

Cross-Party Group Annual Return

Name of Cross-Party Group
Cross-Party Group on Women in Enterprise
Date Group Established (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)
September 2016
Date of Most Recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)
16 November 2022
Date Annual Return Submitted
23 November 2022
Date of Preceding AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11 to 13 months of the previous AGM]
22 September 2021
Group Meetings and Activities Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures. Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.
22 September 2021 – Women in Enterprise CPG

- **Main subjects discussed:**
- Gillian Martin, MSP, offered words of welcome and opened nominations for Office Bearers. - Convener Gillian Martin MSP proposed by Michelle Thomson MSP, seconded by Collette Lawson MSP, Deputy Convenor Michelle Thomson MSP proposed by Gillian Martin MSP and seconded by Collette Lawson MSP, Secretary Katie Birrell, nominated by Carolyn Currie and seconded by Gillian Martin MSP.
- **Funding and Finance** - Criona Courtney highlighted that disproportionately few women business owners had approached the Royal Bank of Scotland for lending, suggesting that it may be a result of asking and declining of their requests. Many early stage businesses, which lacked established relationships with funding organisations and account management support were unaware of their options. The Digital Boost Fund, which closed so quickly that it was difficult to meet the deadline as a business owner.
- Chrissy Mackay highlighted that part of the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund (PERF) assessment was conducted through AI, suggesting that investigation into potential biases is required.
- **Business Support Organisations** - renewed efforts were needed to encourage women to start businesses, encouraging Women's Enterprise Scotland to spearhead a campaign, perhaps in collaboration with the Federation of Small Businesses. It's challenging for businesses to make the most of the services of Scottish Enterprises, as it offers generic services, with no signage to specialist account management services.
- Lynne Cadenhead shared that, as a member of the National Advisory Council for Scotland's Economic Transformation, she was part of a group pushing to put entrepreneurial culture at the heart of the strategy, supporting enterprise for all, including micro businesses. She suggests moving away from a sector to a mission-based approach and wishes to work with the Business Gateway and Scottish Enterprise to ensure that delivery mechanisms work for women.
- **Digital Skills** - Wendy Edie highlighted that ScotlandIS, the digital skills advisory board, were working to encourage more focus on computing in schools, but found that a lack of teachers with the appropriate skillset was an obstacle. Gender specific work with school-age girls from early years is necessary.
- **Data** - Calls for routine gathering of gender-disaggregated data to tackle systemic issues. Some level of obfuscation around support for women – some of the figures which appear seem positive, but when explored in deeper detail, the picture for women in entrepreneurship is concerning. Wage disparity increased by a £2000 salary difference in the last ten years, and there are low levels of women in management roles. It is a systemic issue, created by education, mindset and opportunity.
- Gillian Martin MSP notes need for male engagement, highlighting that many of her colleagues were unaware that statistics like the gender pay gap were so concerning. However, she is delighted by the Government's pledge of £50 million for a national Women's Business Centre and she will continue to work with Women's Enterprise Scotland to see greater equality in Scotland's entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- **MSPs in attendance:** Gillian Martin, MSP; Collette Stevenson MSP; Michelle Thomson MSP
- **Non MSPs in attendance:** Carolyn Currie, WES; Bronwen Thomas, WES; Katie Birrell, WES; Lynne Cadenhead, WES; Jane Grant, Enterprise & Business Innovation at Borders College; Chrissy Mackay, BeYonder; Anne-Marie Morrison, W20 G20 Advisory Group; Susan Harkins, South of Scotland Enterprise; Nathalie Agnew, Muckle Media; Mairi Damer, Word Up Communications; Niamh Burns,

Office of Gillian Martin; Criona Courtney, Royal Bank of Scotland; Lisa Wardlaw, Young Enterprise Scotland; Caroline Brown, Lanarkshire Women in Business.

