

**Minutes of the Cross-Party Group on India Meeting held on Thursday 7th
October 2021**

Sederunt: Pam Gosal MSP - Scottish Conservative (Convenor) (PG)
Jenni Minto MSP – SNP (Co-Vice Convenor) (JM)
Paul O’Kane MSP - Labour (Co-Vice Convenor) (POK)

In attendance: Yolande Claes, PG Paper Company Ltd (YC)
Puneet Gupta, PG Paper Company Ltd (PGu)
Calum Mitchell, Office of Pam Gosal MSP, (CM)

1. Welcome

The Convenor welcomed all to the meeting and shared the agenda.

2. Purpose of Cross-Party Group on India

The Convenor confirmed the purpose of the Cross-Party Group on India. The Group seeks to promote relations between Scotland and India. The Group seeks to work with organisations and authorities to increase cultural, educational and economic exchange between the two countries, who could be one of our largest trading partners which will help support our economy, to engage with the Consulate General of India in Edinburgh and other interested organisations. The Group will act as a platform for relevant stakeholders to share their experience and expertise and further aims to find a platform for discussion with MSPs and to keep them informed of the issues raised.

It was also noted that the Group is in the public interest as it reflects the number of people of Indian heritage choosing to live in Scotland to contribute to our economy and society and is an opportunity to promote common interest and shared heritage.

Programme: Trade, Tourism and Education

It was noted that the Group’s main areas of discussion would be as follows:

1. Trade
2. Tourism/Culture
3. Education

It was agreed to name the first area of focus as Trade, rather than Trade/ Investment, and to extend the focus area of Tourism to include Culture, as noted above.

The Convenor suggested addressing the 3 areas in separate meetings. POK noted it would be good to adopt a thematic approach and suggested speakers relevant to the area of focus could be brought in.

JM observed it was important to set the theme of each session while recognising that there may be fluidity between focus areas.

The Convenor agreed and added that there would be 3 or 4 meetings of the Group per year. Each meeting will therefore specialise in one area.

Delegation trip to India

It was noted that, due to the current pandemic, it was difficult to plan any trip for the time being. The Convenor informed the Group that the High Commissioner of India and the Indian Consulate supported such a trip very much.

It was agreed that some groundwork first needed to be done by the Group before any trip should be planned. The Group needs to establish itself as well as determine the themes and/ or focus of the delegation trip. Discussions will also be needed on who would be invited to join the delegation.

The Group was advised that a registration form must be submitted by the Convenor of the Group by 31 October 2021 and that, after the initial meeting, the Group cannot meet again formally until it has been accorded recognition by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

3. Appointments

The Group proceeded to appoint the Office Bearers and Secretary/Treasurer.

POK nominated PG as Convenor and this was seconded by JM.

PG nominated POK as Co-Vice Convenor and this was seconded by JM.

POK nominated JM as Co-Vice Convenor and this was seconded by PG.

The Group was informed that PGu had volunteered to be Secretary/ Treasurer and nominated YC as Secretary to the Group. This was approved by JM and seconded by POK.

MSP and non-MSP membership of the Group

The Convenor noted that around 12 MSPs had expressed interest in joining the Group as members. Membership will be confirmed shortly.

The Convenor propose to invite the Consul General of India, Mr Bijay Selvaraj, as a non-MSP member. This was seconded by JM.

4. Launch Event

The Convenor proposed to hold a launch event in Edinburgh before the end of 2021. The Group agreed to delay the event until after COP26; JM suggested holding the

event on 30th November 2021, ie St Andrew's Day, and the Group welcomed the suggestion.

This could be an evening event held at the Scottish Parliament. The Convenor will also discuss the event with the Consul General for his input.

The Convenor noted that press releases (for both national and international press) had been drafted and that a group photo could be taken in the Parliament.

5. Dates for Future Meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting should take place in December 2021 and would be an afternoon meeting. The Convenor's Office Manager will liaise with members' offices to identify a suitable date.

The meeting was concluded.