

minutes

Meeting: Cross Party Group on Scotch Whisky
Location: TG20/21, Scottish Parliament

Date Held: Tuesday 12 September 2017

Present: **MSPs:** Richard Lochhead, Jackie Baillie, Bill Bowman, Murdo Fraser, Rhoda Grant, Jamie Halcro Johnston, Rachael Hamilton, Alison Harris, Tom Mason, Liam McArthur, David Stewart, Colin Smyth.

Other attendees: Rebecca Badger (SEPA), Campbell Evans (Whisky Invest Direct), Peter Finnie (SEPA), Karen Freel (Perspectiva Consultants), James Johnston (Malt Whisky Trail), Fiona Johnstone, (SEPA), Orchid Lui (Chinese Times), Stephanie MacLeod (Dewars), Lauren McArthur (SWA), Beatrice Morrice (SWA), David Ogilvie (SEPA), Edward Rowlandson (office of Rachael Hamilton MSP), David Williamson (SWA) and Alan Wolstenholme (SCDA).

Apologies: Blair Bowman, Devin Scobie and Brian McLeish.

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:

- Murdo Fraser MSP
- Richard Lochhead 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.

He briefed members on current industry performance and investment trends. He stated that major investments continue to take place across the sector (for example at The Macallan) and that there are around 8 new distilleries expected to open this year.

David provided information on the recent SWA survey on tourism that revealed an 8% increase in visitors to 1.7million people in 2016. He also spoke about the export collaboration charter and encouraged attendees to link up local businesses with the Scotch Whisky industry.

Action

AGM form
to be
completed
- Secretary

Information was also provided on the industry's Brexit priorities. He underlined that a future trade deal with the EU, transitional adoption of existing EU trade deal benefits, Geographical Indication protection and efficient customs procedures are all important to the sector.

David also stated that the UK budget is being held on 22 November 2017 and that following the c4% increase in March, the Scotch Whisky industry is campaigning for a reduction from the 80% current level of taxation.

Questions and discussion among the group followed the presentation with areas such as the climate change bill, Brexit and new distilleries being covered. Concern was also raised given the time that it takes to negotiate a trade deal. Rachael Hamilton MSP informed the group that the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee recently met with Michel Barnier, European Chief Negotiator for Brexit, during which the Scotch Whisky industry, and mutual Geographical Indication protection, was raised.

SEPA also underlined that Scotch Whisky has been picked as the first sector deal due to the excellent relationship with the SWA, the Scotch Whisky industry and SEPA. This is a new sectoral approach with the aim to improve the way in which they regulate and result in efficient and effective compliance. James Johnston recommended the Sustainability Leadership Development Programme, sponsored by SEPA, delivered through the collaborative partnership of Stirling University and Cambridge University, that he recently attended.

3. Scotch Whisky tasting

Stephanie MacLeod, Master Blender and Malt Master at Dewars, provided a presentation. She explained the history of the company providing key dates and background. Stephanie discussed how she manages the flavour profile of the companies' products, why 'marrying' of Scotch Whisky is important and wood profiles and how they affect the taste. She informed members of an increase of interest in single cask single malts and how the sensory team guard the quality of the product, underlining also the innovation that is used within the industry.

She stated she was proud that a small country produces a global product and provided insight into the tastings on offer that included Aberfeldy 12 year old, Dewars 18 and a cocktail including Dewars 12.

4. AOB

Dates for future meetings will be circulated to members shortly.

For more information please contact Beatrice Morrice bmorrice@swa.org.uk or call 0131 222 9247.