10 November 2021 – Women in Enterprise CPG: Women in Net Zero

- **Main subjects discussed:**
- presentations on 'Women to Net Zero' by Sara Roberts and Wendy Pring
- key challenges within the sustainability journey:
 - For companies with diverse supply chains and a focus on championing SMEs, it can be more challenging to track carbon emissions.
 - Without a sustainability background, the net zero journey is challenging because of convoluted information from government resources.
 - There are a large number of factors to consider which can feel overwhelming.
- Sara called for a centralised resource, which would list experts in the area, examples of net zero journeys and case studies. Clear, standardised data and insights are crucial to helping businesses improve their actions.
- Wendy noted 2 key takeaways from her time at COP26: opportunities for learning from indigenous groups and the importance of resilience.
- Wendy outlined her approach as Founder and Circular Architect of TWF2045: she aims to connect communities and tackle limited job opportunities in remote communities with a focus on net zero.
- She outlined some suggestions to accelerate Net Zero:
 - Building networks of support for businesses on sustainable journeys.
 - Salary and other incentives in businesses, improved working conditions, status and security for sustainable jobs, effective company policy and administration.
 - Women need to be enabled: Wendy suggests that the Women's Business Centre and Women's Enterprise Scotland could participate through outreach centres. Support for women is the glue around her sustainability mission: networks and childcare are required to empower women to take part. In these rural communities, men have left for working opportunities, women could create business ecosystems, contributing to their communities with the suitable tools.
- Timi Adegunwa suggested that in Black communities she works with, sustainability conversations are limited as people are still focused on finding jobs and steady income from their businesses. She wonders how to begin these discussions with such significant socioeconomic issues.
- business leaders, government and activist organisations needed to amplify the voices of ethnic minority climate activists, highlighting the role of limited minority representation in climate initiative making it a space of privilege.
- Gillian Martin requested feedback from those who attended events at COP26. It was highlighted that:
 - SMEs were being given a voice for collaboration.
 - There was hope, but also concern that, after the event, we will return to the status quo. Concerns with returning to status quo – hopeful there but will it last
 - The Green Zone was noted to have had limited engagement, with contributors given only a couple of weeks to prepare.
 - It was clear that women are front and centre at periphery events, with women building relations across borders.
- **MSPs in attendance:** Gillian Martin, MSP

- **Non MSPs in attendance:** Carolyn Currie, WES; Bronwen Thomas, WES; Katie Birrell, WES; Wendy Pring, The Way Forward 2045; Sara Roberts, Healthy Nibbles; Criona Courtney, RBS; Jennifer MacKenzie, TEFL; Caroline Brown, Lanarkshire Women in Business; Amanda Pickford, Thermafay; Timi Adegunwa, Black & Scot; Pauline Reay APTUM

4 May 2022 – Women in Enterprise CPG: Wellbeing

- **Main subjects discussed:**
- Katie Birrell would be stepping down as secretary and opened nominations for a new Office Bearer.
 - Sophie Rooney proposed by Melanie MacIntyre, seconded by Lynne Cadenhead
- Presentation by Ayse Basak Cinar, leadership development and wellbeing coach - Context and need for a focus on Wellbeing in women's entrepreneurship. The Covid pandemic has seen women more vulnerable to economic impacts, juggling primary care and facing challenges of adapting to digitalisation.
- Presentation by Melanie MacIntyre, Executive Coach and Mentor - Three quarters of UK workers are experiencing burnout, with 41% of the workforce expecting to leave their jobs as the 'Great Resignation' continues.
- Presentation by Liberty Bligh, experienced founder and disabled entrepreneur - In June 2020, 1 in 5 adults reported having suicidal thoughts whilst at work. Women are more than twice as likely to develop mental ill-health at work. Poor well-being is statistically linked to poor mental health. Liberty shared the Global Sisterhood Initiative, which would see women collaborating globally to share wellbeing strategies and processes.
- **Systemic Failures** - while women have high capability, they must contend with unsuitable systems and unconscious bias
- **Systemic Change** - We need to be gender-conscious in service and space design to support wellbeing. importance of diversity in decision making.
- Lynne Cadenhead highlighted that establishing women's businesses centres will encourage this systemic change, by designing spaces and services which address systemic issues. They would be a vehicle for women to be successful in business. Systems designed for women: childcare and peer support to address issues like loneliness and overwhelm. Support should be put in place for women anywhere in Scotland, from any demographic to help them grow businesses in the way that they want – that is what is in heart of Women's Business Centre strategy for Scotland.
- **Employee Retention** - Ann Johnson highlighted that while many businesses prioritise wellbeing for their workers, they lose employees to larger companies, for example in the oil sector, that offer higher salaries, while sacrificing elements of balance and health. These challenges impact business-owners ability and desire to continue running their businesses.
- **Meeting Employee Needs** - adopting employee-driven changes
- **Changing Working Culture** - We need to work to normalise work life balance, sustainable long-term performance is harmed by a lack of balance. Embracing seasonality, particularly of women, who tend to function cyclically, is crucial. enterprise education has a role to play in shifting entrepreneurial culture to create sustainable business ownership. A thorough review of enterprise education is needed to place more value on emotional considerations rather than financial forecasts.
- Dina Nziku noted the diversity of Women's Enterprise Scotland and the Cross Party Group. While she celebrated the importance placed on wellbeing at the session, she felt these discussions were not taking place among minority

