

Cross Party Group on Ukraine

Tuesday 11th June 2024 18:00 – 20:00 (hybrid)

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Colin Beattie MSP
Liam McArthur MSP

Ben Macpherson MSP
Clare Adamson MSP

Invited Guests

Volodymyr Havrylov, former Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Veterans Dozen Foundation
Reuben Aitken, Scottish Enterprise
Professor Soledad Garcia-Ferrari, the University of Edinburgh
Benjamin Carey, Carey Tourism
Serhii Bahlai, Come Back Alive Foundation
Kateryna Leschysyn, Come Back Alive Foundation
Oleksandra Sologub, Nazovni
Bohdan Kramar, shevchenko.philia
Lina Liashenko, Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv
Mike Bowden, Swindon Humanitarian Aid Partnership
Tony Strutt, V-Aid
Marina Lyle, Scot Baby Box Appeal
Gail Maguire, Scot Baby Box Appeal
Gillian Cura, Scot Baby Box Appeal
Olga Vivchar, Mission of Innocents
Mariia Miskova, Mission of Innocents
Lesia Vynnychuk, Mission of Innocents

Non-MSP Group Members

Anna Kulish
Bohdan Kruk
Hanna Tekliuk
Peter David Kormylo
Olha Maksymiak
Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk
Tetiana Balanova
Anne Yarney
Oleksandr Chernykh
Juliette Lichman
Giles Sutherland

Kseniia Smyrnova
Anastasia Klimash
Illia Malanchuk
Zhenya Dove
John Hawryluk
Steven Carr
Maryan Pokhylyy
Doug Allan
Oleksandra Novatska
Valeriya Golovina

Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh represented by Andrii Kuslii
AUGB Edinburgh represented by Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk and Tetiana Balanova
AUGB Glasgow represented by Olga Lutsyshyn
Ukrainian Collective represented by Anna Sokolchuk
Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council represented by John Hawryluk
Feniks represented by Magda Czarnecka
Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland represented by Mike Milne-Picken and Councillor Graham Campbell

Apologies

Miles Briggs MSP
Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
Christine Grahame MSP
Michael Ostapko (resigned as a non-MSP individual member)
Yulianna Shalenyk

Paul O'Kane MSP
Katy Clark MSP
Russell Findlay MSP
Yevgen Gorash
Victor Radchenko

Kvitka Perehinets
Kateryna Campbell
Oleksandra Wierzbicka
Olga Biryuk
Peter Cooper
Scottish Refugee Council
The Scottish Council on Global Affairs

Vasyl Kren
Olena Litvinova-Kutsai
Dmytro Syrota
Olena Yuzkova
AUGB Dundee
Center for Civil Liberties
Nadiya

Agenda item 1 Convener

- **Welcome and Apologies**

Colin Beattie MSP (CB MSP) welcomes attendees (both in the Committee Room and online) and opens the meeting. Apologies are to be noted in the minutes.

- **Minutes 16th April 2024 Meeting**

The Minutes are approved as presented, with a minor comment from John Hawryluk, which was communicated to the Secretary.

Agenda item 2 Ukrainian Perspective

- **Volodymyr Havrylov, former Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Director, Veterans Dozen Foundation**

Volodymyr Havrylov (VH) discusses the successful rehabilitation of Ukrainian soldiers through participation in international sports events, including the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C., and the Ceteran Yomp in Scotland. He emphasises the role of sports in helping wounded veterans reintegrate into society, with many going on to lead fulfilling lives pursuing education and starting families.

VH expresses gratitude for the support from Scottish and British military, local communities, and the Scottish Government in facilitating rehabilitation efforts. He highlights the ongoing need for international partnerships to continue supporting wounded Ukrainian soldiers, particularly through joint events and rehabilitation programs.

- **Andrii Kuslii, Consul, Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh**

Andrii Kuslii (AK) emphasised the role the CPG on Ukraine could play in identifying ways to assist Ukrainian forces defending not only Ukraine but the whole of Europe.

AK references a World Bank estimate placing Ukraine's reconstruction costs at USD 486 billion, while acknowledging that Ukraine's economy is showing signs of recovery. Ukraine aims to exceed pre-war export volumes, with key sources of financing including confiscated Russian funds, the Ukrainian state budget, international partners, and donor funds.

AK emphasises the potential for Scottish Enterprise experience to aid Ukrainian business transformation. Economic collaboration between Ukraine and Scotland over the next 5-10 years could drive significant change.

In closing, AK expresses gratitude for Scotland's support of Ukrainian military veterans and proposes a memorial in Scotland to honor Ukrainian heroes who lost their lives in the war.

