

Minutes

Cross Party Group on Poland Meeting

2nd June 2015, Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 3

Attendees: Jean Urquhart MSP, Anne McTaggart MSP, Raymond Roszkowski-Ross, Robert L. Hodgart, John Bates, Simon Daley, Michael Borland, Antony Kozłowski, Andrew Roach, Jenny Carr, Rachel Blair, Krystyna Szumelukowa, Simon Thompson, Elwira Grossman, Karin Friedrich, Izabella Brodzińska, Tomek Borkowy, Sylwia Kiro Żabińska-MacIntyre, Katarzyna Jajszczok, Joanna Kieran, Zosia Wierzbowicz-Fraser, Sylwia Spooner, Dobrawa Jezior.

Apologies received from: Elaine Smith MSP, Czesław Kruk, David Worthington, Martin Stepek, Violeta Ilendo, Lucyna Bednarek Elliot, George Rubiński, Aileen Orr, Pat Glacken, Paulina Trevena, Maciej Wiczyński, Monika Ciska, Donald Blair, Joanna Zawadzka, Anna Ruszel, Magda Czarnecka, Anna Martowicz.

1. Welcome and Apologies.

Jean welcomed everyone and congratulated Zosia Wierzbowicz-Fraser on receiving “The Outstanding Pole in Scotland” award.

2. Subcommittees reports (as applicable)

- Education sub group

Zosia Wierzbowicz-Fraser presented an agenda item which was circulated among the CPG on Poland members before the meeting (see the attachment).

a) The Education group proposed that an open discussion be held on the subject of the “Polish Language in Scotland” which would bring more parties together and allow for wider consultation. They feel that a possible union of Polish associations and schools in Scotland may provide a broader understanding of the difficulties faced by migrant families, with respect to maintaining national identity through the Polish language, culture and traditions.

It was noted that the group members have not heard from Dr Alasdair Allan yet, even though Jean has written to him twice. Jean to write to A. Allan once more in order to get some sort of reply.

b) Following Zosia’s recent visit to Warsaw and discussions with Directors of the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the group feels they may develop closer links with these institutions and gain support for their endeavours in introducing Polish into the Scottish Education system.

c) The group also suggested an open meeting for Polish families and all interested bi-lingual parties to be held in the Parliament.

Main points discussed regarding the meeting:

Families with children and Heads of Polish Saturday schools to be invited; Scottish pupils to be included as well.

Wojtek the Bear teaching materials to be used at the event if possible.

Ministers to be invited and a strong message about the connection of languages and cultural identity to be conveyed.

Video conference of the event was suggested (Jean - may not be possible).

Karin Friedrich to work with the Education group and help with SUII funding.

Karin also suggested that the Education group remind Angela Constance re the GTC and SQA position.

Elwira Grossman to help with outside funding and to consider including Prof. Rebecca Kay's project.

The Education group to agree on a date for the meeting.

- Support sub group

Simon Daley informed the group that Police Scotland is planning to publish an article on Emito.net around subject matter of social work and domestic abuse. CPG on Poland members welcome to contribute their ideas.

An update on ongoing activities of the Support group was given by Sylwia Kiro Żabińska-MacIntyre:

1) Polish psychologists network - their work includes cooperation with Edinburgh Women's Aid (focusing on cases of domestic violence) and Edinburgh Court Service.

2) Feniks's project *Look Around – See Me* – centred around mental health issues and aims to end Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination in Scotland. The project also includes training Community Champions. So far two workshops involving Community Champions had taken place. The workshops tackled topics such as mental health discrimination and suicide prevention.

3) Community *Conversation Cafe* – a project run by Feniks for Poles and other minority groups. It is a community development project which aims to encourage cultural bridging in Leith as well as improving the wellbeing of those involved. The *Conversation Cafe* will be open, drop-in groups based in local community cafes, that welcome anyone to join in on respectful and friendly discussions of topics that matter to them.

4) Fundraising ceilidh - this Feniks and ceilidh collective event is fundraising for community champions from *Look Around – See Me* project. It will take place on 19 September.

5) Process walk – Kiro's project designed to develop self-esteem and to help reconnect with nature. It is a nourishing walk in a spectacular area during which participants can do something for themselves using Process Work (Process Oriented Psychology) tools. It is an idea for personal development enhanced by joy of being in touch with nature and outdoors.

6) Polish Professionals Forum's mentoring project - pro bono clinic (more information to follow).

- Culture sub group

John Bates informed the group about Polish films that will be shown at Glasgow Film Theatre as part of the *Martin Scorsese presents: Masterpieces of Polish Cinema* project. It features films selected by Scorsese that he considers to have been the most inspirational and influential on his craft. The titles screening at GFT are *Eroica*, *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Night Train*, *The Saragossa Manuscript*, and *A Short Film About Killing*.

Jean reminded the group that everyone is welcome to distribute information about upcoming cultural events.

Raymond Roszkowski-Ross and Tomek Borkowy announced two Wojtek shows presented at Fringe Festival this year: Theatre Objektiv's *Wojtek the Bear* and *Wojtek: The Happy Warrior* by The Quarter Too Ensemble.

- **Business sub group:** there was no update from the Business group.

3. In relation to the recent general elections Jean highlighted David Cameron's announcement regarding voting conditions for the EU Referendum and their implications for Poles and other EU citizens living in the UK who will not be allowed to vote.

The main points of a discussion on the EU Referendum that followed:

- It was agreed that the CPG should do something publicly about the PM's announcement.
- Several members of the group pointed out that by paying taxes Poles and other EU citizens living in the UK should have voting rights. Joanna Kieran suggested that perhaps permanent residency should be considered a condition for voting.
- Simon Thompson proposed lobbying MPs interested in Polish affairs.
- Krystyna Szumelukowa pointed out that Poles and other EU citizens were eligible to vote in 2014 European elections but are now not allowed to decide whether the UK would stay in the European Union.
- It was also suggested that the CPG on Poland should cooperate on this matter with other groups representing other European states.

A letter to the Prime Minister regarding voting conditions to be composed by the CPG on Poland members and send out by Jean's office in due course.

4. Fundraising – Wojtek statue

Simon Thompson and Krystyna Szumelukowa from the Wojtek Memorial Trust updated the group on Wojtek project. It was announced that the unveiling of Wojtek's statue will take place on Saturday 7th November 2015. More than 500 individuals and organisations have helped raise nearly £300,000 since their ongoing fundraising campaign was launched in September 2013.

Ms Szumelukowa presented the Wojtek Memorial Trust tartan, with the Scottish Register of Tartans. "The colours of the Polish flag and the Scottish flag sit together in the design to represent the special relationship between Scotland and Poland. The two shades of green correspond to the country hues of the Scottish Borders and also remind us of the green in the Leslie tartan trews which were worn by the Kings Own Scottish Borderers Regiment." More information can be found on the website: <http://www.wojtekmemorialtrust.com/wojtek-tartan/>.

The question was raised whether the unveiling of Wojtek statue could be connected to the meeting at the Scottish Parliament planned by the Education subcommittee. The group was informed that the Wojtek Memorial Trust will not be able to coordinate other events as they have to concentrate on the unveiling, however, other accompanying events are taking place.

The group was also informed that due to restricted space only a limited number of guests will be able to participate in a ceremony held at St Cuthbert's Church.

5. AOB

Robert L. Hodgart presented his academic paper "Scotland's Sustained Autonomy and Continuing Constitutional Journey".

Date of the next meeting: 29th September 2015 6.00 pm.