

Cross-Party Group on Ukraine

Wednesday 19 November 2025, 18:00-20:00
(Hybrid: Committee Room 2 and MS Teams)Minute

Present:

MSPs: Colin Beattie MSP, Miles Briggs MSP, John Mason MSP

Invited guests: Thomas Brayford, Adam Campbell, Fay Anderson, Flora Lang, Professor Oleksandr Pronkevych, Sabir Zazai, Liubov Volodarska (Photographer), Olena Talimonchuk (Assistant to photographer), Jess Casot, Charles Cormack, Maria Fletcher, Nataliya Lyalyuk

Non-MSP Group Members: Andro Mathewson, Olga Niekrasova, Anna Kulish, John Beaton-Hawryluk, Anna Makhlay, Oleksandra Sologub, Olga Lutsyshyn, Magda Czarnecka, Andrii Madzianovskyi, Joyce Landry, Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, Amy McNeese-Mechan, Hanna Tekliuk, Taras Harasym, Andrii Kuzma, Valerie Gerus, Benjamin Pyatski, Daniil Malitskyy, Vitaliia Melnyk, Peter Kormylo, Linda Allison, Olha Maksymiak, Tetiana Puchkova, Bohdan Kruk, Dr Giles Hansen Sutherland, Professor Nigel Osborne, Olga Maslova, Esther Rowan Moodie, Valeria Gerus, Taras Harasym, Zhenya Dove, Illia Malanchuk, Ernst Avetisov, Marjan Pokhylyy, Ritwij Raj, Serhii Kuzminov, Steven Carr, Elena Frantskevych, Anne Yarney, Vasyl Shvets, Benjamin Pyatski, Polya Moshenska, Yuliia Solovyeva, Mykola Zinchenko, Olga Vivchar, Nataliia Pidruchna, Mariia Miskova, Lesia Vynnychuk, Maksym Vivchar, Juliette Lichman, Kseniia Smyrnova, Natalia Khomenko, Tanya Balanova, Martin Hunt, Peter Cooper

Apologies: David Hamilton, Daniel Smith and Joe Goldblat, Kasia Kaczmarska

Item 1: Welcome

Colin Beattie MSP (Convener) opened the meeting and welcomed attendees both in the room and online. Technical issues regarding sound were noted and resolved at the start of the proceedings.

Item 2: Scotland-Ukraine Education and Academic Collaboration

Olha Budnik, Advisor to the President of Ukraine for the Presidential Fund for Support of Education, Science, and Sports. Olha Budnik presented on the cooperation between Ukrainian and UK universities:

- She reported on recent high-level visits to UK and Scottish universities and outlined opportunities for future cooperation.
- The UK–Ukraine University Twinning Initiative, launched in 2022 after the full-scale invasion, now includes over 100 partnerships, engaging 50,000+ students and academic staff.
- A key success is the expansion of dual degree programmes, growing from 6 to 10 university pairs, with an invitation for Scottish universities to join.
- A proposed new programme aims to attract foreign lecturers (from top-ranked universities) to teach in Ukraine, to support staff development and university competitiveness, using co-funding or online formats.
- She presented the Global Coalition of Ukrainian Studies, initiated by the First Lady of Ukraine, as a response to Russian propaganda and a platform for coordinating Ukrainian studies worldwide.
- The Coalition currently includes 31 members, with 6 from the UK, spanning 13 countries, and continues to expand globally.
- As part of this initiative, a Ukrainian Week in UK universities involved around 30 universities, including a visit to the University of St Andrews, featuring events on literature, translation, theatre, and veteran rehabilitation through the arts.
- Potential areas for Scottish Government support include funding Ukrainian studies courses and departments, professorships, joint research, and Scottish academics teaching in Ukraine.
- The speaker concluded by noting strong initial results and expressing readiness to continue and deepen cooperation.

Questions and discussion:

- o John Mason MSP asked for a copy of the presentation to share with a specific university that might be interested. Olha Budnik confirmed she would share the materials.

Dr Giles Hansen Sutherland, academic and art critic.

- Dr Giles Sutherland shared his long-standing engagement with Ukraine, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing through academic, cultural, and artistic collaboration.
- He described multiple self-funded initiatives, including lectures, conferences, seminars, and writing projects in Lviv, framed as cultural humanitarianism.
- His work included contributions to trauma-informed arts, cultural responses to war, and interdisciplinary conferences linking art, politics, and therapy.
- Dr Sutherland highlighted parallels between Scots and Ukrainian languages, including issues of linguistic marginalisation, explored through lectures and teaching.
- He emphasised the role of art and culture during crisis, advocating for two-way cultural exchange between Scotland and Ukraine.
- Recent activities included teaching a Master's course on borderlands, introducing Scottish and Ukrainian poetry, and collaborative performance-based learning.
- Future cooperation was discussed, including low-cost cultural collaboration models, potential summer schools, and decolonisation-focused work.
- Dr Sutherland expressed a long-term vision to establish a Centre for Scottish Studies in Ukraine, noting this would require planning and funding.
- He concluded by reflecting on recent formal recognition of his contribution by Ukrainian academic partners.

