

Cross-Party Group on India

Friday 30 September 2022, 09.00 – 10.30

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Group members

Pam Gosal MSP
Jenni Minto MSP
Sandesh Gulhane MSP

Non-group members

Sharon Dowey MSP
Alexander Stewart MSP
Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

Minister for Business, Tourism & Enterprise, Ivan McKee MSP
Jonathan Brenton, Head of International Trade, Pernod Ricard
Puneet Dwivedi, Vice President, Hindu Forum of Britain
Professor Moyra Boland, Dean for Global Engagement, University of Glasgow
Professor Pankaj Pankaj, International Dean for South Asia, University of Edinburgh
Dr Poonam Gupta OBE, Vice President of Scottish Chambers of Commerce
Dr Paul Little, CEO & Principal, City of Glasgow College
Alastair McGhee, Director of Business Development, Glasgow Kelvin College
Karthik Subramanya, Creative Scotland
Martin Bell, Deputy Director of Trade, Scotch Whisky Association
Iain Campbell, Provost South Ayrshire Council
Professor Brad MacKay, Vice Principal (International Strategy and External Relations), University of St Andrews
Professor Hari Hundal, University of Dundee
Shipra Kohli, Interfaith Association
Mitul Raj, Business Relationship Manager, TCS Scotland
Bijay Selvaraj, Consul General of India
Janet Archer – Edinburgh Print Makers

Secretariat services provided by Yolande Claes, of PG Paper

Apologies

Paul O' Kane MSP

Murdo Fraser MSP

Sarah Boyack MSP

Katy Clark MSP

Anne Buddle, National Galleries of Scotland

Robert Aldridge, Rt Hon Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh

Professor Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice Chancellor of University of Edinburgh

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor, Pam Gosal MSP, welcomed the group and thanked everyone for their attendance. The Convenor also welcomed the Minister for Business, Tourism & Enterprise, Ivan McKee MSP and thanked him for his attendance.

Apologies were noted.

The Convenor noted that the CPG on India was set up to help strengthen the ties between Scotland and India and that, so far this year, two meetings had been held, one on education and one on culture. The Convenor advised that this meeting would focus on the strong trade links between Scotland and India, and how these may be further improved in the future.

The minutes from the last meeting of the Group held on 24th June 2022 (Culture theme) were approved by Pam Gosal MSP, seconded by Alexander Stewart MSP.

The Convenor thanked PG Paper for providing secretariat services.

2. Update from the Deputy Convenors Jenni Minto MSP

The Deputy Convenors was invited by the Convenor to provide an update and noted that, from her perspective, the three themes of the CPG were inter-connected. Ms Minto advised that she had recently attended the 75 years of India's Independence Celebration Event in Edinburgh, which showed the importance of culture. Ms Minto observed that, in terms of trade, India had a vast, emerging market and that she was looking forward to see how both nations could expand their trade relationship.

The Convenor thanked the Deputy Convenor.

3. Minister for Business, Tourism & Enterprise, Ivan McKee MSP

The Convenor introduced the Minister for Business, Tourism & Enterprise, Ivan McKee MSP.

The Minister congratulated the Convenor for establishing the CPG on India. The Minister advised that export from Scotland to India represented 300 million pounds a year and that whisky export was a big part of that, with a significant growth in the last decade. It was noted that there were also a number of Indian companies in Scotland.

The Minister observed that the India was very central to Scotland's trade and investment plans and strategy and that there were tremendous opportunities to be explored with India, in various sectors such as digital, manufacturing, technology, renewable energy, etc.

The Minister highlighted that India was a vast market and it was important to approach each state as appropriate. The Minister reminded members that a new Scottish research partnership had been launched in 2021, enabling Scottish universities to work in partnership with Indian universities and explore opportunities between the 2 countries, and noted that this could also lead to new trade and investment opportunities.

The Minister observed that FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) were also a good opportunity for Scottish businesses to remove barriers to export while encouraging new talent to come to Scotland.

The Minister thanked the Convenor for the opportunity to engage with the CPG on India.

The Convenor thanked the Minister for his contribution and noted that the CPG on India was important to establish connections. The Convenor invited questions to the Minister.

Professor Pankaj Pankaj queried which state(s) should be focused on. The Minister indicated that some work was still needed to understand the scope of opportunities and what relationships to take further.

Dr Paul Little reminded attendees of the need to recognise the important work done by colleges, and not only universities.

Alastair McGhee noted that Glasgow Kelvin College was already exploring opportunities in India with renewable energy, batteries, etc. and will provide further details to the Minister.

Janet Archer highlighted the important link between business and higher education and added that Printmakers was involved in India in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh, highlighting the opportunities to link culture, trade and education.

Alastair McGhee then highlighted that Glasgow Kelvin College was working closely with Paisley Museum and Renfrewshire Council around the Paisley Pattern and its links with India.

Professor Moyra Boland noted the work done by the University of Glasgow, working with Polo Tyres in India who are sponsoring 2 Indian PhD Students and with Tata Consultancy (3 work streams around Teaching, research and Infrastructure).

The Minister acknowledged and praised all the relationships and opportunities being developed already.

4. Deputy Director of Trade at the Scotch Whisky Association, Martin Bell.

The Convenor introduced the Deputy Director of Trade at the Scotch Whisky Association, Martin Bell.

Mr Bell briefly spoke about the Scotch Whisky Association and noted that whisky was the was the UK's biggest 'food and drink' export and very important to the Scottish and UK economy. Mr Bell added that India was a key market and Scotch Whisky's second

largest export market by volume. Mr Bell added, however, that the Indian whisky market was enormous and that Scotland's share of it only represented 2%.

