

Cross-Party Group on Space

Tuesday 02 December 2025, 10:00 – 11:30, online

Minutes

Present

MSPs

- Colin Beattie MSP
- Beatrice Wishart MSP
- *Scott Steele - Office of Colin Beattie MSP*

Non-MSP Group Members

- Alfie Marturano
- Andy Nolan
- Craig Clark
- Daniel Smith
- David Sandy
- Debbie Strang
- Derek Harris
- Derek Young
- Julian Dines
- Andrew Fournet
- Kelly Hardman
- Jenni Doonan
- John Bone
- John Edward
- Keith Robson
- Grant Lewis
- Malachy Devlin
- Martyna Hodges
- Naomi Pryde
- Natasha Nicholson
- Phil Mclachlan
- Ramsay Jones
- Sharon Parker-Lines
- Angela Mathis
- Fionagh Thomson
- Andrew Wilson
- Victoria Mills

Apologies

- Pamela Smith
- James Owens

Agenda item 1

Opening remarks and approval of previous minutes

Minutes approved from meeting held 17 Sept 2025 & AGM held 03 Dec 2024

Agenda item 2

Guest speaker: Daniel Smith, Founder & Creative Director, AstroAgency

‘Space Comm: Pillars and event overview’

Daniel Smith provided an overview of Space Comm Scotland and the strategic direction behind this year’s event. He explained that the organisers have refined their mission into three core pillars: preparing for the future of the European space sector, supporting companies to scale, and strengthening downstream and data-driven applications. Daniel emphasised the significant effort invested in industry engagement to ensure the event aligns with real sector needs. He highlighted this year’s focus on investment challenges, commercialisation support through the “meet the buyer” programme, and the importance of integrating non-space sectors to grow downstream opportunities. Daniel encouraged strong Scottish attendance to ensure the event remains anchored in Scotland.

Agenda item 3

AGM

- Election of office bearers
 - Convenor – Colin Beattie MSP re-elected
 - Deputy convenor
 - Carol Mochan MSP – re-elected
 - Beatrice Wishart MSP – re-elected
 - Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP – re-elected
 - Secretary
 - ADS Scotland – re-elected

Text

Agenda item 4

Guest speaker: Debbie Strang, Deputy CEO, SaxaVord Spaceport

‘Update from SaxaVord’

Debbie Strang delivered a comprehensive update on progress at SaxaVord Spaceport, now Europe's first and only fully licensed vertical launch facility. She described the substantial infrastructure already in place, including Launchpad 1, state-of-the-art tracking and telemetry systems, clean room facilities, and dedicated integration hangars capable of supporting multiple launch providers. Debbie confirmed their first client launch targeted for 2026. She highlighted SaxaVord's growing role as Europe's gateway to space, driven by its advantageous northern latitude and expanding international partnerships. Debbie also emphasised the importance of ground station services, community engagement, and education initiatives, noting strong interest from organisations like the Institute of Physics and STFC in developing coordinated national outreach for Scotland's first orbital launch. She reiterated SaxaVord's commitment to supporting future skills pathways, including apprenticeships and further-education collaborations.

Agenda item 5

Guest speaker: Kelly Hardman, Director, Fragomen LLP

'Mobility and Immigration

Kelly Hardman discussed the growing impact of immigration and mobility challenges on Scotland's ability to meet space sector workforce demands. Drawing on Fragomen's work across global mobility, labour market data, and policy engagement, she highlighted that the sector's rapid growth is being constrained by widening skills gaps (particularly in engineering, data science, AI and systems roles) combined with increasingly uncompetitive UK visa policies. Kelly explained that high salary thresholds, complex and costly visa processes, and security-related hiring restrictions are creating bottlenecks that affect programme timelines and the overall investment environment. She noted that UK visa fees are significantly higher than competitor nations, making Scotland less attractive to globally mobile specialists. Additionally, proposed changes to settlement rules could hinder long-term retention. Kelly argued that Scotland's competitive advantage (its launch capability, innovative ecosystem and strong collaboration) risks being undermined unless talent mobility and retention strategies are improved. Her conclusion was clear: without the people, even the best technology cannot reach orbit, and ensuring predictable, competitive immigration pathways is now mission-critical for Scotland's space ambitions.

Agenda item 6

Actions arising

- Relevant updates on outstanding actions:
 - **Graeme Dey, the Scottish Government Minister for Higher and Further Education, will be invited to the next meeting to discuss skills and education.**
 - To be carried forward to next session of parliament.
 - **Connected working - APPG and CPG to explore ways of working together.**

- Victoria has connected with secretariat of APPG and will ensure connections are carried forward to next session for joint working.
- **Arrange MSP Site visit to AAC Clyde Space (Fridays or Mondays).**
 - Visit to be rescheduled in new when new parliament in session.

Agenda item 7

AOB

Next meeting TBC

Meeting close