

MEETING NOTE

The Cross Party Group on Germany

Tuesday 17th September

5:30-7:00 pm

COMMITTEE ROOM 6

Next Meeting Date [AGM]

Tuesday, 26th November 2013

5:30-7:00 pm

Meeting Room Q1.03

Attendees

Maureen Watt MSP
James Trolland
Petra Wend
Manuela Calchini
Annette Götzkes
Stefan Büttner
Colin Beattie MSP
David Torrance MSP
George Archibald
David Hogg
Graeme Henderson

Colin Beattie MSP welcomed everyone and asked for apologies. Stefan Büttner stated that the German, Swiss and Austrian consulates send their apologies.

Colin Beattie noted the loss of David McLetchie MSP. Mr McLetchie was a strong supporter of the work of the CPG and his passing is a sad occasion.

Approval of previous minutes

Page 2 – In the final paragraph '40 watts' should be changed to '40 megawatts'.

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Subject to the corrections made, the minutes were approved.

Action points

Colin Beattie noted that he had written to Fergus Ewing, the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism, regarding the potential for hydro pumped storage in Scotland. A copy of the response was given to the group. Colin felt the response was interesting but doesn't take us a long way forward, though it does emphasise the importance of hydro power.

Economic Update

Colin Beattie said that on Friday 13th September he had spoken at conference of German industrialists in Edinburgh. Germany is the third biggest inward investor in Scotland but the industrialists knew very little about Scotland, including referendum, pensions etc. He was surprised that the German Consulate wasn't involved as around 80 people were there, and it's difficult to talk more about the economic stuff without the Consulate being there.

Political Update

Stefan Büttner gave a personal update on the political situation in Germany. On Sunday 15th September there had been a state election in Bavaria where the Christian Socialist Union won back the overall majority. The Greens, surprisingly, lost. On Sunday 22nd September the state election in Hesse was due to be held.

Colin Beattie asked if the state elections would be any indication of how the Federal elections would go. Stefan Büttner replied in his view they would be to some extent. Annette Götzkes said that she thought the Bavaria result may not be a real indicator of the General Election. Colin Beattie noted that the Green Party were expected to make advances. Stefan Büttner mentioned that he felt they had been damaged by revelations over their stance on paedophilia in previous decades, and also their intention to increase the top level of taxation. Manuela Calchini said that the Green Party have failed to capitalise on the fact that a lot of their policies from the 70s and 80s are mainstream now.

Stefan Büttner said that the current coalition have a 1% lead in the opinion polls, but the other parties together might get that 1% and then we could see a coalition of the left, the Social Democrats and the Greens, even though the leaders of those parties have said they would never work together with the left. The most likely scenario may be a 'grande coalition' between the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats.

Culture Update

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Manuela Calchini said that there is a £25m upgrade coming to Edinburgh Airport, including a new route from Edelweiss Airlines that features a new route to Zurich. The Airport has provided stats saying 480,000 people fly in or directly to a German airport, so she had been advised by the Airport to say 240,000 fly in to Scotland. They could not give us a breakdown of nationality. On 10th October the new International Passenger Survey (IPS) numbers will be issued. **ACTION POINT - MANUELA CALCHINI TO FORWARD THESE NUMBERS TO GRAEME HENDERSON.**

Manuela Calchini extended an invitation to the CPG to a Parliamentary Reception on 13th November, jointly sponsored by Minister for Tourism Fergus Ewing & the Presiding Officer. The Reception will focus on 'Homecoming', including the Ryder Cup and the Commonwealth Games.

Petra Wend mentioned Mike Russell's recent announcement of a financial package to aid students who study abroad in the countries Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany. One University in each country was identified. Colin Beattie said that this was a start, and then mentioned Universities Scotland's report, 'Richer For It' (included as part of the agenda), which suggests that the outlook from Scottish undergraduates is very positive and hopefully an indication that student attitudes are moving in the right direction as we don't have a very good record of students going overseas.