Mr Bell explained that 80% of the Scotch whisky exported to India was in bulk and bottled in India, and that it was also used as an ingredient in Indian whisky. Mr Bell added that more and more Indian whiskies were sold abroad, including in the UK.

Mr Bell observed that India, as a federal country, was a complex and challenging market (various tax systems in different states). Mr Bell commented that there was still a lot of paper-administration and that, for most Indian states, alcohol excise was their biggest revenue. Mr Bell added that changes in tax structures would be welcome and that, for small Scottish whisky producers in particular, operating in various Indian states was difficult.

Mr Bell noted that there had been some difficult discussions as part of the FTA but was hoping for a successful trade negotiation by the end of 2022 all going well and welcomed the Indian market opening up.

The Convenor thanked Mr Bell for his contribution.

5. Vice President of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Poonam Gupta OBE.

The Convenor introduced the Vice President of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC), Poonam Gupta OBE.

Mrs Gupta spoke about the Scottish Chambers of Commerce engagement with India. She noted that SCC had formally visited India in 2019 and held meetings with a range of bodies including Invest India, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, the Confederation of Indian Industry and Higher Education.

Mrs Gupta highlighted that SCC would be seeking to establish formal Chamber Agreements with the above bodies as appropriate. She added that, for example, SCC already held a general MoU with FICCI and had committed to renewing and re-establishing a specific Chamber-to-Chamber agreement which focuses on inward/outward trade visits and B2B connectivity.

It was noted that SCC had continued to build direct relations at a state-level, with a specific focus on Haryana and that meetings involved the sharing of investment opportunities, knowledge exchange and B2B connections. It was added that SCC would be continuing to build on these relationships into 2023 as pandemic-related restrictions had paused some of these engagements.

Mrs Gupta explained that, in terms of policy engagement, SCC had informed various policy development discussions at Scottish Government and UK Government level and that these had included prioritising engagement with priority markets emerging markets through the Scottish Government's "Trading Nation" report, as well as inputting into the UK Government's Free Trade Agreements consultations.

Finally, Mrs Gupta advised that SCC had direct engagement with the CG India office in Edinburgh and that SCC facilitated enquiries and opportunities from Indian-based businesses, including by providing information and support on investing in Scotland

and the processes associated with it and exchanging knowledge on how Scotland can develop opportunities with India.

The Convenor thanked Mrs Gupta for her contribution.

6. Consul General of India, Bijay Selvaraj.

The Convenor introduced the Honourable Consul General Mr Bijay Selvaraj and congratulated him for a very successful event celebrating the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

The Consul General noted that India had a huge population of 1.3 billion people and that the pattern of the population spread across the country was very varied, with some areas sparsely populated at all. The Consul General urged everyone to travel to India to help understand it better and clear some misconceptions.

The Consul General highlighted that India was a country of great opportunity and great potential, with about 50% of the population being under the age of 30. It was observed that a good, world-class education was important and that the 3 focus themes of the CPG on India were inter-connected. It was added that this was demonstrated by partnerships between Scottish HE and industry and Indian HE and industries.

The Consul general commented that there was room for improvement in terms of trade between Scotland and India and added that important discussions had taken place during COP26 on clean industry and technology, also highlighting how Aberdeen was leading the way on green hydrogen opportunities. The Consul General reminded attendees that India had set a zero-net target for 2070 and a zero-carbon target for 2030.

The Consul General urged all CPG members who wish to develop ideas with India to get in touch with him.

The Consul General thanked the Convenor for inviting him to the meeting and observed that the CPG on India was a great influential group.

The Convenor thanked the Consul General for his contribution.

7. Q&A

There followed a Q&A session, during which the following was raised:

- Professor Pankaj Pankaj noted the lack of interactions between HE and the main industries in terms of green energy and requested some help. The Consul General acknowledged the numerous projects at the University of Edinburgh and advised that he would follow up on this point with Professor Pankaj. Mrs Gupta also offered to connect Professor Pankaj with relevant contacts.
- The Convenor asked how the Scottish Parliament could help. Mr Bell commented that a bilateral roundtable working group prior to any FTA

discussions had been really useful as it had helped discuss challenges on both sides on that specific trade. Mr Bell hoped that a similar structure would re-emerge as Scotland had opportunities to export a lot more to India.

Mrs Gupta commented that many Indian companies were keen to connect with HE institutions in Scotland and that demand was increasing, for example from film production companies or investment companies. However, this can be difficult when dealing with many different Councils in Scotland and many companies then choose to move to England. Mrs Gupta queried how this could be improved so that Scotland does not miss out on opportunities.

The Convenor agreed on the need to ensure appropriate connectivity.

- Puneet Dwivedi observed that Indian students were one of the highest contributors to Scottish economy but highlighted the lack of internship opportunities for them and asked how their talent could be retained in Scotland.

The Convenor agreed and added that the CPG would look into this.

- The Consul General asked what could be done as a group. The need to find relevant entrepreneurs and/ or connections in Scotland to enable students to develop their ideas and projects and implement innovations was noted.

The Consul General suggested to set up sub-groups which would offer the relevant platform on each of the CPG themes.

The Convenor agreed that the connections were needed and thanked the Consul General for his suggestion, which will be discussed further with the CPG's co-Convenors.

Jenni Minto, who also sits on the Scottish Parliament Culture Committee, agreed with the Consul General's suggestion to set up sub-groups and thanked him for a successful event celebrating the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

The Convenor informed members that the next step would hopefully be a trip to India in February 2023, which would include all 3 themes/ sectors.

The Convenor also added that, as part of the Parliamentary process, an AGM of the CPG on India would be held in late October/ early November 2022.

The meeting concluded and the Convenor thanked all for attending the meeting.