

Cross-Party Group on USA

6th October 2021 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Minute

Present

MSPs

Daniel Johnson MSP (Deputy Convenor)
Dean Lockhart MSP (Convenor)
Emma Harper MSP
Liam Kerr MSP
Paul Sweeney MSP
Rachael Hamilton MSP

Invited guests

Jack Hillmeyer, Consul-General, U.S. Department of State in Edinburgh and
Michael Feldman, Political/Economic Officer, U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh
John Primrose, Deputy Director, Scottish Government
David Reay, Chair in Carbon Management & Education, School of Geosciences,
Edinburgh University
Stuart Hamilton, Business Development, Business Support, Scottish Chambers of
Commerce
Allan Hogarth, Executive Director, Scottish North America Business Council
Ian Houston, President US, Scottish Business Network

Non-MSP Group Members

Alexia Haramis
Allan Hogarth
Anastasia Kourtis
Andrew Muir
Anna Stella
Calum Moultrie
Carol Dew
Colin Harper
Dave Reay
David McIntosh
Dean Lockhart
Emma Thomas
Harriet Mortimer
Ian Houston
Jack Hillmeyer

Jacqui Watt
Jamie Cooke
John Erskine
John Primrose
Kat Cary
Lesley Campbell
Liam Kerr MSP
Martin Bell
Michael Feldman
Mushhood Haider
Nora Rothrock
Olivia McLaren
Rebecca Groundwater
Russell Dalgeish
Sahar Danesh
Scott Johnstone
Steve Kerr
Stuart Hamilton

Apologies

Michelle Thomson MSP
Murdo Fraser MSP
Jenni Minto MSP
Alexander Burnett MSP
Paul O’Kane MSP
Monica Lennon MSP
Fiona Hyslop MSP
Donald Emslie
Jo Graham
John Donald
John Mackenzie
Kevin Havelock
Sadie McKinley
William Stirling
Richard Muir
Kate Nowakowska

1. Meeting to commence

Dean Lockhart MSP (DL MSP) opens the meeting, presents the agenda and welcomes all attendees to the first meeting of this group in the new parliamentary session. He welcomes the new consulate team – Jack Hillmeyer (JH), Consul-General, U.S. Department of State in Edinburgh and Michael Feldman (MF), Political/Economic Consul, U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh – and his fellow MSPs: Daniel Johnson MSP, Emma Harper MSP, Liam Kerr MSP, Paul Sweeney MSP, and Rachael Hamilton MSP. The panel session will be looking at the opportunities and events surrounding the COP26 conference. He invites JH and MF to give an update.

2. Update from the United States Consulate General Edinburgh

Jack Hillmeyer (JH) introduces himself, and states that it is an honour and a pleasure to represent the US Government in Edinburgh. One of the good messages they can deliver is that the US State Department see the importance of and opportunities in Edinburgh and will now focus more here – they have expanded from one Consul to two already, and there will possibly soon be a third. He highlights the commitment of the new administration to COP26 and the green agenda, for instance on President Biden's first day in office the US re-joined the Paris agreement, and in April he convened a summit of leaders from around the world to address issues on this topic. 2 weeks ago he made climate a major focus at the UN General Assembly, where President Biden pledged to double the US investment in public international climate finance to over \$11billion. JH emphasises however that this is still subject to negotiation that will take place with Congress. Although 85% of emissions are not under the US control, this administration realises that when the US steps up that is an important way to get other countries to do the same. This was also a recognition that international climate finance is important for addressing and reaching communities that are harder to reach, and for helping poorer countries to address this issue. JH emphasises that the US will be very involved in, and leading at COP26.

Michael Feldman (MF) introduces himself and echoes that it is a real honour to be here as the first Consul for Political and Economic Affairs. MF highlights the lifting of the travel restrictions between the UK, Europe and the US – this will take place in November, and they're still working on the specifics of that, but they wanted to have a process in place to allow vaccinated visitors to travel to the US. On COP26, they are expecting many high-level delegates from the US, from the highest levels of Government, but also state delegations, governors, etc., as well as businesses. There is likely to be over 1000 people from the US at COP26. More announcements will be made on this in the coming days.

