

MEETING MINUTES

Cross Party Group on Germany

Tuesday, 26th November 2013

Meeting Room Q1.03

Next Meeting

Tuesday, 28th January 2014

5:30pm

Committee Room 4

Attendees

Colin Beattie MSP
Cameron Buchanan MSP
Colin Keir MSP
Ken Macintosh MSP
Jamie McGrigor MSP
Maureen Watt MSP
Manuela Calchini, Visit Scotland
John Clifford, Austrian Consulate
Nicola De Paoli, Schottland magazine
Annette Götzkes, Edinburgh University
Verena Gräfin von Roedern, Consul General of Germany
Heinrich Schnettger, Consul of Germany
James Trolland, Scottish Democratic Alliance
Petra Wend, Queen Margaret University

Apologies Stefan Büttner, Barbara Kaulbach, Peter Müller McDougall

Colin Beattie opened the meeting and welcomed the two new MSPs, Cameron Buchanan and Ken Macintosh.

Topics Discussed:

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes & Matters Arising

Colin Beattie requested that page numbers be added to future minutes.

Page 2 – change ‘Stefan Büttner gave an update’ to ‘Stefan Büttner gave a personal update’

- change ‘Stefan Büttner replied they would be to some extent’ to ‘Stefan Büttner replied in his view they would be to some extent’

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- change 'Stefan Büttner mentioned that they had been damaged' to 'Stefan Büttner mentioned that he felt they had been damaged'
- change 'Annette Götzkes said that the Christian Socialist Party are quite right-wing and therefore the Bavaria result may not be a real indicator of the General Election.' to 'Annette Götzkes said that she thought the Bavaria result may not be a real indicator of the General Election.'

Subject to the corrections made, the minutes were approved. Along with the meeting note, the minutes from the last meeting were also approved.

Manuela Calchini said she would forward the International Passenger Survey (IPS) numbers to Graeme Henderson.

Graeme Henderson confirmed he had arranged for Carsten Raun from Edinburgh Oktoberfest to come and speak to the group at the January meeting.

Colin Beattie asked the group to suggest speakers for the forthcoming year, and proposed Fiona Hyslop to talk about her view on Europe. Jamie McGrigor suggested someone to speak about the Barcelona Project, a primary school project where children are taught more than one language. Ken Macintosh thought Alasdair Allan would be the best person to approach. Colin Beattie noted that Michael Russell might also come in.

Ken Macintosh noted that the teaching of German in Scottish schools is declining and suggested asking the British Council.

ACTION POINT - Graeme Henderson to send Ken Macintosh the previous CPG minutes to provide background to the group's work

Annette Götzkes proposed asking Anne Robertson, the Language Advisor at City of Edinburgh Council.

John Clifford noted that the British Council often overlooked the fact that Germany is not the only German-speaking country in Europe and suggested that the CPG could look into how Scotland has benefitted from Austrian and Swiss nationals coming to the country. John Clifford further mentioned that the CPG may want to analyse the calibre of people teaching German in Scottish schools.

Petra Wend confirmed that she is on the advisory board to the British Council Scotland, and suggested that the CPG ask the chair, James Boyle, along to speak to the CPG. Petra Wend stated that there is no one person responsible for promoting language assistants but that they were all collectively responsible for pushing language assistants in Scotland and creating a marketing campaign to ensure that councils continue investing in assistants; as a result of this campaign the number of students had risen in recent years.

Cameron Buchanan said that the previous German consul was very active in going round schools to promote the German language, but that the consul had stated the problem was encouraging schools to take on German nationals to teach for a year. Petra Wend noted that the schools chose how to spend their own funding. John Clifford said the uptake from the Austrian side had declined. Petra Wend stated that funding had risen.

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Colin Beattie said that the Goethe Institut had offered a 'free day' where they would visit schools, and it would be interesting to know how many schools took up this offer.

ACTION POINT – Graeme Henderson to ask the Goethe Institut what the take up was for the 'free day' offer, and if they thought it was successful.

Verena Gräfin von Roedern said that the German Consulate had launched a programme where 19 language assistants were invited to teach German for six months in Scotland as part of their degree. The assistants would receive an Erasmus scholarship (350 Euro monthly) and would also be paid by the competent Scottish authorities additional £350 each month.

Petra Wend noted that, in a positive development, around 3-4 months ago the General Teaching Council for Scotland had made it a requirement that anyone who wanted to become a teacher in Scotland required at least one foreign language up to Standard Grade level. Ken Macintosh said that a foreign language used to be a requirement to study at universities. John Clifford asked if the CPG could raise the language requirement with universities.

Colin Beattie asked if the group had clarified inviting someone from the British Council. Petra Wend advised writing to James Boyle to ask who best to invite. Ken Macintosh suggested inviting an academic instead, so the group can have an informed discussion on language education in Scotland. Petra Wend noted that the group could invite the head of DELC at Edinburgh University's School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures. Annette Götzkes suggested inviting either Alan MacNiven or Huw Lewis from Edinburgh University.

ACTION POINT – Annette Götzkes to approach Alan MacNiven or Huw Lewis to speak to the CPG

Annette Götzkes said that another approach is to send out student ambassadors into schools. These ambassadors were preferably fourth year students who had spent a year abroad and could advocate their experiences to their peers. The ambassadors themselves could be given a certificate from the Consulate as official recognition. Annette Götzkes noted that she would need help finding out which schools taught German.

