

# Cross-Party Group on India – AGM and Meeting

Monday 23 October 2023, 11.00 – 11.45

## Minutes

### Present

#### Group members

Pam Gosal MSP  
Ivan McKee MSP  
Murdo Fraser MSP  
Miles Briggs MSP  
Alexander Stewart MSP  
Foyso Choudhury MSP

#### Non-group members

Kenneth Gibson MSP

### Invited guests

Dr Poonam Gupta OBE, Vice President – Scottish Chambers of Commerce  
Amit Chaudhary, Indian Consulate, Edinburgh  
Professor Pankaj Pankaj, University of Edinburgh  
Francesca Casci, Director of External Relations, University of Aberdeen

Secretariat services provided by Yolande Claes, of PG Paper Company Ltd

### Apologies

Sharon Dowey MSP  
Paul O’Kane MSP

#### 1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor, Pam Gosal MSP, welcomed the group to the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

Apologies were noted.

The Convenor noted that today’s meeting would consist of the CPG AGM, followed by a discussion on the recent CPG’s trade mission in India and plans for the year ahead.

The minutes from the last meeting of the Group held on 26 June 2023 were approved by Alexander Stewart MSP, seconded by Dr Poonam Gupta OBE.

The Convenor thanked PG Paper for providing secretariat services.

## **2. AGM**

### Re-election of Office Bearers

The Convenor invited the Group to proceed to re-appoint the Office Bearers and Secretary/Treasurer.

Alexander Stewart MSP nominated Pam Gosal MSP as Convenor and this was seconded by Foyso Choudhury MSP.

Foyso Choudhury MSP nominated Paul O’Kane MSP as Co-Vice Convenor and this was seconded by Kenneth Gibson MSP.

Alexander Stewart MSP nominated Ivan McKee MSP as Co-Vice Convenor and this was seconded by Murdo Fraser MSP.

Alexander Stewart MSP thanked the Convenor and Co-Vice Convenors for the work in the past year.

The Convenor thanked the Group for her re-election and for their hard work for the CPG on India.

The Group nominated Yolande Claes as Secretary to the Group and the Convenor thanked PG Paper for providing secretariat services to the Group.

## **3. Discussion on recent India delegation**

The Convenor introduced a discussion on the recent CPG delegation to India. PG thanked Dr Gupta for her help and support.

The Convenor added that Dr Gupta was now sub-lead for the Trade sub-group of the CGP on India.

The Convenor reminded the CPG of the objectives of the trade mission:

1. Connect with FinTech organisations in India and highlight the possibilities for collaboration between the rapidly expanding FinTech industries of Scotland and India.
2. Develop a strategy for how the Scottish and Indian FinTech industries can work together more effectively in the future.
3. Potential Memorandum of Understanding to be signed in the future between FinTech Scotland and FinTech organisations in India, which builds upon the existing UK-India Joint Working Group.

Kenneth Gibson MSP, who took part in the trade mission, agreed it had been a very productive visit with many contacts made. The following points were highlighted by Mr Gibson:

- Importance to follow up on all contacts made and seek potential collaboration
- Essential to try and get direct air links between Scotland and India.
- Need to follow up on student exchanges, not only from India to Scotland but also from Scotland to India.

Mr Gibson also observed that SCDI needed to boost its footprint in India.

Alexander Stewart MSP, who also joined the trade mission, noted that expectations were well met, with real opportunities to meet the movers and shakers. He also acknowledged the fantastic welcome received by the delegation and highlighted India's availability for collaboration and the immense opportunities for what could be achieved. Mr Stewart commented that the trade mission had been a solid foundation to move forward and thanked everyone who had made it possible.

Foysoil Choudhury MSP, who also took part in the trip, thanked the Convenor and Dr Gupta for organising the trade mission and agreed it was a successful trip, with excellent contacts and productive meetings. He stressed the need to follow up on these opportunities.

Dr Gupta noted there was room for improvement ahead of the next visit and reaffirmed her support for the group and trade mission.

The Convenor commented that it had been a privilege for the delegation to meet Ministers and high-level contacts.

The Convenor noted that, with regards to student exchanges, she would feedback on this to the CPG Sub-Group on Education.

The Convenor noted that one area spoken about was start up businesses and that online introductions with both FinTech Scotland and FinTech sector in India could be facilitated for potential collaborations and connections. She also observed that India had one of the largest populations in the world and that the Fintech sector provided a lot of opportunities.

The Convenor noted that she was keen to take the three objectives further and that a group would be set up to develop these and take them forward. She added that letters of thanks would go out to all those met in India, as well as to the High Commissioner of India and the Honourable Consul General of India in Edinburgh.

Kenneth Gibson MSP observed that the more the CPG on India does, the more influence it can have in Parliament and Government. Mr Gibson also thanked the business contacts who had sponsored the trade mission.

The Convenor asked Mr Ivan McKee MSP to lead on the financial side and the MOU as well as to help facilitate an online event between FinTech sectors in Scotland and in India.

**ACT: PG and IMcK to discuss further.**

Professor Pankaj Pankaj commented that he was delighted the trade mission had been so successful and observed that the University of Edinburgh already had connections in India.

The Convenor confirmed that her office would draft a report on the trade mission and share it with the CPG.

Amit Chaudhary, Vice Consul at the Indian Consulate, Edinburgh said he was very pleased the trip had gone well and offered the Consulate's support to the CPG, including for future trips.

#### **4. Plans for the year ahead**

The Convenor spoke to plans for the year ahead.

The Convenor advised that:

- The Trade Sub-Group would move ahead with a focus on FinTech.
- the Sub-Group on Education was drafting a paper, after a heatmap of Higher Education connections between India and Scotland had been established. The paper will be shared with the CPG Co-Convenors. The report, drafted with Universities Scotland's involvement and therefore shared with all Scottish Universities for input, will help prepare the next CPG visit to India.
- For Culture and Tourism, the Convenor spoke about potential markets such as whisky and noted that the Scottish Whisky Association was keen to go to India. Golf was also mentioned, maybe in connection with Screen Scotland.

Murdo Fraser MSP added he had very good contacts with the Scottish Whisky Association.

The Convenor asked Mr Fraser and Mr McKee to shape a paper on Culture and Tourism opportunities.

The Convenor highlighted the importance to look at Education and Culture and Tourism for the next CPG delegation to India to take place in 2024.

Ivan McKee MSP mentioned looking into the global Scots cohort overseas and get some routes into it.

Kenneth Gibson MSP emphasised the importance to follow up on the recent trip and to build on that as it will then help show what had been done when the CPG returns to India.

The Group discussed various dates for the next delegation to India. June/ July 2024 were suggested for the next trip to India as there will most likely be elections in India

in April/ May 2024, or possibly during the 2 weeks of recess in Scottish Parliament in October 2024.

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