

Cross Party Group on Ukraine

Wednesday 12th March 2025 18:00 – 20:00
(hybrid)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Colin Beattie MSP
Clare Adamson MSP
John Mason MSP

Invited guests

Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Yevheniia Kravchuk, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament, Member of Supervisory Board of the Ukrainian Institute
Volodymyr Sheiko, the Ukrainian Institute
Nigel Osborne, Art Therapy Force Ukraine
Lezley Marion Cameron, Depute Lord Provost
Amy McNeese-Mechan, City of Edinburgh Council
Erik Avetisov, Kharkiv Rotary Club
Ian McFarlane, McFarlane Productions
Marta Leshyk, Journalism Society at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen
Vitaliia Melnyk, Gestalt therapist
Olga Lutsyshyn, SoloWay, Member of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group
Oksana Saiapina, Kvity Ukrainy
David Hamilton, Scottish Information Commissioner
Andriy Chornenko, Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy
Martin Hunt, Tartan Silk
Tetiana Puchkova, BlackSeaNews
Nazarii Lialiuk, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament
Nataliya Lyalyuk, St. Mary's Ukrainian School in Glasgow
Yurii Filippov, Black Sea Center for Strategic Initiatives
Larysa Zhdankina, The School of Law, University of Glasgow
Oksana Tverdokhlibova, Ukrainian Product Design
Shaughan Rick, Balakun
Nataliia Hinde, Economic Development Consultant
Vasyl Ponomarenko, The Ukrainian Physics and Mathematics Lyceum
Liudmyla Latyshenko, The Ukrainian Physics and Mathematics Lyceum
Graham Campbell, Glasgow City Council
Jeremy Grant, Director, Edinburgh Editorial

Oksana Rozumna, Chevening Scholar
Olha Maslova, Connecting Scotland, Glasgow Council for the Volunteer Sector
Victoria Senn, Business Mentor
Anna Bennett WS, Palace of Holyroodhouse
Katarzyna Jajszczok, Blue Yellow Ribbon of Hope
Anna Bubnova MBE, British Council

Non-MSP Group Members

Anna Kulish
Kseniia Smyrnova
Hanna Tekliuk
Olha Maksymiak
Steven Carr
Maryan Pokhylyy
Anne Yarney
Doug Allan
Oleksandra Novatska
Giles Sutherland
Mykola Zinchenko
Maryna Zvarych
Serhii Kuzminov
Varvara Mishyna
Anna Makhlay
Olga Niekrasova
Daria Shapovalova
Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh represented by Andrii Madzianovskyi and Oleksii Tyshchenko
The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) Glasgow branch represented by Sofiia Solodovnyk
The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) Edinburgh branch represented by Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, Olha Kyrylyuk, Lynda Allison
Ukrainian Collective represented by Olha Maksymiak
Scottish Refugee Council represented by Sabir Zazai
Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) represented by John Beaton-Hawryluk and Katie Marson
Feniks represented by Magda Czarnecka
Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland represented by Peter Cooper
Nazovni represented by Oleksandra Sologub
shevchenko.philia represented by Bohdan Kramar and Ostap Lukianchuk
Mission of Innocents represented by Joyce Landry, Olga Vivchar, Mariia Miskova, and Lesia Vynnychuk
Carey Tourism represented by Benjamin Carey

Apologies

Yevgen Gorash
Yulianna Shalenyk

Bohdan Kruk
Kvitka Perehinets
Anastasia Klimash
Illia Malanchuk
Peter David Kormylo
Zhenya Dove
Vasyl Kren
Tetiana Balanova
Kateryna Campbell
Oleksandra Wierzbicka (stepped down)
Olena Litvinova-Kutsai
Dmytro Syrota
Oleksandr Chernykh
Olga Biryuk
Olena Yuzkova
Juliette Lichman
Valeriya Golovina
Joe Goldblatt
Daniel Smith
The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) Dundee branch
Center for Civil Liberties
Nadiya
Scottish Council on Global Affairs

Agenda item 1 Convener

- **Welcome and Apologies**

Colin Beattie MSP welcomes attendees (both in the Committee Room and online) and opens the meeting. Apologies are to be noted in the minutes.

The Minutes of the 24th September 2024 meeting are approved as presented. The CPG also approves the CPG Membership Badge and consents to sharing the meeting record with its social media expert.