Questions and discussion:

- o Colin Beattie MSP commented on the idea, noting that a successful model already exists with the "Scottish College" at the University of Mainz (Germany), which contributes significantly to cultural exchange.

Item 3: Supporting the Next Generation of Displaced Ukrainians

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, Chair, AUGB Edinburgh; Pro100 Ukrainian Saturday School ("Prosto Shkola"). Hannah presented the work of "Prosto Shkola" in Edinburgh.

- The school has grown from a small homework club to a verified educational institution at Leith Academy with over 110 pupils aged 4-15.

- **Key Achievement:** In November 2025, the school received official verification from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, meaning students' academic results are recognized in Ukraine.
- She outlined challenges: sustainable funding (especially for venue hire at commercial rates), the need for Ukrainian to be recognized in the Scottish curriculum (SQA exams), and the risk of assimilation/language loss

Questions and discussion:

- o Colin Beattie MSP asked about the term "crews" used in the presentation. Hannah explained that classes are taught by ability rather than strictly by age.
- o John Mason MSP asked about relationships with the Council regarding venue costs, noting issues in Glasgow. Hannah confirmed they pay commercial rates and rely on grants as parent contributions do not cover these costs.
- o John Beaton-Hawryluk (EVOC) commented on the broader issue of third sector access to public premises (schools, community centres) and excessive costs, suggesting that this issue be considered at the national level with a view to ensuring equal access.

Nataliya Lyalyuk (Manager) and Nazarii Lyalyuk, St. Mary's Ukrainian School Glasgow, presented on the mental health and educational challenges facing displaced Ukrainian children in Scotland.

- St. Mary's Trust has supported over 2,500 displaced Ukrainian children across the UK since 2022, operating in 15 locations with a focus on trauma recovery, emotional resilience, and school integration.
- The speakers highlighted that approximately 75% of displaced children face language barriers, while many experience trauma, withdrawal, isolation, anxiety, and depression, particularly teenagers balancing UK education with Ukrainian studies.
- St. Mary's Ukrainian School Glasgow currently supports over 150 children, providing a safe, culturally familiar, and inclusive environment, including for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- A key challenge identified was the lack of funding for teaching assistants, limiting the school's ability to meet SEN demand despite a long waiting list.
- Nazarii Lyalyuk shared a case study of a displaced child who was non-verbal for a year due to severe trauma but recovered through the school's long-term support, illustrating the impact of trauma-informed care.

Questions and discussion:

- John Mason MSP asked whether the school receives trauma-related support from Scottish schools or the NHS. Nazarii Lyalyuk confirmed that no direct support is received, and services are largely delivered through the school's own resources, with referrals made to the NHS where possible.
- Nazarii Lyalyuk raised concern that some Scottish schools have refused to admit Ukrainian children with SEN, including a case involving a child using a wheelchair.
- Colin Beattie MSP expressed concern and requested that specific details be forwarded for follow-up.
- John Beaton-Hawryluk (EVOC) noted significant differences in local authority funding approaches, citing that Glasgow received approximately £30 million in UK Government funding but allocated no funding to the third sector, unlike Edinburgh (approx. £1 million). He suggested a separate discussion to address this disparity.
- Nazarii Lyalyuk added that the school's teachers hold Ukrainian professional qualifications, have experience in inclusive education, and that some also work within Scottish local authorities as support staff.

Joyce Landry, Founder, Mission of Innocents. Joyce presented on using arts and culture to support displaced children.

- The initiative began on cruise ships in Leith and Glasgow to support children who spoke little English, using art for expression.
- She highlighted the "Life in One Suitcase" project performed at the Edinburgh Fringe and the children's participation in the Edinburgh Tattoo.
- Future plans include launching a Creative Arts Centre at Ocean Terminal.

Item 4: Membership Requests

The Group approved the membership requests listed in the agenda: Elena Frantskevych, Vasyl Shvets, Polina Moshenska, Nataliia Danova, Maryna Mokretska, Yuliia Ismail, Sofiia Solodovnyk, Ukrainian Business Hub of Scotland, Reusing IT, Ukrainian Society at the University of Dundee, Ukrainian Society at the University of Edinburgh

Item 5: Working Groups Updates

Kseniia Smyrnova (Education WG):

- Presentation covered Ukrainian school education and higher education in Scotland.
- A meeting of the five Ukrainian schools in Scotland identified shared challenges: funding, recognition, staff shortages, inclusion, mental health support, and implementation of Ukrainian language standards.

