Cross-Party Group on Islands – initial meeting

Thursday, 1st October from 13.00 to 13.30, Online

Meeting Minute

Present

MSPs

Kristopher Leask MSP
Liam McArthur MSP
Jenni Minto MSP
Donald MacKinnon MSP
Tim Eagle MSP
Andrew Baxter MSP
Victor Currie MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Sheila Gilmore, Visit Arran
Terry Hegarty
Theona Morrison, CoDeL
Betty Andrews, SRA
Artemis Pana, SRA
Kirsty MacColl, SIF
Susan McKellar
Scott Watson
Rebecca Munro
Julie Gibson
Douglas Scott
Euan Scott
John Berry, SIF
Megan McWilliams
Ian Young
Neil Kermode, EMEC
John Maughan, Mull Community Council

Apologies

None

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1. Welcome

Artemis Pana, SRA, on behalf of the Secretariat, welcomed attendees to the Initial Meeting of the Cross Party Group (CPG) on Islands.

Artemis outlined the purpose of the meeting, which was to complete the information required for the CPG registration form. She also welcomed the commitment from MSPs to take the CPG forward into Session 7.

It was noted that, once the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee approves the registration, the CPG will be able to resume its business from Session 6, including hosting meetings on specific topics.

2. Re-registering the CPG Islands:

The requirements for re-registering the CPG were discussed and agreed as follows:

Name and purpose of the Group

Members approved the continuation of the existing name and purpose of the Group, which must remain unchanged from the previous Session:

The Cross Party Group on Islands provides a forum for the discussion of issues relevant to Scotland's islands and the residents of island communities, and it aims to improve links between the Scottish Parliament and island communities.

MSP membership

The following MSPs were confirmed as initiating members:

- Christopher Leask MSP, Scottish Greens
- Liam McArthur MSP, Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Andrew Baxter MSP, Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Jenni Minto MSP, Scottish National Party
- Donald MacKinnon MSP, Scottish Labour
- Tim Eagle MSP, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Victor Currie MSP, Reform UK, also confirmed that he wished to join the CPG.

Non-MSP membership

It was confirmed that organisations and individuals who were members during Session 6 would continue as members in Session 7, with membership opening to additional members following approval of the registration.

Subscription charges

Members agreed that there would be no subscription charge.

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3. Appointment of Office Bearers

Artemis handed over to the MSPs present to appoint the office bearers for the Group.

Liam McArthur MSP and Jenni Minto MSP confirmed that they were happy to share the role of Convenor, with each serving as a **Co-Convenor**.

The appointment was proposed by Tim Eagle MSP and seconded by Donald MacKinnon MSP.

4. Appointment of Secretariat

Liam McArthur MSP nominated **Scottish Rural Action and Scottish Islands Federation** to continue in their role as Secretariat for Session 7.

The nomination was proposed by Jenni Minto MSP and seconded by Tim Eagle MSP.

5. Potential topics for Session 7 CPG Island meetings

Liam McArthur MSP invited members to discuss potential topics for future meetings of the CPG.

Island Community Impact Assessments and human rights

Terry Hegarty, Mull, suggested that human rights in island communities and Island Community Impact Assessments (ICIAs) should be considered as topics for future meetings.

Liam McArthur MSP noted a proposal from the Rural Affairs Committee for post-legislative scrutiny of ICIAs and highlighted the opportunity for island communities to contribute to this work.

John Maughan, Mull Community Council, also highlighted concerns regarding the potential human rights implications of the new Mull Campus development. He supported the need for greater scrutiny and improvement of ICIAs.

It was agreed that post-legislative scrutiny of ICIAs should be a key area of engagement for the CPG.

Barriers to enterprise and community-led development including funding and regulation

Sheila Gilmore, Visit Arran, agreed that ICIAs should be covered by the CPG and suggested that the CPG could also pick up on themes discussed in the previous session around barriers to island enterprise activity and community-led local development. She highlighted the need for greater flexibility in island funding, and flexibility in regulations.

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Examples included the requirement to obtain three quotes as part of funding applications and the timescales associated with funding processes. It was noted that these requirements can be difficult to meet in island communities because of logistical challenges and limited local capacity.

Community energy and fuel poverty

Scott Watson, Carbon Neutral Cumbrae, highlighted community energy and fuel poverty as potential areas for discussion.

He suggested that enabling islands to develop their own solutions could provide approaches that could subsequently be applied more widely across Scotland.

Neil Kermode, EMEC, supported the focus on fuel poverty and highlighted the disconnect between the costs of building and improving the energy efficiency of homes in island communities and the support available. He noted that this can contribute to embedding fuel poverty further.

Neil also highlighted the practical challenges associated with legislation and initiatives such as the roll-out of smart meters.

Scott further highlighted the successful joint meeting between the CPG on Islands and the Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SPREEE) and suggested that further joint CPG sessions could be valuable.

Marine litter

John Berry, SIF, noted a potential gap relating to islands in the next marine litter strategy. He suggested that this could provide a useful opportunity to test the application of an ICIA.

Public Sector Reform

Donald MacKinnon MSP, in the context of engagement on Public Sector Reform, asked whether the CPG had strong engagement with Local Authorities in session 6.

Artemis Pana noted that Local Authorities are indeed represented within the CPG membership. Further to this, the Island Economy Showcase, held at the Scottish Parliament in 2025, was designed and delivered as a partnership between the CPG, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and all six Local Authorities with inhabited offshore islands. This proved a useful model for more in-depth discussion of issues that are relevant to Scotland's islands.

Given that Public Sector Reform is likely to be a significant area of discussion over the coming period, members agreed that it would be a worthwhile topic for the CPG to consider. It was suggested that Local Authority representatives are specifically invited to present and participate in any sessions on PSR.

It was also noted that there is a view within Government that islands could potentially lead the way in demonstrating how reform could work in practice.

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Agreed priorities

Members agreed that early engagement on Public Sector Reform, potentially involving Local Authorities, and post-legislative scrutiny of Island Community Impact Assessments should be two initial key areas for the CPG to feed into.

It was agreed that the CPG should aim to hold a further meeting before the end of the year.

6. Next steps to complete registration

Artemis Pana requested permission for the Secretariat to liaise with Liam McArthur MSP's office to support completion of the CPG on Islands registration form. Permission was given.

7. AOCB

Local engagement

Neil Kermode suggested a series of satellite events to enable discussion to take place locally, with issues and recommendations subsequently brought to the CPG for consideration.

Scottish Rural and Island Parliament

Theona Morrison, CoDeL, highlighted the next Scottish Rural and Island Parliament (SRIP) as an opportunity for CPG Islands members to meet in person and potentially host an island-specific session.

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