Petra Wend mentioned the 'Adopt An International Student' programme, which sees students spending a whole year with a school teaching them about their country. Petra Wend further mentioned the 'HOST' programme, where international students spend a weekend with a Scottish family.

Colin Keir noted that Cathy Fullerton at Edinburgh City Chambers would be the best person to approach re. secondary schools in Edinburgh that taught German.

ACTION POINT – Colin Keir to approach Cathy Fullerton

Annette Götzkes said that Boroughmuir High School seemed to be quite an active school in supporting German. Cameron Buchanan noted that many private schools may also be active in this regard.

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John Clifford asked if the CPG could discuss the educational issues with the Academic Standards Council in Edinburgh. Colin Beattie said this would be worth trying.

Annette Götzkes said that their students performed an annual play and it would be a nice idea to take the play into schools for pupils to study it, so it would become more of an outreach activity.

Colin Beattie noted that the preceding discussion had given the CPG various options for guests and discussion for the forthcoming year. Graeme Henderson mentioned that he had invited Petra Wetzel, the owner of the West Brewery, to speak to the group in March.

Colin Beattie asked what else the group should be looking at. John Clifford said that the green agenda was one to keep in mind, especially looking at the cooperation between Scotland, Switzerland, Austria and Germany. Colin Beattie noted that it might be good to get someone in the industry to speak to the group. John Clifford felt it would be beneficial to bring in someone involved with local initiatives.

Colin Keir mentioned Nova Innovation as a renewable energy company with a German partner who could be invited to speak. Jamie McGrigor said that forestry is a topic that could be discussed, given that Germany and Austria have a strong, sustainable, ongoing method of producing timber while Scotland may be facing a crisis due to lack of planting new trees. John Clifford suggested the Austrian Trade Commissioner to speak on this topic.

Colin Beattie asked the group to confirm if they were happy to have renewables as a discussion topic. The response was positive. John Clifford stated he could approach the Austrian Commercial Attaché and Trade Commissioner once the CPG had chosen a date.

Economic Update

Peter Müller-McDougall had sent the group an article, taken from the Glasgow Herald on 20th November 2013, about the unveiling in Switzerland of a strategy to increase turnover from industrial biotechnology in Scotland from £189m to £900m by 2025. Colin Beattie said that he would shortly be meeting with Ingenza, one of the featured companies, and he would ask them about this article and then report back to the CPG.

Ken Macintosh mentioned the McMittelstand Conference, which was scheduled to take place on 3rd December at Edinburgh University and featured John Swinney as one of the guest speakers. The focus of the Conference was about Scotland learning from the German economic model. Verena Gräfin von Roedern said that she had received an invitation to this Conference but was unable to attend; however, a representative from the German/British Chamber of Industry would be attending.

Ken Macintosh noted that German researchers were expected to attend a conference on shale gas in Edinburgh on 11th December.

Political Update

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In his absence, Stefan Büttner had provided the group with a personal written political update. The CPG noted his update.

Within the context of the ongoing coalition negotiations, the Consul General of Germany underlined that the two biggest German parties (CDU/CSU and SPD) had both hoped to form a coalition with a small partner (Liberal Democrats or Greens respectively) as opposed to a grand coalition. The coalition negotiations proved challenging for both parties. Colin Beattie asked how long the negotiations had been going on. Verena Gräfin von Roedern said for about two months.

John Clifford remarked on the Austrian elections, which he noted he ended in a stalemate and that the parties involved had chosen to compromise as a solution. John Clifford felt that this was resulting in a decline in both the larger parties as they get closer together, resulting in them winning fewer votes at each election.

Colin Beattie noted that the European Parliamentary elections were due in six months but that no one was speaking about them. Verena Gräfin von Roedern said that there had recently been some stories in the press about both David McAllister, the leader of the Christian Democratic Union, and also the Liberal candidate for the Euro elections. Cameron Buchanan noted that we'd be more likely to see campaigning around 2-3 months before the elections.

Colin Beattie spoke about the Scottish perspective, especially in light of today's publication of the Scottish Government's 'White Paper' on independence. Colin Keir noted that, in the case of a 'No' vote, the proposed UK European referendum could cause a crazy situation as Scotland only has 6 MEPs – the same as Humberside and fewer than Malta and Luxembourg. Colin Keir felt that this may result in an increase in UKIP MEPs and the potential for the UK to be taken out of Europe.

James Trolland mentioned that he works with the Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA), which is similar to the Christian Democrats in Germany. The SDA has fielded candidates in Scottish elections and this was an indication that the centre-right voice was evolving in Scotland.

Cameron Buchanan emphasised that Scotland only having six MEPs was a major problem. John Clifford asked if independence would result in more MEPs. Colin Beattie said this would be part of negotiations.

Culture Update

John Clifford spoke about a new initiative at Edinburgh University about cultural diplomacy. Verena Gräfin von Roedern said she would be going to the launch of this initiative. Manuela Calchini noted that Fiona Hyslop is very keen on this topic, and Colin Beattie said the CPG could ask Fiona to touch on this when she next speaks to the Group.

Petra Wend stated that she will become the auditor of German Universities from January 2014 onwards, and that her field will be international strategy.

Annette Götzkes noted that Stefan Büttner was arranging a German-Scottish symposium on transport policy on Thursday 28th November. Annette Götzkes also

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mentioned that Edinburgh's German Christmas Market was now a European Christmas Market.

Other business

Colin Beattie noted the next three meetings as per the agenda.

Colin Beattie closed the meeting at 18.59.