Agenda item 2 Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

- Angus Robertson MSP

Angus Robertson (AR) begins by welcoming the Consul of Ukraine and participants, expressing that while there is hope for peace, recent international developments have caused concern. He criticises recent suggestions by global actors that peace negotiations could proceed without Ukraine's involvement and condemns attempts to undermine Ukraine's democratically elected leadership. AR stresses the Scottish Government's position that while a just peace is desirable, it cannot come "at any price," especially while a fifth of Ukraine remains under occupation.

He reaffirms the Scottish Government's continued and unequivocal support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, as well as its

commitment to supporting Ukrainians living in Scotland. He acknowledges the presence of many Ukrainian organisations, churches, and community groups at the meeting, and notes that their participation in Scotland's democratic institutions is meaningful and valued. AR encourages all participants to share any feedback or requests for further support.

AR refers to the recent debate in the Scottish Parliament and a statement from the First Minister – a rare show of political unity that reinforces Scotland's commitment to Ukraine and its people.

He reiterates that Scotland does not hold powers over immigration or visa matters but assures attendees that the Scottish Government raises concerns regularly with the UK Government, advocating for greater clarity and protections for Ukrainians. He also commits to improving communication between government, local authorities, and Ukrainian organisations across Scotland.

In response to a question from John Beaton-Hawryluk regarding cuts to third-sector funding and its impact on mental health and community support services, AR acknowledges the seriousness of the situation—particularly in Edinburgh. He highlights that the recent Scottish Government budget included increased funding for local authorities, which should allow for the continued support of third-sector provision.

AR closes by reiterating the Scottish Government's willingness to listen and act on the concerns of Ukraine's community in Scotland and encourages participants to speak with his officials following the meeting.

Agenda item 3 Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh

- Andrii Madzianovskyi, Consul of Ukraine

Andrii Madzianovskyi (AM) addresses the GPG with a reflection on the strength of the relationship between Scotland and Ukraine. He expresses sincere gratitude to the Scottish people, authorities, and Members of the Scottish Parliament for their continued support and solidarity with Ukraine.

AM highlights the remarkable cooperation between Scotland and Ukraine, particularly noting the Scottish Government's Super Sponsor Scheme, which he describes as one of the best European support programmes for displaced people. He acknowledges the warmth and generosity of the Scottish public, stating that "my country will never forget these good deeds."

He emphasises the deep cultural ties between Scotland and Ukraine, underlining their shared histories, values, and bravery. AM notes the richness of Ukrainian culture—its music, dance, and artistic expression—and speaks of the importance of cultural diplomacy as a powerful complement to political diplomacy, conveying the resilience and identity of the Ukrainian nation.

AM concludes by briefly sharing his background: a lawyer by education and a diplomat, with 27 years of service in various Ukrainian state institutions, including senior roles within the Prosecutor General's Office, state administrations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine prior to his current appointment in Scotland.

In closing, AM reaffirms Ukraine's deep appreciation for Scotland's enduring friendship and expresses hope for continued cooperation and a shared future.

Agenda item 4 Ukrainian Institute

- Yevheniia Kravchuk, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament, Member of Supervisory Board of the Ukrainian Institute

Yevheniia Kravchuk (YK) expresses her appreciation and recalls her previous visit to Edinburgh, during which the idea was raised to establish a branch of the Ukrainian Institute in Scotland, with Edinburgh identified as a particularly fitting location. She notes that the Ukrainian Institute operates under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and serves a role similar to that of the British Council, promoting Ukrainian culture abroad.

YK emphasises that, in the face of war and global uncertainty, culture plays a crucial role. She underscores that Ukrainian culture and identity are central to what Ukraine is fighting to protect, highlighting its long and rich history, distinct from that of neighbouring states. She welcomes the earlier remarks of Consul Andrii Madzianovskyi on the importance of culture and stresses that cultural diplomacy is a key element of Ukraine's state policy.

YK thanks stakeholders for supporting the idea of establishing a Ukrainian cultural centre in the city, and notes that it could become a lasting legacy.

In response to questions from the Convener and the members of the Group, YK outlines that next steps toward establishing a branch of the Ukrainian Institute in Edinburgh would require collaboration with several partners. She notes that Ukraine has already established branches of the Ukrainian Institute in France and Germany and hopes a similar model could be adopted in Scotland.