JH highlights that international travel had been an issue for many, especially for business, so they're happy we'll soon have more freedom of movement between the 2 countries.

DL MSP thanks them both for a fascinating update. It was a very welcome announcement around the US doubling their financing commitment, as this will be a real game-changer. He asks JH and MF if it would be possible to share a list of US delegates to COP once this is available, especially with Stuart Hamilton and others on this call. It would be fantastic for Scottish and US businesses to be able to get together around COP. DL MSP introduces Stuart Hamilton (SH) and Allan Hogarth (AH) to talk about some of the business events surrounding COP.

SH highlights that Glasgow Chamber of Commerce are leading on COP26, and as part of this they will be running a climate change mission. This will be a hybrid event, designed to help companies to learn, trade and connect, to discover new market streams and products, etc. and prepare for potential upcoming legislation. Over 100 companies from 10 countries (including the US) will meet with 20 Scottish companies. Some meetings and events will be in person but the whole event will be broadcast.

AH explains that, on COP, they are working with Stephen Bridges, the UK representative for Indiana. They are hoping to engage with the Governor for Indiana and their colleagues once they arrive in the UK for COP. Also working with representatives from California, and are pulling together mayoral leaders from across the US for an event in Edinburgh – more details on this to come. AH will share this information with Alexia Haramis (AH ECC) to share with the group.

DL MSP brings in Ian Houston (IH): IH highlights that the Scottish Business Network (SBN) will be running Scottish International Week (SIW) as part of COP26 from the 2nd-9th November. SIW has been running now for several years, and last year had 10,000 people engaged – this year it will be focused on COP26. Information on participating will be made available to the group.

Russell Dalgleish (RD) adds that SIW21 will comprise over 100 events which will include online events from around the world hosted by prominent Scots and several physical events in Glasgow. The full program can be found [here](#). One event for COP26 that SBN are particularly excited about is with Washington based Global Entrepreneur Network and the Danish Government which will take place in Glasgow on the [9th November](#).

3. Dean Lockhart to introduce the panel of speakers

John Primrose (JP) is Deputy Director for International at Scottish Government, and his responsibilities include the relationship with the US. The Scottish Government has 3 aims for COP:

- To play a full part in securing an ambitious and deliverable global deal
- To increase Scotland's progress to net zero through a just transition
- To enhance Scotland's place in the world, attracting innovation and investment, and developing partnerships

JP explains that for them, delivering a successful COP26 will mean delivering increased commitments and actions from governments, to deliver a faster, global transition to net zero in a way that is fair and just. It will also include mobilised finance to support global climate action – he welcomes the US commitment as a huge step forward in this area. They want to increase recognition for the need for joint working across nation states, cities, and businesses. Scottish Government is playing a key role in the under-2 coalition, which is a sub-national group looking to make ambitious commitments at COP – a large proportion of emissions come from sub-national entities so the commitments need to be made by them too. The Governor of California is the co-Chair of that group and they have been working closely with him. The COP 26 Scottish Government programme is nearly finalised and will be shared with delegates soon, and they will be inviting guests to a number of key venues around Scotland. There will also be a range of opportunities within the blue zone itself. Their CivTech Global Alliance, which the USA is part of, will be delivering a series of events from the 3rd to the 5th of November. They are looking to support programmes for a number of political delegations, JP asks that all information on the US delegation is shared with their office in Washington D.C., although he highlights that Jodie Smith has left the Scottish Office there and will be replaced by Chris Thompson. He is looking forward to hearing anything that this group requires from the Scottish Government and encourages people to get in touch with him.

David Reay (DR) is here to give an update from the University of Edinburgh. They are engaged with COP on a whole range of topics, but especially on green skills and jobs. At COP itself, there will be events in the green zone with the UK government, and one event they are leading on is looking at green career pathways across different sectors (9.30-10.30am Nov 7th). The Scottish Government are also running 3 events on green skills, on 2nd, 5th and 8th November. This is a key part of the just transition, with sectors having to change rapidly and new skill sets being required. For Scotland, the oil and gas sector is a real test bed for that transition. Some of the activities they're involved in, especially around US-Scotland relationships:

- In Scotland we have the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan. He is part of the implementation strategy group, working with industry bodies, businesses and education providers, looking at how we can get ahead on the skills base
- We also have a UK Government Green Jobs Taskforce, which the University of Edinburgh has fed into

The US is facing similar challenges on the green recovery and how to ensure a just transition – this is an area where DR would love to be having conversations with US colleagues on good practice, the approaches we're taking, and how we can make the most of the opportunities around job creation, etc. DR asks that those on the call share their insights for CESAP (Scotland) and CCC work on green skills and jobs (UK), as this area will hopefully be a major legacy of COP26.