AK responded to the question from Colin Beattie MSP at the end of his address.

Agenda item 3 Guest Speakers on Ukraine's Sustainable Development and Growth

- **Reuben Aitken, Managing Director, International Operations, Scottish Enterprise**

Reuben Aitken (RA) provides an economic update on Ukraine, noting that despite a 30% GDP loss in 2022 due to Russia's invasion, Ukraine's economy has shown resilience, with recent GDP growth at 5.7%.

RA outlines Scottish Enterprise's commitment to supporting Ukraine through three key initiatives:

1. Knowledge Transfer and Capacity Building: RA highlights Scotland's strong track record in foreign direct investment, being the top performer in the UK outside London for the last five years. He emphasises the potential for leveraging Ukraine's global diaspora, who may wish to return and help rebuild the country, similar to how Scotland has effectively utilized its own diaspora. The "Global Scots" network of 1,200 influential businesspeople worldwide also offers valuable connections and opportunities. Scotland is ready to share its expertise in foreign direct investment and energy transition, providing mentorship to Ukrainian businesses.

2. Entrepreneurship Support: RA stresses the importance of supporting Ukrainian entrepreneurs, both in Ukraine and Scotland. Scottish Enterprise plans to create tailored proposition materials that will help Ukrainian businesses navigate systems and scale their operations.

3. Trade Opportunities: RA discusses the potential for integrating supply chains and promoting trade opportunities between Scotland and Ukraine. By aligning Ukraine's export catalog by Nazovni with Scotland's strengths and needs, they aim to drive long-lasting trade relationships. Key sectors identified include agritech, pharma, food, IT, and energy.

RA encourages further collaboration, inviting ideas to deepen partnerships and support sustainable growth in Ukraine.

Followed by questions and comments from Colin Beattie MSP, Ukrainian Consul Andrii Kuslii, John Hawryluk, Lina Liashenko, Councillor Graham Campbell, Mike Bowden, and Professor Soledad Garcia-Ferrari on various matters.

- **Professor Soledad Garcia-Ferrari, Personal Chair of Global Urbanism and Resilience, The University of Edinburgh**

Soledad Garcia-Ferrari (SGF) emphasises the growing collaboration between the University of Edinburgh and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, aimed at fostering mutual benefits through cutting-edge research, education, and policy development. This partnership is set to play a crucial role in Ukraine's post-conflict reconstruction and recovery.

As part of this initiative, the University has established joint research labs functioning as think tanks focused on environmental sustainability, geopolitical relations, languages and cultures, and the impacts of war. These labs are designed to contribute to Ukraine's academic, infrastructural, and societal recovery.

SGF acknowledges Ukraine's historical strength and determination to preserve its identity, noting that moving forward, Ukraine will seek to further strengthen its unique identity while addressing challenges related to justice and democracy. She highlights efforts to integrate Ukrainian culture and language into Edinburgh, including events such as the recent Ukrainian Week.

She also emphasises capacity-building and mobility programs for Ukrainian academics and students. Through various initiatives, the University has created opportunities for Ukrainian scholars to engage in research and development. Plans are underway to expand these efforts into long-term research institutes, prioritizing student and staff experiences, particularly in addressing Ukraine's real-world challenges and fostering global collaboration.

In addition, SGF discusses the "Education Beyond Borders" programme, which provides scholarships and support for displaced and refugee students, including 25 students arriving in September 2024. The University is committed to integrating Ukrainian culture and language within its academic framework while upholding principles of academic freedom and diversity.

SGF also highlights ongoing efforts to include public participation in Ukraine's reconstruction, recognizing the importance of community voices in rebuilding cities and regions affected by war. She concludes by emphasizing the University's commitment to standing in solidarity with Ukraine and its people, expressing optimism for future collaborations and Ukraine's potential to influence sustainable reconstruction efforts across Europe.

Followed by a question from Oleksandra Sologub about potential collaboration to revitalize the communities.

- **Benjamin Carey, International Consultant and Influencer, Carey Tourism**

Benjamin Carey (BC) discusses the importance of tourism as a key driver for economic recovery and sustainable development, even in war-torn countries like Ukraine. Tourism, BC explains, can promote shared heritage and contribute to healing in post-conflict environments, making it a uniquely powerful tool in recovery.

BC shares his personal ties to Ukraine and draws on his extensive experience in post-crisis countries such as Georgia, Iraq, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda. He emphasises the importance of developing tourism strategies early, even before a conflict ends. Countries must prepare to recover lost markets, target new ones, and diversify their tourism products, even as infrastructure may be damaged.