- Volodymyr Sheiko, Director General of the Ukrainian Institute

Volodymyr Sheiko (VS) provides an overview of the Ukrainian Institute's mission, structure, and international activities. He explains that the Ukrainian Institute's mandate is to promote Ukrainian culture abroad and foster deeper cultural understanding through partnerships and exchanges.

VS outlines the Institute's achievements since its founding in 2017, including over 70 cultural projects in the UK and activity in 40 countries, with digital reach extending to around 80. He highlights successful collaborations in Scotland, including with the Edinburgh International Film Festival, Summerhall, Celtic Connections, and the Edinburgh International Culture Summit.

He stresses the unique role of culture as a tool of national resilience during wartime, noting that Ukraine's new five-year cultural strategy recognises culture as an essential element of national security. In this context, cultural diplomacy is not only a soft power instrument but also a counter to hybrid threats such as disinformation.

VS refers to the recent UK-Ukraine 100-Year Partnership Declaration, which explicitly mentions joint cultural cooperation and support for the Ukrainian Institute's activities in the UK. He welcomes this commitment and expresses hope that it can be translated into practical collaboration.

He proposes establishing a Ukrainian Institute branch in Edinburgh, based on existing partnerships and a successful history of cultural cooperation in Scotland. He explains that while earlier plans for an office in the UK did not materialise, recent momentum and strong interest from Scottish stakeholders present a timely opportunity. He adds that such an office would be a long-term investment in bilateral cultural relations and support Ukraine's recovery by strengthening its cultural infrastructure abroad.

VS outlines two possible models for establishing a presence in Scotland: creating a locally registered charity, as in France and Germany, or forming a hosted partnership

with an institution such as Creative Scotland, similar to the arrangement with DutchCulture in the Netherlands.

Discussion follows on the proposal to establish a Ukrainian Institute office in Edinburgh.

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, Chair of the AUGB Edinburgh branch, voices concerns about potential duplication of cultural efforts. She questions how the proposed Ukrainian Institute would differ from or complement existing organisations, particularly in terms of funding, which she notes may already be stretched.

VS responds by emphasising that the Ukrainian Institute brings specific expertise in cultural diplomacy and maintains direct connections with Ukraine's cultural and governmental sectors. He highlights the Institute's ability to link international programming directly with developments on the ground in Ukraine, offering a different function than diaspora-led initiatives. He stresses that collaboration with local organisations is key and that the Institute's presence would be complementary rather than competitive.

Clare Adamson MSP welcomes the proposal and asks for clarification about the relationship between the Ukrainian Institute and the existing Ukrainian Institute in London. VS clarifies that the London-based institute is an independent charity not affiliated with the Ukrainian government, whereas the proposed office in Edinburgh would be the first official UK-based branch of the Ukrainian Institute, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Oleksandra Novatska, a Ukrainian cultural professional based in Scotland, expresses strong support for the proposal. She highlights the need to promote modern Ukrainian culture, which remains underrepresented in Scotland. She also calls for collaboration between Ukrainian cultural professionals in Scotland and the Ukrainian Institute to amplify cultural diplomacy efforts.

John Beaton-Hawryluk, representing EVOC, supports the proposal and suggests that the Institute could serve best in providing curated resources, film materials, and guidance, while local Ukrainian organisations continue to deliver programming on the ground.

He also suggests developing of a proposal and identify funding opportunities by creating a "Manifesto for Ukraine", outlining a political ask ahead of the next Scottish Parliament election, to strengthen long-term political support for Ukraine-related initiatives, including cultural efforts.

VS thanks all participants for their contributions and reiterates that the Ukrainian Institute seeks to enhance—not replace—existing efforts.

Agenda item 5 Membership Requests

All membership requests and relevant application materials were distributed to Members by the Secretary prior to the meeting.

Individual memberships of Amy McNeese-Mechan, Erik Avetisov, Ian McFarlane, Marta Leshyk, Vitaliia Melnyk, Olga Lutsyshyn, Oksana Saiapina, David Hamilton, Andriy Chornenko, Martin Hunt, Tetiana Puchkova, Nazarii Lialiuik and Nataliya Lyalyuk, Oleksandra Zhyhalkina, Yurii Filippov, and Larysa Zhdankina were approved by the Cross-Party Group.