SH has already touched on COP, but also wants to discuss the wider trade missions programme: 2 and ½ years ago, Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC) agreed with the Scottish Government to deliver trade missions globally, in order to align with the Trading Nation project and increase Scotland's exports. They have now delivered 50 inward and outward missions, and whilst the current programme ends in 2023, a new programme will then begin. The missions focus on B2B meetings to encourage contracts and opportunities to do business. They are multi-sector missions and primarily focus on smaller businesses who are looking to export for the first time. They focus on the 15 target destinations identified by Scottish Government, and the USA is top of that list. 20% of their missions have been to various US states. Over the last 18 months they have switched to virtual missions, and this has been hugely successful, with no drop off at all in success rates. They intend to return to physical visits when possible, but will be moving to a new model that retains some virtual elements. The next mission is to Boston in March 2022. If you want more information on these missions, get in touch or visit their portal.

AH – the Scottish North American Business Council (SNABC) has so far this year worked with trade missions to Virginia, North Carolina, and Chicago, and next year will be working in Canada. Recruitment for the Boston mission is underway already and they are welcoming applications for this. Virtual missions allow companies to prospect for potential customers and connections at virtually no cost. They are looking forward to restrictions on flights being lifted in November. AH highlights the SNABC LinkedIn page, which has information on their continuing activities, including their upcoming Doing Business Webinar on 18th November 2-5 pm.

IH – virtual trade missions have been really effective; SCC and others have done a really amazing job at creating relationships and growing networks online. It has given people in the US a deeper understanding of the innovation and entrepreneurship that

exists in Scotland. One strength of the SBN is that they have capacity on the group, with ambassadors in key locations around the US, as well as the rest of North America, and this will continue to grow. They will work with a variety of partners and entities to increase collaboration and cooperation. COP is a vehicle for discussion around climate change, but it must create real action – the action is what will be remembered. The networks that we have here will help create that action, through cooperation and collaboration. IH is travelling to the UK for about 5 and ½ weeks starting on 18th October, and he is happy to meet people in-person to continue the conversation.

DL MSP – agrees that COP is not just an event, but is about delivering on whatever is agreed. Bringing that home to individuals, consumers and businesses, is vital, and core messaging and public awareness will be essential for the required behavioural change. That is something they are looking at in the Scottish Parliament and in the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

RD provides an update – they are expecting a large number of visitors from the US, and have been receiving enquiries from various different nation states. If you have any events planned, particularly physical events, share the details with Russell and they will list them free of charge on the Scottish International Week website and direct international delegations to that information. RD also highlights that one of their ambassadors took part in an event recently at the Futures Institute, which looked at a possible scenario set 10 years from now, where there could be 1 billion refugees fleeing from climate change. The event looked at where these refugees could go, and some of the top destinations for capacity and a safe environment were Canada, Siberia, and the West coast of Scotland. RD also gives an update on trade – we now have the Department for International Trade with some offices in Scotland, and are seeing huge amounts of support coming out of these for Scottish companies, particularly those doing business in the US.

DL MSP provides the offer that if anyone thinks it would be helpful to meet some of the members of the Net Zero committee at parliament, he would be happy to look into that, subject to restriction in the building etc.

Scott Johnson (SJ) highlights that around COP they have an environment special interest group meeting next week, to explore how they can maximise what they're doing in life sciences around the environment and how they can capitalise on COP26. He will share any relevant outcomes from this with the group. He also highlights that there are some regulatory opportunities coming up post-Brexit, and he would be keen to get US members involved in how we can better align life sciences regulations with the US, which is the primary market for this sector.

Jamie Cooke (JC) raises that there is a lot happening at the RSA with a number of partners, particularly the US. They will make sure that information is available, but if anyone would like to find out more they can contact him.

