

Cross-Party Group on China

Minutes of Meeting

Date: 1st October 2020

Attendance

MSP Members

Dean Lockhart MSP

Bill Bowman MSP

Special Guests

Consul General Ma Qiang

Members

Individuals

Siyi Chen

Lesley-Anne Campbell

Simon Macaulay

Jessica Guo

Judith McClure

Patricia Johnston

James Brodie

Wilson Barrie

Alexia Haramis

Ian Baxter

Jane Grant

Wendy Green

Eddie Holmes

Yvette Jelfs

Max Browning

Jared Philippi

Enze Yee

Cathy Gu

Peter Kwok

Alistair Hamilton

Nathan Woolley

Lihao Lin

Stuart Hamilton

Yuwen Fortune

1 Welcome and Apologies

Dean Lockhart MSP opened the meeting welcoming members and guests to the latest meeting of the Cross-Party Group on China. He continued by welcoming the special guests who were addressing the group this evening, his Excellency Consul General Ma Qiang. Dean Lockhart MSP wishes everyone a happy Chinese National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed to.

3 Consul General Ma Qiang

Good evening. I am delighted to join you online. Today marks the 71 anniversaries of the founding of the People's Republic of China. It is also the traditional Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival. Please accept my best wishes for each and every one of you. Many significant changes came as a lot have happened since I attended the CPG China meeting for the first-time last year. The outbreak of coronavirus across the globe is the most serious health crisis we have experienced in the last hundred years. The pandemic situation remains grim and complex. Despite great pressure from epidemic control, China has worked with other countries to overcome the difficulties and provided assistance to the international community to the best of its ability. China twice donated funds to the World Health Organisation totalling 50 million US Dollars and sent 34 medical expert team to 32 countries. China also provided 283 anti-epodemic assistance to 150 countries and 4

international organisations. This demonstrates China's sincere desire to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Meanwhile, China will continue to champion multilateralism and globalisation as well as deepen opening-up, prioritising the development of Free Trade Zone and Free Trade Port so as to offer level- playing field for foreign companies. China is faced with opportunities to accelerate its economic transformation and upgrading. This public health emergency has revealed the enormous vitality and potential of "stay-home economy", "cloud office", digital economy and artificial intelligence. China and the UK can collaborate accordingly on the fast-growing sectors of robotics, smart equipment, digital economy, to name a few.

The world is experiencing profound changes in light of Covid-19, so in China-UK, China-Scotland relationship. Tough travel restrictions have compromised our cooperation and exchanges. At the end of March this year, a team of medical experts from China Shandong Province visited the UK and held a webinar with Scottish government officials and clinicians to share experience of Covid prevention, control and treatment. They also donated medical supplies to Scottish side. This has given a strong boost to our cooperation on fighting the disease. During this difficult time, I had telephone calls and correspondence with leaders of many sectors including Health Secretary, Cabinet Secretary for External Affairs, Presiding Officer of the Parliament, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Chair of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Chair of RZSS Scotland, expressing solidarity and mutual support. At the most demanding stage of Scotland's fight against the coronavirus, my Consulate and the Chinese community brought PPE supplies to organisations such as Angus Council, South Ayrshire Council, Perth & Kinross Council and the Edinburgh Zoo. Bill Kidd MSP has submitted a motion to the parliament noting our actions. China-Scotland joint response to Covid-19 adds new contents to our relationship. There is a great deal we can do together to make new contribution to safeguarding and improving global public health. I expect clear-eyed people in Scotland to work in partnership to get a head start and explore new areas of cooperation when the virus is behind us, so as to help our engagement and friendship go from strength to strength.

4 Dean Lockhart MSP

Consul General, thank you very much for the update. And I must say it was fantastic to join the call on Monday with ambassador Liu to celebrate National Day and to hear the collaboration between China and the UK. And what you've just set out a series of very exciting joint collaborations between Scotland and China which I think is very exciting despite the challenges of the pandemic, there are a number of areas where cooperation and joint working continues. I think that brings us quite neatly onto the agenda items for this evening's meeting. I think education is an area which has been tremendous growth in past few years and also on trade. We all need to adapt to current situations on the challenge of the pandemic. And it's great see that Scottish Chamber of Commerce and others are introducing innovative solutions that are still keeping dialogue open, looking at trading opportunities. Normally I should know we would be arranging physical trade missions at this stage throughout the year. That's still a possibility, but over and above that, I think the idea of moving trade missions on to virtual meeting is a very innovative and positive development as well. Maybe we move on to the first agenda item, which is possibly we talk about the current situation of mandarin language are teaching at in schools and universities in Scotland.