Organisational memberships of Ukrainian Product Design and Balakun were approved by the Cross-Party Group.

Agenda item 6 Members on Working Groups

- Oleksandra Novatska on Culture Working Group

Oleksandra Novatska (ON), Cultural Coordinator of the Ukrainian Heritage Site in Lockerbie and Secretary of the CPG's Culture Working Group, provides an update on recent activities. She emphasises the importance of cultural engagement in preserving heritage and fostering shared understanding between Scotland and Ukraine. ON presents updates on key cultural initiatives:

"The Weight We Cared" Exhibition – Developed by the Museum of Ukrainian Craft and Culture Scotland, this exhibition explores themes of displacement, identity, and memory through personal belongings carried by Ukrainians fleeing the war. ON notes that the exhibition has had a profound emotional impact on both the Ukrainian community and the wider Scottish public, sparking dialogue and fostering empathy. Due to overwhelming interest, efforts are now underway to expand the exhibition for broader audiences.

"Heartbeats of Ukraine" at the Scottish Storytelling Centre – This recent cultural evening combined music and film, including a screening of a powerful documentary on Ukrainian frontline paramedics in partnership with Kyiv Independent, and a video message from Olena Herasymjuk, founder of a project preserving the stories of Ukrainian writers who lost their lives in the war. The event concluded with a performance by students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, celebrating Ukrainian resilience through music.

Burns and Rumi Supper – In partnership with Glasgow Afgan United, the group co-organised a Ukrainian-Scottish cultural exchange event. The SoloWay Ukrainian Choir contributed a performance that blended traditions and showcased solidarity through song.

UNESCO Spring School 2025 – The group successfully submitted two proposals for this peace-building programme at the University of Glasgow, such as Petrykivka painting workshop, exploring Ukraine's rich folk art traditions and an adapted presentation of "The Weight We Cared", highlighting cultural memory, displacement, and resilience through art.

Ukrainian Heritage Site in Lockerbie – ON provides an update on the transformation of this historic site into a small museum and cultural hub. The space now brings together local Scots, second-generation descendants of Ukrainian prisoners of war, and newly arrived refugees, hosting exhibitions and cultural events.

ON concludes by extending the working group's deepest gratitude to volunteers for their continued support. She acknowledges the time, effort, and personal commitment of individuals working to ensure Ukrainian voices and stories are shared and heard across Scotland.

- Olha Maksymiak on Health and Wellbeing Working Group

Olha Maksymiak (OM) begins by welcoming two new members to the group. Natalia Hinde is an international consultant with experience in business development and marketing, having worked across the UK and Europe. Alongside her professional work, she has successfully led a number of charitable initiatives, including clean drinking water projects in Northern Uganda, development programmes in Ukraine, and efforts to build stronger links between Ukraine and Scotland. Vitalia Melnyk is a Gestalt

therapist and has recently completed certification with UK professional bodies in counselling and psychotherapy. She also serves as the Development Coordinator at the Hibernian Community Foundation, where she has created a range of support programmes for the Ukrainian community, including the About My Life therapy group, the Edinburgh Women's Circle, and a teenage club.

Olha reports that in November 2024, a series of informational sessions that welcomed around 200 attendees, were held in Edinburgh and Glasgow to support displaced Ukrainians with guidance on immigration, legal pathways, and UK tax.

In December, the group hosted Carol of Hope, a charity concert at Glasgow Cathedral in partnership with the Ukrainian choir SoloWay, made up entirely of displaced Ukrainians. The event raised £1,650 for children in Ukraine through Dnipro Kids. The group acknowledges the contributions of former Chair Steven Carr, who also serves as Chair of Dnipro Kids.

Olha notes that the inclusion of Ukraine in the upcoming UNESCO Spring School was the result of coordinated advocacy by members of the CPG, the Ukrainian Consulate, and partner organisations. This marks an important recognition of Ukraine in international peace-building discourse.

She provides an update on support for displaced Ukrainian doctors in Scotland, reporting that the support network now includes 36 members—almost double the previous number. Many of these professionals continue to face challenges in meeting regulations requirements, including passing a series of costly exams. Despite requests to the Department for Work and Pensions, funding for these exams remains limited. As a result, many doctors are offered low-skilled employment while preparing for exams, which negatively impacts their mental health. Nonetheless, two members of the group have successfully completed the process and are now working as doctors in the UK.