ethnicities. We need to broaden these conversations to communities where wellbeing may not be viewed as such a priority.

- **Leadership** - Leadership terminology need to change, highlighting the role of many characteristics associated with women, which lead to effective leadership that may challenge conventional ideas about leadership.
- **MSP's in attendance:** Gillian Martin, MSP; Collette Stevenson MSP; Michelle Thomson MSP
- **Non MSP's in attendance:** Katie Birrell, WES; Lynne Cadenhead, WES; Sophie Rooney, WES; Ayse Basak Cinar, Coach; Melanie MacIntyre, Mel MacIntyre Coaching, Liberty Bligh, TruBoox; Julia Latif, Our House of Spice; Dina Nziku, University of West of Scotland; Ruth McElroy, Federation of Small Businesses; Claudia Cavalluzzo, Converge; Jennifer MacKenzie, TEFL; Karen Hedge, Scottish Care; Lesley Landels, Love Scottish; Wendy Pring, The Way Forward; Jill Arnold, SIS Ventures; Ann Johnson, Blaze

16 November 2022 – Women In Enterprise CPG: Procurement (Initially scheduled for 14 September 2022 but postponed due to the death of Her Majesty the Queen)

- **Main Subjects discussed:** Welcome and introductions, Convenor Gillian Martin MSP. Gillian Martin passed to Secretary, Sophie Rooney, to convene AGM portion of meeting: Election of a Convenor – Carolyn Currie proposed Gillian Martin MSP, Bronwen Thomas seconded. Election of Vice Convenor – Gillian Martin MSP proposed Michelle Thomson MSP, Ann Johnson seconded (Acceptance confirmed by Michelle Thomson following the meeting). Election of a secretary – Bronwen Thomas proposed Sophie Rooney, Carolyn Currie seconded. Election of Treasurer – Sophie Rooney proposed Carolyn Currie, Lynne Cadenhead seconded.
- **Ann Johnson from Blaze Manufacturing Solutions** - Hardly any work in oil and gas currently – operators have publicly declared they are not going to use the SME community and instead give work to tier ones. This means the SME community is dying as there is no work or feed down for them. Ann has an invitation to present at data centres however as the event is in London, the networking part of the event will be done in the pub, it's very male dominated. Ann is not going to the event and is sending someone else in her place because she is not comfortable networking in a bar/pub with lots of men. Still a real issue of 'old boys network' in Aberdeen – friends giving their friends contracts, tends to be PE companies owned by men that give work to companies that they also own so it freezes the market
- **Pauline Macdonald from Ferguson Marine** - Pauline was on the board of directors for WBE Canada helping women owned business specifically – the CEO of the company was working with govt to mandate that a certain percentage of all public sector bids went to women owned businesses - In Canada 5% of every single public sector contract has to go to indigenous suppliers and so she was fighting for the same for women owned businesses. WBE Canada helped certify suppliers so they could use the WBE Canada logo so that when the public sector went out to tender, they could ask if they were certified – if a company is certified they know all the due diligence has been done on suppliers. To have a register of how many SMEs suppliers in Scotland would be helpful to get people signed up and show public sector these women owned businesses have gone through due diligence and they are certified, it would minimize risk for them so more chance of winning business.
- **Ruth McElroy from FSB** - Local authority spend show despite making up about 93% of entire business community, micro businesses only get less than 5% of