Annette Götzkes said that, thanks to Stefan Büttner's contacts, the University of Edinburgh had sponsored a fact-finding trip to the University of Tübingen to find out about the new European framework to standardise the levels of their open language courses. The process at the University of Edinburgh is now finished so people can go up to level A2 of the European Framework and then go into first year at university. Claudia Duttlinger, Head of the Language Centre ('Fachsprachenzentrum', FSZ) of the University of Tübingen, will be coming to Edinburgh on 28th November to speak at the University about the European framework. She will also discuss a programme relating to mobility of staff, so colleagues can go to Tübingen to compare planning lessons and organising syllabuses. Stefan Büttner commented that for their upcoming class 'Turning the Air Blue - A Green Language Course', Tübingen's Language Centre's English language section has, as a consequence, arranged for a number of Scottish experts to join the class via video-link to give a talk, so they are now linked up with Robin Harper, the Environment manager of Edinburgh University, Stefan Büttner* and David Hogg* [*arranged additionally as a consequence of this CPG meeting].

Stefan Büttner said that he had been at a meeting with the Parliament's learning officer to see if there would be interest in lunchtime language learning. In theory this

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could be paid for from gross salaries, or, if related to work duties through MSPs training provision. Colin Beattie asked who would do the tuition. Stefan Büttner said that they haven't got to that stage yet and are just gauging interest. Colin Beattie asked how this was being taken forward. Stefan Büttner said he was awaiting a response from the Head of the Learning Dept (hopefully by 27/9/13). Ideally he'd like to do a brief survey of Parliament staff over their language skills then see if there would be demand.

Stefan Büttner mentioned that on 11th October the Goethe Institute in Glasgow is celebrating its 40th Anniversary, and that at the end of September Oktoberfest will be taking place in Princes Street Gardens.

PRESENTATION

Colin Beattie handed over to George Archibald and David Hogg. George Archibald thanked the CPG for the invitation to give a presentation on the Bright Green Hydrogen in Methil, and invited the CPG to visit the site in the future. The facility has its own wind turbine and is a new, interesting way to store energy in the form of hydrogen. George Archibald explained that he runs a business partnership of which Bright Green Hydrogen is a part, and then introduces a video giving an introduction to the project in Methil.

George Archibald handed over to David Hogg, the technical manager, to give a presentation on the work of Bright Green Hydrogen. Colin Beattie asked if the energy produced is only for electricity, not heating. David Hogg replied at the moment yes, but they would like to be able to change this in future. James Trolland asked if the solar panels absorb and feed into the energy system or is it only hydrogen, and if the building is like the eco-island on the Isle of Wight. David Hogg states the building has more of a dumb-smart grid. It's not quite like the eco-island which responds to what everyone on the island is doing. The Methil building just looks at what the turbines are doing and responds to that. James Trolland asked if that means it's a single item rather than a multi-item. David Hogg replied yes. The project was built so that it can be expanded. They are looking at compressed air energy storage methods as well, and making it a complete rounded system so it's not just focussed on the hydrogen system.

Colin Beattie asked if the 50% efficiency of the electrolyser is good. David Hogg replied most people would say no from an energy storage point of view but there are pros and cons to all of the methods of energy storage. If they could tie it in to their heating system they could get 80% efficiency. Without an external heat source the best you can get will be around 50-60%. However you do get very pure hydrogen - 99.995% pure. Colin Beattie asked why that is good. David Hogg stated you don't

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want impurities in your hydrogen stream when putting it through a fuel cell or a boiler.