The group is also working to establish a peer support group for Ukrainian psychologists and psychotherapists, who face similar challenges in securing professional recognition in the UK.

Olha concludes by raising concern about the mental health impacts of visa uncertainty. She cites a recent survey by the Ukrainian Collective, conducted in December 2024 with support from the Scottish Refugee Council, which found that 91% of displaced Ukrainians reported stress or anxiety related to their visa status. The survey, with 430 respondents, was presented to the Ukrainian Resettlement Stakeholder Reference Group. Olha notes that both she and her colleagues receive daily messages from Ukrainians in Scotland reporting declining mental health, job rejections, and the inability to plan their future due to short visa extensions. The working group continues to raise this issue in cooperation with media and civil society organisations.

Note from the Secretary: Olha Maksymiak is approved by the CPG as the new Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group.

- John Beaton-Hawryluk on Resettlement Working Group

John Beaton-Hawryluk (JH) provides an update and proposal concerning the Resettlement Working Group. He recommends that the group be renamed the Communities and Resettlement Working Group, to better reflect the evolving scope and purpose of its work.

He explains that, over the past year, the group has operated beyond the traditional understanding of resettlement. Rather than focusing solely on newly arrived

individuals, the work has expanded to include broader engagement with communities across Scotland. This change in name and scope would recognise that resettlement is not a fixed phase, but an ongoing process involving integration, community development, and policy influence.

JH highlights that the expanded remit allows for greater collaboration with a range of stakeholders and partnership groups. The group's work includes connecting Ukrainian communities with key government contacts.

The proposed revised terms of reference, previously circulated to members, include a focus on bridging communities, sharing knowledge and best practice, supporting community-led activity, and strengthening the relationship between Scotland's communities and Ukrainians.

Note from the Secretary: The revised Terms of Reference are approved by the CPG, and the working group is formally renamed the Communities and Resettlement Working Group.

- Kseniia Smyrnova on Education Working Group

Kseniia Smyrnova (KS) begins by reporting the successful implementation of the pilot phase of a bilateral project between Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and the University of Edinburgh. This academic collaboration focused on four subject areas—methodology, chemistry, geopolitics, and urban studies—and included joint work between professors and student groups. The project was successfully completed, and efforts are now underway to secure additional funding to support further staff and student exchanges.

KS notes that the universities have also launched a new area of academic collaboration in astrobiology, with strong potential for future scientific engagement. She highlights that the partnership is ongoing and recently included a visiting professor from the University of Edinburgh.

KS also reports on the establishment of the Ukrainian Politics Network, a new initiative supported by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, bringing together academics, researchers, think tanks, and analysts to examine the impact of the war in Ukraine on global geopolitics. The first inaugural workshop took place in February, with further events planned for May, including a professor exchange.

Turning to school-level engagement, KS announces the first steps in a school twinning initiative between schools in Kyiv and Edinburgh. Meetings have already taken place between mathematics teachers, and discussions are ongoing around student exchanges, particularly in maths and science. She notes the logistical complexity of such exchanges—given that pupils require teacher supervision—but expresses optimism that, with additional recourses, the initiative can move forward.

KS provides an update on the St. Margaret's Saturday School founded in August 2023 in Edinburgh. The school delivers classes in Ukrainian language, English, Ukrainian history, maths, business studies, and folk crafts, and also offers extracurricular activities and English lessons for parents in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council. The school is now in its second year and plans to introduce a new exam-based Ukrainian national language course for secondary students. The school hopes to collaborate with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to align this with national qualification levels.

She further notes that Ukrainian language courses continue to run successfully at the University of Edinburgh, with cultural events being delivered in partnership with the Ukrainian Society and community groups, with more planned for May.

KS expresses support for the proposal to establish a Ukrainian Institute in Scotland, referencing discussions with other stakeholders during the meeting and highlighting the value of academic collaboration in such an initiative. She reflects that previous conversations around a Ukrainian cultural centre in Edinburgh may already be informally taking shape through the combined academic and community-led efforts.

In closing, KS notes that the group continues to work with partners in both Ukraine and Scotland to develop sustainable models of academic and cultural cooperation.