procurement spend by value but largest companies get more than half – long way to go as big disproportionality here. A major policy directive of Scottish Government is Community Wealth Building – a commitment to growing and maintaining the wealth of local places. FSB assessed for every pound that is spent with a small business roughly 67p goes straight back into the local community – whereas at a large multinational only 40p of that goes into the community. Barriers to procurement from a small business perspective: time - procurement applications are long and hard, Bureaucracy - complexities of projects that run across areas/departments; nationwide suppliers, Payment - larger suppliers fail to pay subcontractors on time. Proposals to barriers: if local authorities were to increase their local procurement spend by 2% every year that would add £140 mil to economy within a handful of years, Introduction of statutory targets for local spending, Public buyers should be compelled to examine payment practices of larger providers at bid stage to ensure sub-contractors will be paid on time, Ensure legislation is joined up – Community Wealth Building cannot work against other policy directives.

- Collette Stevenson MSP is trying to push at a govt level for supply chain visibility – a clause should be introduced in a tier one contractors framework agreement that says they have to have supply chain visibility to show who they are using so that info can be passed down to local authorities.
- Jackie Brierton - from growbiz, helping rural businesses diversify their income streams by looking at procurement but they have even more barriers than businesses near the central belt. PCS site is not intuitive or helpful.
- Carolyn Currie from WES - Carrie reflects evidence of how the system isn't working - often contracts are procured on a 70/30 quality-price basis, on a 70/30 basis it is possible to undercut on the basis of price but if you have a procurement based on 80% quality and 20% price it is less possible over someone with poor quality to undercut solely based on price – how are we applying that quality criteria systematically?
- **MSPs in attendance:** Collette Stevenson MSP, Gillian Martin MSP, Paul Mclennan MSP
- **Non MSPs in attendance:** Carolyn Currie, WES; Bronwen Thomas, WES; Sophie Rooney, WES; Lynne Cadenhead, WES; Evelyn McDonald, Scottish Edge; Ruth McElroy, FSB; Ann Johnson, Blaze Manufacturing Solutions; Kathleen Riach, University of Glasgow; Jackie Brierton, Growbiz; Pauline Macdonald, Marine Ferguson; Mairi Macdonald, Royal Bank of Scotland; Julie Hall, ABS

MSP Members of The Group

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

Gillian Martin – Convenor – SNP

Michelle Thomson – Deputy Convenor - SNP

Claire Baker – Scottish Labour

Liam Kerr – Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Collette Stevenson – SNP

Non-MSP Members of The Group

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals

Organisations

Women's Enterprise Scotland - secretary and treasurer
Royal Bank of Scotland
Business Gateway
Federation of Small Businesses
Young Enterprise Scotland
WES ambassadors
Scottish Enterprise
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
GrowBiz
Edinburgh Business School
Heriot Watt University
Napier University
Queen Margaret University
Fraser of Allander Institute
Scottish Autism
Oxfam
MS society Scotland
Women Being
LINC
Scottish Edge
University of West of Scotland
Women's Fund for Scotland
Fife Council

Group Office Bearers

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide

upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	Gillian Martin MSP
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Deputy Convener	Michelle Thomson MSP
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Secretary	Sophie Rooney Women's Enterprise Scotland
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Treasurer	Carolyn Currie Women's Enterprise Scotland
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If the Group is not disclosing any financial information please tick the box to confirm that the Group has considered the support received, but concluded it totalled under the threshold for disclosure (£500). ✓

Subscription Charged by the Group

Please provide details of the amount charged and the purpose for which the subscription is intended to be used.

No subscription charged

Convener Contact Details

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