

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON SKILLS

Wednesday 4 March 2020, 1300-1400 hours
Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament

Minutes

Present

- Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
- Beatrice Wishart MSP
- Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
- Mark McCahill, Colleges Scotland
- Jordan Fairlamb, Dawnfresh Seafoods
- Bethany Welsh, Balfour Beatty
- Melissa Jeffrey, Scottish Government
- Rebecca Steele, Arnold Clark
- Sara Collier, Skills Development Scotland
- Gayle McMahan, Skills Development Scotland
- Maxine McClintock, Skills Development Scotland
- Frances Porter, Skills Development Scotland
- Lauren Patterson, Skills Development Scotland
- Daniel McLean, Skills Development Scotland
- Caitlin McIver, Skills Development Scotland
- Fiona Stewart, Skills Development Scotland
- Andrew Croe, SQA
- James Morgan, SQA
- Chic Brodie, Caledonian (Strategy) Scotland Ltd
- Jacqueline Hall, Enginuity
- Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation
- Cara Hilton, CECA Scotland
- William Crowe, Institute of Structural Engineers
- Stephen Young, Institute of Structural Engineers
- Robert Girvan, CITB
- Simon Williams, NHS Education for Scotland
- Geoff Campell, Nithcree Training and Scottish Road Haulage Group
- Kevin Patrick, Lantra Scotland

Apologies

- Clare Adamson MSP
- Johann Lamont MSP
- Gillian Martin MSP
- Ross Greer MSP
- Wendy Burton, Scotland Union Learning
- George Brown, SQA
- Gordon Nelson, Federation of Master Builders
- Anne Galbraith, SECTT
- Liz Barron-Majerik, Lantra Scotland
- Moira Houston, Chartered Banker Institute
- Ishabel Bremner, Argyll and Bute Council
- Rachel Le Nolan, SCVO
- Drew McGowan, West College Scotland
- Barbara Adams, Servelec

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

2. Election of Deputy Convener

Beatrice Wishart MSP was elected as Deputy Convener of the Cross Party Group on Skills and welcomed to the group.

3. Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Wednesday 4 December 2019 meeting were ratified.

4. Presentation and Discussion

The meeting was focused on Scotland's Apprenticeship Network and took place during Scottish Apprenticeship Week. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) brought together a number of current apprentices who reflected on their experience of being an apprentice including the benefits of Scotland's Apprenticeship Network.

Melissa Jeffrey, an apprentice with the Scottish Government, stated that she joined the network in 2017 to help change the perception of apprenticeships and it has given her opportunities to go into schools to give talks and show young people how to apply. She said that she is a mentor for the apprentices within the Scottish Government.

Bethany Welsh, an apprentice at Balfour Beatty, discussed how apprentices can bring fresh talent and new ideas into companies as well as getting the opportunity to learn on the job and get a head start in the labour market compared with graduates.

Rebecca Steele, an apprentice with Arnold Clark, noted that having 4-5 years' work experience left her better prepared for her career than she would have been if she had gone to university then straight into a job.

A winner of Scotland's Apprentice of the Year, Jordan Fairlamb, works at Dawnfresh Seafoods and has progressed onto a Graduate Apprenticeship at Strathclyde University. He said that doing an apprenticeship has given him valuable work experience whilst in a paid job. Jordan is a member of the Scottish Apprenticeship Network said that this has been a great opportunity to go speak at events and do additional courses such as Mental Health First Aid and a Growth Mindset course.

The group were then given the opportunity to ask the apprentices questions. Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP said that going straight to university after school seems to be seen the default for a lot of people and asked how to better promote apprenticeship routes. Jordan Fairlamb said that they are being promoted through the Scottish Apprenticeship Network and that it was an aim to get an apprenticeship member for each school. He also said that going out to talk to schools helps. Melissa Jeffrey highlighted that Foundation Apprenticeships are a great opportunity to get a qualification while still at school and to help parents to understand what's on offer. Bethany Welsh noted the importance of making parents aware of the different options available.

A follow up question was around if awareness about apprenticeships amongst their friends and peers was increasing. Melissa stated that she went to school with people from deprived backgrounds and that a number of people were doing apprenticeships. She said that it's definitely recognised more now. Both Rebecca and Bethany agreed. Stuart McKenna asked about the opinion of apprenticeships; Melissa said that some people think it's not a recognised qualification, that it's for people who don't go to university.

Stephen Young asked about how they interacted with STEM at school. Bethany stated it was at high school whereas Jordan said that they had STEM lessons in primary school. She said that some of her friends who went to university now can't get a job but that because she chose the apprenticeship route she has a job with the Scottish Government and sees that it is a good way to get a foot in the door. She also noted the opportunities available for people with disabilities.

Chic Brodie asked if we are focusing on the skills areas that the economy needs. Fiona Stewart from SDS said that they do an annual sense check, marrying up with growth sectors and looking at changes in technology which are changing the jobs and career paths. She said they look at their frameworks and gather intelligence from industry to adapt and develop different strategies as necessary. Fiona stated that employers have a responsibility to look at how they are going to bring in young people, and that they require to be flexible to give young people opportunities.

5. Dates for Future Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 3 June 2020.

6. Close

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