

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON SKILLS

Wednesday 4 December 2019, 1300-1400 hours
Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament

Minutes

Present

- Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
- Clare Adamson MSP
- Martin McGuire, WorldSkills UK
- Barry Skea, New College Lanarkshire
- Raymond Stirling, City of Glasgow College
- Hazel Marshall
- Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
- Tom Hall, Colleges Scotland
- Gordon Nelson, Federation of Master Builders
- Chic Brodie, Caledonian Strategy (Scotland) Ltd
- Simon Williams, NHS Education for Scotland
- Kenny Stewart, The Open University in Scotland
- Jennifer Adamson, Lantra Scotland
- Barbara Adams, Servelec
- Sara Collier, Skills Development Scotland
- Emma Slavin, Skills Development Scotland
- Fiona Stewart, Skills Development Scotland
- Drew McGowan, West College Scotland
- Moira Houston, Chartered Banker Institute
- Ian McCulloch, ITC Training Academy
- Alison McLure, Institute of Physics

Apologies

- Beatrice Wishart MSP
- Ross Greer MSP
- Johann Lamont MSP
- Gillian Martin MSP
- Anne Galbraith, SECTT
- Jacqueline Hall, Semta
- Robert Bruce, Semta
- Aileen Ponton, SCQF Partnership
- Julie Cavanagh, SCQF Partnership
- George Brown, SQA
- Steve Borley, SQA
- Robert Girvan, CTB
- Kerry Bamber, City & Guilds
- Valerie Bauckham, Chartered Banker Institute
- Shona Matthews, Chartered Banker Institute
- Rachel Le Noan, SCVO
- Ishabel Bremner, Argyll and Bute Council
- Anne Meikle, Cearta Associates Ltd
- Tommy Breslin, STUC
- Wendy Burton, STUC
- Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation
- Kelvin Thomson, Improve Limited
- Stephen Young, Chartered Institute of Structural Engineers

1. Welcome and Apologies

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP opened the meeting and noted apologies from members of the group. Colleges Scotland was thanked for sponsoring the lunch.

2. Annual General Meeting Business

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP was re-elected as Convener of the Cross Party Group on Skills and Colleges Scotland will continue to provide the secretariat. The election of the Deputy Convener was deferred until the next meeting.

The Annual Return Form was reviewed and approved by the group.

3. Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Wednesday 9 October 2019 meeting were ratified.

4. Presentation and Discussion

Martin McGuire, WorldSkills Director for Scotland, WorldSkills UK, gave an overview of WorldSkills activity. Martin was accompanied by Barry Skea, WorldSkills UK Training Manager and Head of Faculty at New College Lanarkshire, and Raymond Stirling, a UK gold medal winning Painting and Decorating student from City of Glasgow College.

Martin highlighted that WorldSkills is an international organisation with secretariat in Amsterdam and the Chief Executive office in Australia that holds the 'Olympics of skills' on a two-yearly cycle. The next international competition will take place in Shanghai in 2021. A short video clip of the recent WorldSkills international competition held in Kazan, Russia, was shown and it was noted that Team UK came in 12th place and five students from Scotland competed, with two being awarded Medallions of Excellence. It was noted that some countries are heavily investing in WorldSkills, recognising the connection to economic development.

In Great Britain, WorldSkills UK, is the overarching body that holds WorldSkills UK Live – the biggest careers event in the UK and national skills competition finals with a wide array of subjects and competitions available for young people. Martin said that 100,000 young people are engaged every year and that a Scottish college has gained first place in the UK for the last seven years in the UK league tables.

Martin explained that the competition journey begins with regional heats and then the national finals in Birmingham. Squad UK is chosen from the medallists at the national competitions, then following training and preparation, Team UK is selected to represent the UK at the international competition. WorldSkills brings a whole range of opportunities for young people and apprentices. A short video clip taken as WorldSkills UK live was shown.

Martin said that WorldSkills UK is now looking at commissioning research around skills development and inclusivity. Martin stated that in England, Ofsted is now looking at WorldSkills competitions as part of inspections. It was noted that WorldSkills UK has frameworks available to be used and embedded, based on international standards, which are helping to improve quality, and make it easier for providers to partner with industry as well as retain and attract staff.

A question and answers session followed. Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP asked how WorldSkills was funded. Martin stated that WorldSkills UK activity was primarily funded by the Westminster government.

A question was asked about whether colleges use WorldSkills frameworks in curriculum planning. Barry Skea said that he had worked on the development of an SQA framework and that all of his students are working to the WorldSkills framework, it is embedded within the curriculum, and is reflected in the fact that three students from New College Lanarkshire won gold medals in the national competition finals in Birmingham.

Clare Adamson MSP highlighted a recent article in TESS magazine that showed the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, pictured with the German WorldSkills Team and asked how we can get people here interested and true recognition for our students. Martin McGuire stated that going to WorldSkills International in Kazan was an eye opener to see the level of investment and how other countries are doing it for economic reasons – getting a step change for the economy. He said that it is good to celebrate but we don't get the chance to celebrate Scotland's success enough.

Barbara Adams at Servelec said that working in the private sector with new technology, there are skills gaps and are keen to work with colleges and partners to develop apprenticeships and tackle close the skills gaps. Martin McGuire agreed to put them in touch with their local college.

There was a discussion around gender balance in certain skills areas and there was agreement that there needs to be a change in mindsets. Martin McGuire concurred and highlighted that at the recent WorldSkills International competition in the painting and decorating competition, the majority of medal winners were female.

Skills Development Scotland asked about the WorldSkills frameworks – where they are held and how they are shared. Barry Skea stated that they are freely available on the WorldSkills UK website. He said that they are updated every two years after every international competition; they are reviewed, based on industry input from around the world.

Jamie Halcro Johnson MSP asked Raymond Stirling how he got involved in WorldSkills and what he got out of the experience. Raymond stated that he was asked by his college to participate in a regional qualifier competition which led to competing at the national finals in Birmingham. He said that he put a lot of work into the training and that it has brought on his work a lot. He also said that he is now inspiring new students to do the same.

A question was asked about what budget is available for WorldSkills activity. Martin McGuire confirmed that there is no budget for WorldSkills activity in Scotland. He said it was down to individual providers and employers if they want to take part. It was highlighted that the WorldSkills competitors were fully funded by WorldSkills UK to participate so there is no barrier to participation. Barry Skea noted that his role as a WorldSkills UK Training Manger was voluntary.

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP asked if there was a role for competitive skills in schools. Martin replied that there was a Junior WorldSkills in Kazan for 14-16-year olds and that the Developing the Young Workforce initiative could be used to embed this. He noted that New College Lanarkshire now has a robotics club for schools on a Wednesday evening and that this is also helping to address gender balance.

Clare Adamson MSP highlighted that she had attended an Expo in Hanover for STEM which was funded for young people to attend and would be keen for something similar to happen here. Barry Skea said that more regional competitions are needed that it would be good to bring them all under one roof for young people to see.

Gordon Nelson, Federation of Master Builders and secretary to the Cross Party Group on Construction, stated that skills are frequently raised at those meetings and noted they are keen to hold a joint meeting in future.

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP stated he would be happy to consider a joint meeting.

5. Dates for Future Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 4 March 2020 and that Skills Development Scotland would be presenting on the topic of Scotland's Apprenticeship Network.

6. Close

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was closed.