James Trolland asked if the electrolyser is the most efficient on the market. David Hogg said it is not particularly high-end, probably due to funding. James Trolland asked what r&d is happening in Scottish universities. David Hogg replied St Andrews has probably the best solid-oxide fuel cell and electrolyser department in the world. James Trolland asked at what point do companies like Bright Green Hydrogen become partners with r&d departments. David Hogg says there are a few companies in the UK who have that kind of intellectual capital, though none are in Scotland. St Andrews University created a company called St Andrews Fuel Cells, but because of the state of the market at the time the company was created it no longer exists. They have gone back to pure R&D as opposed to producing a commercial product. Bright Green Hydrogen has a test centre as part of the Methil facility that could/should be used for Scottish/British fuel cell electrolyser developers who want to test their kit and that's where we facilitate them going to market. Bright Green Hydrogen has also worked with IECHP in Bellshill. George Archibald noted that the facility is the first of its kind and the hydrogen revolution is yet to dawn. The Methil plant was designed so they could improve it as they go along. They can identify how to improve the facility but it's a case of finding the funding.

Colin Beattie asked how big is the hydrogen market in the UK, and if it's so efficient, economical and effective, why it isn't being used everywhere. David Hogg replied that it is not economical at present. It would cost about 11p to put a unit of energy through the system. The commercial rate would work out at 22p worse than just buying from the grid. George Archibald stated that it's not done for this purpose. Stefan Büttner asked if they've ever run out of space to store hydrogen. David Hogg said yes, all the time; the surplus is exported to the grid.

Maureen Watt asked how much interaction they'd had with Aberdeen where they're looking at developing hydrogen buses. David Hogg replied that they work with them as part of the HyTrEc programme at Gateshead College but are not involved in the bus project. They are involved with Dr Mark Smith who is the 'grandfather' of the project. He came up with the 'Highlander' idea - the idea of having hydrogen refuelling stations in all of Scotland's major cities. Aberdeen took that idea. Further interest has come from Dundee who have visited the Methil facility. Maureen Watt asked how much the system can be scaled up. David Hogg replied that the system itself is modular though storage is different; you would either need a bigger tank or a compressor with lots of smaller tanks. Maureen Watt asked if that meant volume of storage is a more important factor than length of time of storage. David Hogg said yes, they can only store two weeks' worth as that's the size of their tank but if they had a bigger tank they could store more than that.

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Manuela Calchini asked how many wind turbines would be needed to feed the Plant's future plans. David Hogg replied that they have one running at around 750kW, the maximum demand of all the buildings in their business park is around 150kW. If you can balance out the peaks and troughs using energy storage you could run that 150 constantly and only have to rely on the grid in extreme circumstances. George Archibald stated that with this system you don't have to worry about the wind not blowing.

David Hogg noted that at present we're selling energy cheaper than we're getting it back. Even if there's an efficiency hit in storing the energy we are still spending less than if we sell and buy it back. Colin Beattie asked if it's a question where there has to be a certain scale to make it economic. David Hogg replied that at the moment their system is largely uneconomic. It wasn't designed and integrated perhaps as well as it should have been. It would be more economical if it was combined heat/power which theoretically could be done. Colin Beattie asked what that would do to the economics. David Hogg replied you could make the efficiency three times better. Colin Beattie asked why then doesn't every university, for example, have one. George Archibald replied that it's in its infancy. Hydrogen is not used a whole lot at all.

David Torrance stated the whole area is well worth visiting and a lot of money has been spent on infrastructure. Stefan Büttner asked how much it would cost to replace the existing unit that doesn't include heat with one that does. David Hogg replied that they probably wouldn't want to do that because if they were going to replace the technology that's there they would replace it with something bigger and better to take the whole park offgrid. That would probably cost around £200,000.

Colin Beattie thanked David Hogg and George Archibald and hoped the CPG would be able to visit the facility at some point.

END OF PRESENTATION

Stefan Büttner mentioned inviting the organisers of the Edinburgh Oktoberfest to a future CPG meeting. **ACTION POINT – GRAEME HENDERSON TO INVITE THE EDINBURGH OKTOBERFEST ORGANISERS TO A FUTURE MEETING.**

Colin Beattie thanked everyone for coming and stated that the next meeting, the AGM, would be on 26th November.

END OF MEETING

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