# Cross-Party Group on Scotch Whisky

## Thursday 8th October 2026, 12:30-13:30, Hybrid at Scottish Parliament

## Minutes

## Present

### MSPs

Murdo Fraser MSP
Laura Mitchell MSP
Rachael Hamilton MSP (online)
Lloyd Melville MSP
Michelle Campbell MSP
Max Bannerman MSP
Senga Beresford MSP
Donald MacKinnon MSP
Andrew Baxter MSP
Kim Schmullian MSP

### Non-MSP Group Members

Ellie Carrington (Scotch Whisky Association – Secretariat)
Susanne Cameron-Nielsen (Scotch Whisky Association)
Howell Davies (Interface) (online)
Michael Taylor
Kenny Junner (Unite the Union) (online)
Kyle Macintyre (Diageo)
Daniel Reid (GMB) (online)
Annie Hill (Heriot-Watt) (online)
Orchid Ly (online)

## Apologies

Tim Eagle MSP
Emma Roddick MSP
Katie Hagmann MSP
Jackie Baillie MSP

## Agenda item 1

Welcome, introductions and apologies

## Agenda item 2

Election of office bearers

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Murdo Fraser MSP and Laura Mitchell MSP were elected Co-Conveners. Lloyd Melville MSP and Senga Beresford MSP were elected Deputy Conveners.

SWA was re-elected as the secretariat.

## Agenda item 3

Introduction to the Scotch Whisky Association, Ellie Carrington

Ellie gave an overview of the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), the trade association representing the Scotch Whisky industry with around 100 member companies, representing approximately 98% of production. Members range from multinational organisations to small independent distillers. The SWA works across a range of areas from legal, trade and exports, to industry sustainability and alcohol in society.

There are currently over 150 operational Scotch Whisky distilleries across Scotland and Scotch Whisky accounts for 72% of Scottish food and drink exports and 21% of all UK food and drink exports. More than 41,000 jobs are supported by the industry across Scotland, with a further 25,000 across the UK. In 2024, there were 2.7m visits to Scotch Whisky attractions, making distillery visitor centres and experiences collectively the most popular tourist destination in Scotland.

## Agenda item 4

State of the Scotch Whisky industry, Ellie Carrington

While July brought positive news internationally with UK-India FTA implementation and the removal of US tariffs on whisky, the Scotch Whisky sector has experienced sustained pressures in recent years, domestically and internationally. This cumulative burden includes two rounds of tariffs in the US; supply chain volatility as a result of international conflicts; significant domestic cost pressures, including rising energy bills; and three cumulative increases in excise duty in the UK market in just three years.

The industry's asks of the Scottish Parliament and Government include: delivering a competitive business environment with streamlined and improved regulation; an efficient and well-resourced planning process; a reliable and resilient infrastructure to reduce cost and complexity and free up investment; a supportive and enabling policy and regulatory framework that supports sustainability strategies; support for the establishment of local Community Alcohol Partnerships to tackle drinking in under 18s, improve their health and well-being and enhance their communities; and support to help bolster Scotch Whisky's potential in key markets.

## Agenda item 5

CPG members discussed what they'd like to see from the group in the upcoming year. Members agreed to alternate meetings between online and hybrid. Also discussed was the opportunity for a site visit, potentially jointly with the Scotch Whisky All Party Parliamentary Group at Westminister. The Secretariat would send across details of what the CPG covered last session. A suggested topic for consideration was made on Scotch Whisky workforce and

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skills. Donald MacKinnon mentioned independent and small distilleries and the challenges facing them. Multiple members suggested looking at how the industry can adapt to climate change, water abstraction and smaller distilleries working with the regulator as well as the Scottish Government proposal to bring the environmental bodies into one. The relationship between the industry and tourism and hospitality was discussed, with the potential for a joint session with the Tourism and Hospitality CPG. Lloyd Melville spoke about sustainability and using local materials, exemplified by Arbikie Distillery in his constituency and their farm to bottle process. Scottish Affairs Committee are doing an inquiry into the Scotch Whisky industry, and it was suggested the CPG could look at the evidence provided and see what would be applicable in a Scottish Government and Parliament context.

The secretariat agreed to organise a meeting for a couple months' time and circulate details.

**Meeting closed.**

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