- Anna Kulish on Business and Economy Working Group

Anna Kulish (AK) provides an update on recent initiatives to strengthen economic cooperation between Scotland and Ukraine and informs members of the establishment of a coordination group, which includes representatives from the Scottish Government, Scottish Development International (SDI), Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Scotland Food & Drink, and the Ukrainian Consulate. The group is engaged in ongoing discussions to explore opportunities for closer economic collaboration and to identify potential areas of mutual benefit. The Business and Economy Working Group, being a part of this initiative, extends appreciation to SE/SDI for convening key stakeholders.

In addition to supporting Ukrainian businesses, AK notes that the group continues to focus on facilitating Scottish business engagement in Ukraine and supporting the economic potential of displaced Ukrainians in Scotland. As part of this, a community survey was conducted to better understand the entrepreneurial aspirations and challenges of displaced Ukrainians. The survey, led by the Ukrainian Product Design founded by Oksana Tverdokhlibova, received many detailed responses from individuals either planning to start a business or already operating one.

Findings indicate strong entrepreneurial potential within the community, alongside common challenges such as limited legal and financial knowledge, language barriers, visa uncertainty, and lack of access to local networks. All respondents expressed interest in continued engagement, and AK expresses optimism that, through collective effort, this potential can be unlocked with tailored support strategies.

For Scottish businesses, AK reports that the group has developed a comprehensive guide to the Ukrainian market, created in partnership with the Ukrainian entity of BDO, a global accountancy and business advisory firm active in both countries. The guide includes insights on business opportunities, investment incentives, beneficial tax regimes, and mechanisms for private sector engagement in Ukraine's recovery.

An event is planned to launch the guide and highlight wider economic opportunities in Ukraine for Scottish counterparts. AK concludes by thanking the Convener and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the recent debate in the Chamber reaffirming solidarity with Ukraine, which has helped bolster confidence in economic engagement.

Ukrainian Product Design and Marta Leshyk have joined the working group as members.

Agenda item 7 Highlight Discussion: Art Therapy Force Ukraine

- Nigel Osborne, Emeritus Professor of Music and Human Sciences, The University of Edinburgh; Field Worker, Art Therapy Force Ukraine and Edinburgh Direct Aid International

Nigel Osborne (NOs), musician and cultural practitioner, addresses the CPG and shares his deep commitment to using the arts to support people affected by conflict. He reflects on his long-standing work in post-conflict settings including the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, East Africa, and East Asia, and most recently, Ukraine.

He explains that his engagement with Ukraine began through an artists' retreat on the island of Brijuni, where Ukrainian artists and cultural managers – mostly women – gathered at the outset of the full-scale invasion. From this, a trauma-informed arts programme was developed in collaboration with Dr Anastasiia Shureko and the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. The programme trains students in using creative arts to support children affected by war, and has since expanded to multiple institutions across Ukraine, including universities and conservatories in Lviv, Kharkiv, Cherkasy, Kropyvnytskyi, and Odesa.

NOs outlines how this work has evolved into an initiative supported by the British Council, training facilitators and delivering trauma-informed arts sessions in shelters, hospitals, and de-occupied territories. He describes work with children and soldiers alike, highlighting how music and art are used to help regulate physical and emotional responses to trauma. He notes that their approach is informed by medical and psychological evidence, and supported by peer-reviewed research.

He shares a video clip showing work with displaced children from Mariupol in a shelter in Lviv, where the process of co-creating music helps foster emotional expression and rebuilds self-esteem.

NOs stresses that culture is not just a source of healing, but a vehicle for change. He notes that throughout Eastern Europe, culture has historically played a critical role in resistance and transformation, citing his past work with Polish and Czech artists during times of political transition. He strongly endorses the proposal to establish a Ukrainian Institute in Scotland, describing Ukraine as a country of “unbreakable creativity” and emphasising that cultural resilience is among its greatest strengths.

He encourages Scotland to continue its role in supporting Ukraine's cultural future and underlines the importance of collaboration at the European level.

AOB

Appreciation was extended to the AUGB Edinburgh branch for covering the catering expenses at the Group's previous five meetings.

Closing Remarks

The Convener reflects on the evening's discussion, noting that every contribution has reinforced the message that culture matters—in diplomacy, in education, in healing, and in community-building. He calls for collective efforts to enhance and expand cultural activity in Scotland in partnership with Ukraine.

The date of the next meeting: 11 June 2025