

**Meeting of Cross-Party Group on Industrial Communities in the Scottish Parliament
Wednesday 23 January 2013 at 5.15pm, Committee Room 6, Scottish Parliament**

Attending Councillors	Attending Officers		Attending MSPs
Abidah Farrah William Menzies Derek Rosie Andrew Wood	John Beveridge Anne Houston Malcolm Leitch	Robert McGill David Parry Ian Smith	Colin Beattie Neil Bibby Helen Eadie Mark Griffin Adam Ingram

Apologies	
Linda Aird Councillor Marie Burns Carol Coull Pauline Douglas Jacqui Leslie John Mason MSP	Councillor J McMillan Elaine Murray MSP Councillor Irene Oldfather Councillor D Reid Councillor Bob Young

1. Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy – Presentation by Angela Constance, Minister for Youth Employment

Helen Eadie welcomed the Minister to the meeting and thanked her for taking time out of her busy schedule. The Minister acknowledged that many members around the table would be familiar with the issues of youth employment which were closely linked to the Scottish economy. She highlighted that there was a need to ensure that young people were at the heart of every decision and that she was talking about our young people where we had a moral responsibility to help. However, she highlighted the recent labour market statistics and indicated that there was good news for the second month in a row with 23,000 young people unemployed less than at this time last year, which was the lowest rate for 18 months. However, she also acknowledged that those figures highlighted the protracted difficulties in tackling this issue. However, she also indicated that the unemployment rate of 19.9% which meant 82,000 young people between 18 and 24 were out of work was far too high. She also highlighted that statistics didn't tell the full story, for example, when that figure is broken down, it shows that young men are still more unemployed than young women, but the gap is narrowing.

The Minister also highlighted that there were a number of structural issues that she needed to be addressed through Curriculum for Excellence, career support, etc. She also mentioned that, on a recent learning visit to Brussels and The Hague, she discovered that vocational training programmes were much more embedded in other European countries.

The Minister also announced the Commission for Young People which has been recently established by the Parliament and will report back in the second quarter of 2014. The

Commission has been established to really understand the issues affecting young people and to develop a long-term strategy. Some of the changes she would like to see are the encouragement of more modern apprenticeships in the private and public sector, and enhanced offerings to young people with regard to modern apprenticeships, Community Jobs Scotland, and an additional £800,000 had been made available for this. In addition, the Scottish Government has established Skills Force, which is a one-stop web facility for employers.

Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy – Presentation by Angela Constance, Minister for Youth Employment (continued)

In addition, the Scottish Government has established Skills Force, which is a one-stop web facility for employers.

The Minister then went on to welcome the ICA Briefing on Job Creation and agreed with many of the comments with regard to the Future Jobs Fund and other issues contained within the briefing. The Minister also went on to highlight new information with regard to analysis of Community Jobs Scotland which has been providing meaningful work experience for over 1400 young people over 2012-13. In addition, an employer's recruitment incentive will be launched in April which will provide a 50% wage subsidy for 18-24 year olds and which will be targeted at SMEs.

Other key activities the Scottish Government would be promoting this year included "Make Young People Your Business" – this is a programme where it is important to argue the business case for employing young people. The second activity is the "European Youth Guarantee" – which will guarantee under-25s a job, education or training within four months of being unemployed. Helen Eadie thanked the Minister for her presentation and welcomed the questions for the group.

Councillor Menzies highlighted the fact that 19.9% for youth unemployment was a global figure and that in some communities this figure would be a lot higher, particularly former industrial communities who were still suffering from the effects of the last two recessions. He also highlighted that fact that coalfields in Ayrshire were still a significant employer in the communities. He asked the Minister how the Scottish Government could use other funding opportunities to maximise local opportunities. The Minister responded by recognising that indeed there were pockets where youth unemployment was indeed higher and that this was unacceptable. In addition, she acknowledged that the Scottish Government needed to find ways of encouraging people to spend money locally, especially in the light of recent welfare reforms

Neil Bibby MSP also raised the issue of targeting and asked whether the Scottish Government were going to target increased funds at local authorities with higher unemployment rates. Andrew Wood followed this up with a question on displacement of jobs through modern apprenticeships and highlighted the fact that the private sector were not yet in his area able to fully participate in modern apprenticeships which was disappointing. The Minister responded by highlighting the fact that there were indeed skills shortages in certain industries, for example, oil and gas and in IT. She also reaffirmed her concerns that in some areas youth unemployment could be nearer 30% and that there were some deep-seated structural issues which required to be addressed. She also acknowledged that there should be a role for local authorities in supporting young people through initiatives like employer incentives. Councillor Menzies responded with a concern that there was an assumption that there were a significant number of local employers, and indeed this was not always the case in former industrial communities which the Minister acknowledged and agreed that job creation and the creation of sustainable jobs had to be a priority for the Scottish Government. In particular, the Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government didn't want to see people on a revolving door through short-term job

placements. The Scottish Government has made a commitment that they will support 25,000 modern apprenticeships every year during the life of the parliament.

Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy – Presentation by Angela Constance, Minister for Youth Employment (continued)

Ian Smith also highlighted the issue of transport and, in particular, the fact that jobs were often available for people who were willing to travel but local transport infrastructure was not sufficient to get people there. Again, the Minister agreed that this was an issue that needed to be addressed. Finally, Helen Eadie thanked the Minister for her time and requested the possibility of further discussions with members of the Cross Party Group, which the Minister was happy to agree to. Anne Houston agreed to follow this up with the Minister's staff over the next few weeks.

1. Attendance and Apologies

(see page 1)

2. CPG Annual Report

a) Re-election of Office Bearers

Helen Eadie was re-elected Convenor of the Cross Party Group by Councillor Menzies and seconded by Neil Bibby MSP. Colin Beattie was nominated as the Vice Convenor for the Cross Party Group by Councillor Derek Rosie and seconded by Bobby McGill.

b) Discussion and Agreement of Cross Party Group Annual Report

Helen Eadie invited comments on the Annual Report which had been provided and needs to be submitted to the Scottish Parliamentary Standards Group shortly after the meeting. The Group confirmed that the Annual Report was an accurate reflection of the activities that had taken place in the previous 12 months.

3. Note of Cross Party Group Meeting, 3 October 2012

a) Mentoring Event Update

Anne Houston gave an update on the Mentoring Event in the absence of Pauline Douglas. A date has not yet been set for this event, but the support of the Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Cranfield Trust has been secured. Anne confirmed that she would inform people as soon as further details were available. Ian Smith also confirmed that the Coalfield Regeneration Trust had provided local support in his community and should they wish to do so again he would make premises available to them. Adam Ingram also highlighted that he had met with Margaret Burgess with regard to thinking about the capacity of organisations to apply effectively for funding. He suggested that it might be worthwhile having a network of local organisations that could deliver local support on an ongoing basis, particularly targeting those areas in most need. Councillor Menzies acknowledged that industrial communities continued to miss the small grants available through the Coalfield Regeneration Trust and hoped that further positive developments would arise with regard to CRT funding. Helen Eadie reported on a recent Cross Party Group discussion with the Deputy First Minister with regard to funding for the CRT which was looking favourable. Ian Smith highlighted the fact that a small CRT grant established Coalfields Community Transport which now employs 15 people. Adam Ingram also raised the issue of support being required across south-west Scotland and not necessarily just in coalfield communities, and suggested that continued lobbying should take place over the issue of putting a disproportionate amount of funds into some of these more disadvantaged areas.

4. Note of Cross Party Group Meeting, 3 October 2012

b) Follow up with Other Lottery Organisations

Anne informed the meeting that a meeting with the Heritage Lottery Chief Executive would take place in the Scottish Parliament on 5 February 2013 at 3pm, and that members were welcome to attend. She also highlighted the fact that the ICA UK Secretariat have commissioned a statistician to look into researching lottery spend based on information received from Big Lottery UK. Neil Bibby highlighted that the Education and Culture Committee had received information from Creative Scotland on funding which, again, highlighted that there were disparities across Scotland's more disadvantaged communities. Andrew Wood also recognised that the issue of disparity of funding was not just across deprived communities but also was affecting communities with very small populations.

5. The Ten Point Plan

Helen Eadie welcomed the document which members had discussed previously in some detail. She agreed that this would be a document that the Cross Party Group would revisit on a regular basis and that indeed a number of the issues within it were currently live, including State Aids, European funds and job creation. Helen Eadie also indicated that she had asked John Swinney to look at other European funding opportunities which are currently not being accessed by Scotland.

6. Report on Meeting with Nicola Sturgeon – Deputy First Minister, 29 October 2012

Helen Eadie indicated that Nicola Sturgeon had provided an updated letter on State Aids following this meeting and wants to continue to work with the ICA in lobbying on the State Aids issue. Dave Parry from the ICA UK Secretariat informed the group of the significant lobbying that had been taking place by members against the European Commission proposals, but also highlighted that the latest draft proposals have not changed. A consultation has been opened until 11 March 2013, which means that we have almost two months at most to exert influence on the Commission. Labour MEPs have asked for a meeting with Commissioner Almenia, but there has been no reply as yet. Helen Eadie also confirmed that she had put a motion to Parliament on this issue and had highlighted it with all MSPs suggesting that they express their concerns to the European Commission. Malcolm Leitch welcomed the input from local authorities and MSPs on the issue and did confirm that the European Commission were well aware of the disquiet in the UK with regard to the draft proposals. He also highlighted that the Scottish Government were offering a briefing to local authority officers on 8 February 2013. Finally, Adam Ingram MSP confirmed he would like to join the Cross Party Group on Industrial Communities and Anne Houston agreed to arrange a briefing meeting with him.

7. Update on State Aids Debate and ICA Lobbying Activities

8. Update on Future European Structural Funds Programmes

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Cross Party Group Meeting will now be Wednesday 29 May 2013, and not Wednesday 15 May as originally indicated on the agenda.

