

Cross-Party Group on Scotch Whisky
Thursday 29th January 2026, 13:00-14:00, Teams

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Murdo Fraser MSP
Gordon MacDonald MSP
Rhoda Grant MSP
Douglas Ross MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Ellie Carrington (Scotch Whisky Association – Secretariat)
Alicia Souter (Scotch Whisky Association)
Kate Winstanley, Community Alcohol Partnerships
Annabelle Bonus, Drinkaware
Annie Hill, Heriot-Watt University
Linda Copeland, Emma Harpers Office
Kyle Macintyre, Diageo
Kenny Junner, Unite the Union

Apologies

Jackie Baillie MSP

Agenda item 1

Welcome, introduction and apologies

Gordon MacDonald MSP welcomed members.

Agenda item 2

Ellie Carrington gave a brief overview of the current state of the Scotch Whisky Industry.

She highlighted some headlines from a recent members survey on how they found the business environment in 2025 and outlooks for 2026. These showed how the industry is being widely affected by cost of living pressures on consumers, increased energy and employment costs and global impacts. Kyle Macintyre from Diageo spoke about pressures on the sector, staffing issues, production reductions to rebalance output and demand in key markets with difficult decisions having to be made.

Agenda item 3

Made to be Measured Campaign – Alicia Souter, Scotch Whisky Association

Alicia Souter gave an overview of the Made to Be Measured Campaign on responsible drinking which was launched in 2023. Focussed on Scotland, with the target audience 24 to 55 year olds. Promote an appreciation of Scotch Whisky as a product but made to be savoured and enjoyed responsibly.

Increase awareness of alcohol content units and compare drinks across categories and increase awareness of Chief Officer's Campaign low risk drinking guidelines – 14 units per week. Explained how the campaign is run across social media and public advertising. Members are provided with assets through a campaign toolkit to run their own adverts.

Reached 2.08 million people across Scotland in 2025 with 5.5 million impressions delivered. Results showed 88% of those who saw the campaign had taken some sort of action and 75% gained a better understanding of alcohol content across different drinks.

Will be expanding for a year and hopefully continued once latest evaluation figures are in.

Agenda item 4

The industries work with Community Alcohol Partnerships – Kate Winstanley, Director, Community Alcohol Partnerships

Kate Winstanley explained how Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAPs) support local partnerships to reduce alcohol harm and prevent underage drinking, improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

There are 35 active CAPs in Scotland, with the latest launching today in Elgin, and more than 360 CAPs across the UK. There are four regional advisers based in Scotland who talk to local stakeholders – police, schools, local authorities and third sector organisations. They are invited to sit on a partnership to deliver an action plan tailored to local needs. A toolkit of interventions and marketing materials are provided as well as an evaluation framework to measure the impact of actions taken to reduce underage drinking.

Evidence shows a 64% decrease in regular drinking among 13 to 16 year olds; a 42% reduction in anti-social behaviour reported by the police; and a 98% compliance with Challenge 25. CAPs are currently working on a campaign to reduce parental supply of alcohol to underage drinkers. Asked who instigates the creation of CAPs by Gordon MacDonald, Kate said anybody could go to CAP and ask for advice to create a local partnership. CAP have mapped which areas of Scotland have the highest areas of harm and are working to create partnerships in these areas as a priority.

Agenda item 5

Update on Drinkaware's new Service Finder – Annabelle Bonus, Director of Research, Strategy and Impact, Drinkaware

Annabelle Bonus gave an overview of Drinkaware and their work to help adult drinkers drinking above CMP guidelines to cut down their drinking. This is done through providing information through the website and screening tools working with partners. The new Service Finder was recently launched to help dependent drinkers find the support they need and address barriers to formal treatment. Personas were set up to help identify and create profiles of users with user stories drawn up.

No other service finder covers all four nations and current services are hard to pin point, also most service finders list services in terms of proximity rather than catchment area. The Service Finder has a goal to reduce friction in the referral process and get people to the correct service for them. Went live on 5th January and has already had over 1000 page views. On how the service is publicised, it had a soft launch with formal marketing planned for later in the year once more data has been gathered and if users are finding it useful.

Agenda item 6

Any other business

- Douglas Ross met a constituent on water abstraction issues and the River Spey. Wanted to put it on the radar of the CPG for the next session. He also put in a SPiCE inquiry on the River Spey and abstraction.
- Ellie gave thanks on behalf of the secretariat to the conveners and deputy conveners for their support over the last parliament and noted the CPG would pick up in September.
- Annie Hill echoed her thanks to the CPG and support around the proposal for the new centre at Heriot-Watt.

Meeting closed.