

minutes

Meeting: Cross Party Group on Scotch Whisky
Location: Mary Fairfax Somerville, Committee Room 4 Scottish Parliament

Date Held: Tuesday 13 September 2016

Present: **MSPs:** Richard Lochhead, Gordon MacDonald, David Stewart, Colin Smyth, Rhoda Grant.

Other attendees: Susy Atkinson (Edrington), Blair Bowman, Campbell Evans (Atholl Crescent Consultants), Annie Hill (Institute of Brewing and Distilling), Kate Fry (Assistant to Rhoda Grant and David Stewart), Jack Gemmell (Chivas), Orchid Lui (Chinese Times), Lauren McArthur (SWA), Beatrice Morrice (SWA), Gerry O'Donnell (Edrington), Tony Reeman-Clark (SCDA), Devin Scobie (Caledonia Consultants), Ian Smith (Diageo), and David Williamson (SWA).

Apologies: Douglas Ross MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP, Fulton McGregor MSP, Andy Rosie (SEPA).

Richard Lochhead MSP chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees.

1. Election of office bearers

Members of the group elected office bearers to the following positions.

Joint Conveners:

- Richard Lochhead MSP
- Douglas Ross MSP

Joint Deputy Conveners:

- Liam McArthur MSP
- Gordon MacDonald MSP
- David Stewart MSP

Secretary

- Beatrice Morrice, Scotch Whisky Association

2. Scotch Whisky Overview

David Williamson (Scotch Whisky Association) provided an overview of the Scotch Whisky industry and the work of the SWA.

He briefed members on current industry performance and investment trends. Major investments are taking place across the sector, for example at the likes of Dalmenach, The Macallan and Mortlach distilleries. At the same time, over 40 new distilleries are planned, mostly new entrants to the sector. He underlined that the Scottish business environment needs to be as competitive, if not more so, than the rest of the UK.

David updated members on the industry's Brexit priorities, setting out some of the challenges and opportunities faced as a result of the

Action

referendum vote. The industry will require as open a trading policy as possible, accompanied by pragmatic, non-disruptive transition arrangements. One priority is to ensure that existing benefits under trade deals are maintained or 'grandfathered'.

David also reported on the industry's commitment to promoting responsible attitudes to alcohol, including through the Scotch Whisky Action Fund. This provides funding to projects across Scotland to try innovative ideas to help tackle alcohol misuse. A Court of Session ruling on minimum unit pricing is expected before the end of 2016.

Members were invited to attend the launch of the SWA's environmental strategy on 21 September 2016 and also to sign up to receive the SWA Newsletter. This is issued quarterly and provides recent news regarding the Scotch Whisky industry.

SWA to circulate newsletter sign up details

Questions and discussion among the group followed the presentation with areas such as the environment, cask movement, and Brexit being covered.

3. Work plan

Beatrice Morrice (SWA) provided a summary of possible areas of interest for future meetings of the group. Members then discussed areas they would like to include on the work plan.

It was agreed that Brexit should be the focus of the next meeting. Other areas that are to be examined at future meetings include:

- Impact of tourism
- New distilleries
- Marketing side of the industry
- Legal protection of Scotch Whisky
- Innovation within the industry and supply chain
- Environmental sustainability, climate change
- Comprehensive look at the market in India.

The possibility of a visit to a Scotch Whisky site was discussed. Members agreed that a visit should be considered.

The secretary of the group will discuss a timetable and set future dates for meetings with the office bearers of the group. Members were encouraged to raise suggestions with either of the Joint Conveners or Beatrice Morrice from the SWA.

SWA, office bearers, & members

4. AOB

Tony Reeman-Clark (SCDA and Strathearn Distillery) informed the group that his first Scotch Whisky will be ready later this year. He offered members the opportunity to visit his distillery in Perthshire.

Gerry O'Donnell, Edrington, invited members to the new Macallan distillery that will be opened in Spring 2017.

Blair Bowman informed the group that the BBC is running a three part

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programme on Scotch Whisky that commences on 11 October 2016.

Dates for future meetings and a work plan will be circulated to members shortly. **SWA**

For more information please contact Beatrice Morrice
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