5 Roundtable discussion about mandarin language teaching in Scotland

Simon Macaulay – SCEN

I think the first thing to say that this is an extraordinary challenging time for schools. I'm sure the lockdown period, what we were able to do is to keep in touch with 17 chairs and mandarin across Scotland and to find out what they were able to do to provide for students to people is working from home. And keep back this particular so on the road and encouraging students to continue to their mind and then over that period. The other thing that many us have been doing this that their own professional development, there's been a lot of amazing work going along, going on with teachers and developing materials suitable for pupils and their own professional development. I think it's sad to say that it is a challenging time for all subjects in schools.

Dean Lockhart MSP

Are there enough mandarin teachers in the system to meet the demand for what's kind of situation in terms of the capacity to teach mandarin at the moment?

Simon Macaulay – SCEN

I think the short answer is no. That it's important that there are more qualified teachers of mandarin emerging. I think the three centers now I know that are providing the post graduate diploma education for qualified teachers. We need more where we're talking to the general teaching council for Scotland.

Max Browning – University of Edinburgh

I think what's really important in terms of learning mandarin and this environment is actually collaboration, especially between university in China and Scotland. I am referring as the University of Edinburgh which is my personal experience. I study mandarin at the University of Edinburgh, collaboration with universities and institutes in China. For example, I've been put on a course with Fudan University in Shanghai. Which has been very helpful because the Chinese lessons there are 4 hours a day. It's intensive. It's structured. It's virtual teaching, but it's very interactive. So it gives the students the chance to practice their spoke, written, reading and listening. So collaboration between Chinese and Scottish institutes, I think, is gonna be really key going forward obviously.

Alistair Hamilton --- University of Edinburgh

I am not involved in teaching mandarin at all but I do teach a lot Chinese students. I took my 40 students, I think it's about 25 of them are from China. So it's quite a very large part of the market. In terms of the shift online teaching is being very interesting, actually, because although we're missing out on the face to face interaction, which is incredibly important that we want to get back to it. Everything actually makes it easier for the Chinese students because they can go back and not just listen to the lecture again, but look at the captions in as well. In terms of getting here, this interval managed to travel. I think I've got two or three still to arrive. But most of them are here, order here and in quarantine. I'm under just looking forward to being we can actually get some face to face interaction going.

Nathan Woolley – University of Glasgow

I just make one observation which hasn't been made so far while the efforts of people to teach online haven't been being heroic. And everybody's doing the best to get students this experience as they have for students in Scotland learning Chinese. Anybody who's done the foreign language would be aware that it's vital to learn the language in country. You can learn the grammar and the vocabulary, but you need to understand how that language operates in the society. One concern that I have is that we had a cohort of students coming through now, who have currently missing the opportunity to be in China. I certainly hope that all universities in higher education will put make plan have plans in place. So it's due to this is opportunity to have a chance to spend some time in China in the future. I realize that China has strict entrance regulations in place at the moment which makes it difficult.

Jane Grant – Edinburgh College

My question will not question but come into is that we have 26,000 students that have to call it. They both suddenly had to get along and learning that's been an enormous challenge, but it is doing well. Our relationship with China is that we do a huge amount of English language and early years training in China. That's in Guangzhou and Hainan. And that's obviously being put on hold with a lot of last face to face. We used to do some of it. Evidently a lot of it's moved online. But certainly our clients in China are very keen for face to face teaching and interactions around some of these subject areas, particularly as some of them are technical vocational and subjects. So I just wonder if there's any sense or when those entrance and visa requirements may ease up in terms of people being able to go and work on teach in China.

Jessica Guo – AACCEE

I would like to update some business we are talking about at this moment about mandarin education as a trustee of SECN. I have bring up a education technology company. They use intelligent voice and artificial intelligence to learning language special Chinese mandarin. And they have built up a platform for who has interesting to learn Chinese language and also culture. And this platform we try to bring over to Scotland for our schools who has interesting to open their modern language specially for kind of helping teachers and students to learn at this moment until we try to make that platform it's more suitable for Scotland.

Wendy Green – Confucius Institute for Scotland in the University of Edinburgh

Majority of mandarin teachers have to return to China and they can't come back because of the pandemic. We have to get higher local teachers. We have to use some of our PhD students and morning house to teach the Confucius Institute class. We move all the classes online from this term. But the registration actually was really well much better than we expected. So we have to reduce the number of classes we can also due to the shortage of teacher. We still have more than 2/3 of like the normal student numbers. And we have students from outside of Edinburgh because it's online now. So students from England, students from North of Scotland, they can join our classes. So all I can see is there is a huge interest and increasing interest for and people learning a mandarin. There's no limits now for distance or for travel. So I think we will continue probably after we can return to classroom teaching. We will continue to offer some online classes as well. That will actually change some of our prospect of teaching. Another thing I think is we need to

work more closely with our partners as well for take teachers because I know there are many centers as supplier Chinese center.