- Work is ongoing to strengthen cooperation with Ukrainian state authorities.
- The university twinning initiative (launched in 2022) now involves 15 Scottish universities.
- Key successes include the Ukraine Politics Network at the University of Edinburgh and wider interdisciplinary collaboration with Kyiv, including student exchanges and research projects.
- Future plans include establishing reciprocal academic centres in Edinburgh and Kyiv to support long-term cooperation.

Questions and discussion:

- o Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk shared news of a sixth Ukrainian school opening in Scotland (Lockerbie) in August.
- o Andrii Kuzma (Ukrainian Society, University of Edinburgh) asked about collaboration for their upcoming conference on 12 March and the student journal Diaspora, requesting help engaging professors. Kseniia Smyrnova confirmed full support and asked him to contact her directly.
- o Ritwij Raj (University of Glasgow / Global Challenges Scholar) proposed creating a unified digital platform for academics in Scotland to discuss broader aspects of Ukraine beyond the war (e.g., sustainability). Kseniia responded that the proposed "Ukrainian Centre" could serve as such a hub.

Olha Maksymiak (Health and Wellbeing WG):

- Presented findings from a survey of 375 displaced Ukrainians: top stressors are visa uncertainty (88%), war (78%), and loss of professional identity (64%).
- Highlighted "brain waste" among qualified Ukrainian doctors and psychologists unable to practice in Scotland due to regulatory barriers.
- The group has established peer support networks and is advocating for legal pathways for integration into the NHS.

John Beaton-Hawryluk (Communities and Resettlement WG):

- Presented EVOC data regarding local authority funding, highlighting the disparity in third-sector distribution across different councils (e.g., Edinburgh vs Glasgow).
- Key Findings: He highlighted a significant disparity in how funds are distributed. While Edinburgh Council allocated approx. £1 million (2% of received funds) to the third sector, Glasgow Council received approx. £30 million in government funding but allocated nothing to the third sector.

- He outlined different funding models: Aberdeen (community planning), Dundee (procurement), Falkirk (resettlement fund). The report aims to identify best practices

Zhenya Dove (Culture WG):

- Member Achievements: Abandon artists: Alina Litvinova success with exhibition at Custom House (25 artists). And Oleksandra Novatska botanical art course
- Reported on the success of "The Light We Share" event at the Scottish Parliament.
- Upcoming events: Maria Prymachenko exhibition at the Central Library in December and film screenings with the French Institute.
- Thanked Juliette Lichman for her work on exhibitions, and people involved to "The Light We Share" preparation.

Anna Kulish (Business and Economy WG):

- The Group welcomed the ratification of the UK–Ukraine 100-Year Partnership Agreement
- Updates were provided on the Scotland–Ukraine Growing Recovery Programme (January 2026), led by John Smith’s Trust, with a focus on hydrogen innovation, supported by the Working Group.
- The Group reported on participation in the Rebuild Ukraine Conference in Warsaw, highlighting Ukraine’s recovery as a major European business opportunity, with strong engagement from Scottish businesses.
- Key meetings were held with industry bodies, public agencies, and investors, including the Confederation of Builders of Ukraine, to explore market access and joint venture opportunities.
- Emerging joint projects were noted, including collaboration with a Stirling-based company (QuickBlock) on modular construction solutions for infrastructure protection and temporary housing in Ukraine.
- The Group thanked partners including Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, and the Scottish Government, and confirmed continued support for Scottish businesses engaging with the Ukrainian market.

Agenda item 6: AOB & Closing

Andrii Madzianovskyi, Consul of Ukraine.

- The Consul addressed the Group with sombre news regarding a massive Russian missile attack that morning. He reported the attack targeted the peaceful city of Ternopil, destroying two multi-storey residential buildings, killing 25 people, with another 25 still missing.

- A minute of silence was held to honor the victims.
- Andrii Madzianovskyyi addressed the Holodomor (1932–1933) as a man-made famine and act of genocide, linking it to a longer history of imperial violence against Ukraine.
- Holodomor Commemoration: The Consul called on the Cross-Party Group and the Scottish Parliament to formally recognize the Holodomor (1932-1933) as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people, noting that 42 countries (and the UK Parliament) have already done so.

Colin Beattie MSP responded that while he personally views it as genocide, the Scottish Parliament is currently constrained by the UK Government's legal definitions. He confirmed he would attend the memorial event.

Date of Next Meeting The next meeting is scheduled for 18 February 2026.

Meeting closed.