AH comments that one of the challenges with COP is providing the connections to organisations who are involved to get the message out, is there a way that parliament could help facilitate greater exchange of information between participants? He also raises the risk that some city centre venues in Glasgow may be disrupted by protests,

and so event organisers may wish to consider alternative venues outside the city centre in case they're needed.

A number of attendees suggest alternative venues or offer to help find venues: Emma Harper MSP (EH MSP) highlights a venue in Dumfries called Easterbrook Hall; RD comments that they have a number of venues available in Glasgow but outside the city centre, so reach out to him for help on that; JC suggests the Savings Bank on Bridge Street as another potential city centre venue. If anyone has any challenges on venue space, they can also get in touch with JP.

JH follows up on SH's comments on their trade missions being multi-sectoral, and asks what the areas with the biggest potential are?

SH answers that their missions cover a multitude of sectors, but that they are increasingly focusing on the shift to the green economy. For the next mission there will be a focus on chemical manufacturing, product manufacturing, food processing, and computers and electronics. He can potentially share information on previous participants if anyone is interested. There will be a future focus on renewables going forward.

AH highlights Scotland has a real strength in technology and software, especially in the climate change space, as well as in education and technology. They do still also have strengths in the food and drink sector which aren't going away.

IH points to the space sector in Scotland as an important sector with real potential to grow. He points to the connection between the space sector and COP, in that having the technology to be able to go to space and explore that, will hopefully allow us to expand that technology into something that can be applied to climate change. The private space sector needs to think about what this technology might result in and how we can use it to better understand the climate around us. He highlights that one advantage of having so many sectors brought in to COP26 is that it allows us to tell the story of the innovation, research, etc., that is going on around Scotland, and for us to look at how we can bring these together to tackle climate change.

RD reminds the group that that the Scottish Space Sector will be profiled at the Dubai Expo this month – more information [here](#).

JC agrees that the space industry is a huge opportunity for Scotland and highlights that there are some initial conversations underway with partners in the US about possible linked makerspace project for communities in the West of Scotland and Pennsylvania.

AH ECC highlights that Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce are working in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council on showcasing activity around COP26, and as part of this they have launched a new [Edinburgh Net Zero website](#) to support businesses, residents and visitors in the run up to COP. This website offers a central point of information on Edinburgh's Net Zero ambitions, featuring case studies, blogs, resources and sustainability guides, as well as promoting events linked to COP26. There is an opportunity there for anyone to feed in their events around COP26 and have those featured on the website. If you have any content you feel would be suitable

for the website, you can send it on to her colleague Emma (emma.reid@edinburghchamber.co.uk) who can review and arrange to have this uploaded.

DL MSP thanks contributors for an excellent session, and there is a lot to follow up on in terms of events and bringing connections together. He reiterates his offer to help with looking into events or bi-lateral meetings at Parliament, or meetings with the Net Zero committee if anyone is interested.

4. Dean Lockhart to handover to Jack Hillmeyer and Michael Feldman for final remarks

MF comments that COP26 is going to be a behemoth event with so many delegates from so many different countries, and at the consulate they see their role as helping to facilitate connections, help people plug into delegations etc. – if anyone would like help with navigating the delegations and making those ties, get in touch.

JH reflects that the benefit of meetings like this is making connections, and it is important for them to get input on things like the areas that are right for growth. He reflects on the short, medium and long term, that in the short term it's great to meet everybody, and they may reach out to some people to set up appointments. In the medium term the focus is COP26, and the London Embassy are doing a huge amount of work on this too. In the long term, it's great to be here and to develop these connections. They will both be here for the next 3 years, and the future looks very bright and very green. One of the things they're trying to do in their own home at the Consulate is make the building much greener and more energy efficient and demonstrate at the personal and business sector level their commitment to sustainability. He finishes by thanking everyone for joining the call, and thanking DL MSP for organising.

5. Dean Lockhart to provide closing remarks

DL MSP closes by thanking the US Consulate for taking part and commenting that this group has always been about networks, collaboration, and actions, and this meeting has been fantastic for that. He wishes all good luck with the lead-up to COP26.