Ian Baxter – University of Heriot Watt

We've been amazed and we've seen much higher sign up than we normally do. We have a language is an intercultural development. The teacher is mandarin within the degree schemes and we tend to compliment that providing it because causes within their degree schemes, but also that more general sort of what we call leisure learning and extra mural classes through the Confucius Institute. And we've seen a huge take up online over the summer. We've our team is much smaller this year because out of our team from last year left over the summer. But we have two new members coming here currently in isolation and about to exit isolation to join us fully. But they've been able to get up to speak quite quickly.

Dean Lockhart MSP

I think my take away from that discussion is that very encouraging trends in terms of the demands for mandarin language, both the schools and universities. I think schools might be still be ongoing challenges about meeting the demands in terms of the supply of mandarin language teachers and universities obviously some challenges in terms of face to face teaching. But the online experience seems to be in some ways, not as good, but in other ways, more accessible. And was a balance in terms of doing what's possible.

6 Roundtable discussion about trade and business

Stuart Hamilton – Scottish Chamber of Commerce

I suppose a Scottish team in the network began a program of international trade missions once over 4-year period began that last year. It's the money was made available by Scottish government. We started in earnest in November. China figured very significantly in the program that we put together from November to March. Actually, we had 6 missions with China for an urban to a world. So these were run by principally by Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, which is very strong links with Shanghai and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, which has very strong links with Shenzhen. But these missions were nationwide as far as Scott was concerned. So they weren't specific to these individual chambers, the Scottish Chamber of Commerce was actually due to itself to run a ticket to commission to Yantai in Shandong province in March. They say this year, of course that didn't happen. We had to revisit a though about the trade mission program. But an actual fact, it's looking very positive. Indeed, I think there's some real opportunities that have a reason through this crisis, because we have switched our focus now to online virtual missions. The idea of the virtual mission they were running is that they are the open up to physical missions that will take place later on. At the moment, we have an event which is aimed at Inner Mongolia and Shandong. And that will then split into a two missions later after where we will go to these regions in these provinces. Secondly, with separate groups of companies for separate sectors will be taking this opportunity to get everyone who's involved, who wants to be involved in this online in the 17th of November. What is the benefits that we've discovered, actually from having to run events online, which we don't see as a substitute ever. Have your opportunity to explore that and know online before they actually commit to go there. Once again, how we want to engage with China, we're finding the opportunities are really quite exciting. The response that we're having from China is excellent. Our role is to match businesses to businesses and have quality meetings. We are still looking for the same outcomes from which will be things that we would have with new missions.

Yvette Jelfs -- Yvette Jelfs

I just wondered how some goods I am really interested in the Inner Mongolia. There are a cashmere company which is very large cashmere company in Inner Mongolia. And it was discussing about the Royal Ascot run rights that we have here as a company in Scotland to work on that over in China. But I am also making a collection with Johnston's of Elgin here in the Scottish Borders. It's been really difficult for me as business issue in the UK, which is actually give me a lot more time to work out for my business opportunities in China anyway.

James Brodie – CBBC

Where there's been a physical trade fair going on in China, we've maybe engaged with it. I'm with people on the ground visiting the fair, but the company is back here, obviously being online. And I think it's been with me make success. I think more recently as China's move much more back to some balance of normality. It's actually become slightly more challenging to engage with when we will online. And there actually offline is starting to become a bit more nuanced to last week. Some people are online, some people are offline, is becoming slightly more and challenging to manage that in that way.

Eddie Holmes –

My question is focused on the industrial relations and commercial opportunities. There are a number of projects that China has successfully supported in Scotland. It is of commercial activity and cooperation between China and Scotland with the economic and social benefit. As a way forward or them making it more productive activity. In terms of the national business relation.

8 Conclusion remark

Consul General Ma Qiang

Thank you very much for the information share by all of you. And I am also very encouraged by the information shared here. I think there is a good potential for us to cooperate on businesses. I think this platform is very good. This is it's very good platform for business, for information sharing.

Dean Lockhart MSP

Thank you Consul General. Thank you very much for those remarks. And I think it's been a great meeting, a very positive, lots of signs of encouragement. It's been the first virtual meeting. I think it's going well. Thank you for your patience in terms of those who are waiting to contribute. And I think the contributions have been great. And thank you for joining the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: 2nd December 2020