BC notes that Ukraine should focus on two key tourism markets: the diaspora, which will play a critical role as ambassadors of Ukraine's heritage and beauty, and solidarity tourism, driven by people from countries with strong sympathies for Ukraine, such as Georgia and Western European nations. He highlights the potential of dark tourism, while acknowledging the need to treat the tragic history of recent years with sensitivity. Ecotourism and heritage tourism also offer significant potential for Ukraine's recovery, as demonstrated by BC's previous work developing rural tourism in Scotland, where tourism proved more valuable to the rural economy than farming and forestry combined.

He stresses the importance of creating a tourism framework that brings tangible benefits to local communities. Developing tourism should prioritize sustainable community benefits by ensuring the necessary services and utilities are in place, engaging local communities in tourism delivery, and offering authentic, local experiences. BC highlights that capacity building—particularly the creation of destination management organizations—is crucial for ensuring that tourism benefits local communities directly.

Despite challenges like landmines, BC points to the beauty of Ukraine's countryside, the potential of its wine and cognac industries, and the richness of its heritage as unique selling points for the future. He concludes by encouraging the Ukrainian government to start planning for post-war tourism development now, while the opportunity to shape the industry for sustainable recovery remains.

Followed by a comment on Ukrainian culture promotion by Oleksandra Novatska.

Agenda item 4 Membership Requests

All membership requests and relevant application materials were distributed to Members by the Secretary prior to the meeting. Organisational memberships of Nazovni and shevchenko.philia were approved by the Cross-Party Group.

Agenda item 5 Members on Working Groups

[Deferred due to time constraints and will be addressed at a future meeting.]

Agenda item 6 Highlight Discussion: Voices from Ukraine

- **Giles Sutherland, Art Critic, The Times (Scotland)**

[Giles Sutherland presents in a modified order (after the Come Back Alive Foundation's input). The original order is maintained in the minutes for consistency with the agenda].

Giles Sutherland (GS) shares his experiences from a self-funded visit to Ukraine in November 2022. Frustrated by the lack of comprehensive coverage in the media, he sought a direct understanding of the situation, visiting Lviv to witness the war's impact firsthand.

He notes UNESCO's estimate that approximately \$20 billion has been lost due to the damage inflicted on Ukraine's cultural heritage. GS emphasises that the war is not just physical but also a war against culture, with Russia's military aggression tied to a systematic denial of Ukraine's existence through cultural subjugation.

Culture, according to GS, is an expression of civilization, beauty, and common values, and Ukraine's cultural manifestations, including even Eurovision winners, showcase this richness. He stresses how misrepresentations of a nation's culture can lay the groundwork for imperial aggression.

GS pays tribute to several young Ukrainians, including writers and soldiers, who have died in the war. He calls it 'a war against culture and young people.'

GS also highlights the work of Nigel Osborne, an art therapist with a long history of working in conflict zones, including Bosnia, who has supported young people and veterans in Ukraine through creative therapy.

In closing, GS shares a poem he wrote in Scots, reflecting on his intention to publish a collection of works by Ukrainian writers, translated into Scots, as a tribute to Ukraine's resilient culture.

- **Serhii Bahlai, Analyst, Come Back Alive Foundation**

Serhii Bahlai (SB) highlights the focus on military aid and the work of a charitable foundation supporting Ukrainian military. A key issue identified is the need for specialized translators for military vocabulary, which poses challenges for soldiers studying abroad. SB proposes addressing this gap as a humanitarian initiative to ensure accurate translation of military terms.

- **Kate Leschyshyn, Partner Manager, Come Back Alive Foundation**

Kate Leschyshyn (KL) reflects on international cooperation with Ukraine, highlighting the work of their NGO, and emphasises the importance of trade for Ukraine's recovery. She encourages increased trade with Ukrainian manufacturers, including small businesses producing handmade, paper, textile goods, which can be supported through online purchases.

KL also mentions various NGO projects, such as demining Ukrainian territories and improving the efficiency of Ukraine's air forces. She underscores the role of charities and NGOs in supporting Ukraine's defense and the need to expedite efforts to reduce the damage caused by the ongoing war. KL offers to share more details on projects post-meeting and invites further collaboration between Ukrainian and Scottish organizations.

Agenda item 7 Round Table Discussion

Discussions were actively held throughout the meeting, incorporating elements of the planned roundtable format.

Closing Remarks

CB MSP concludes the meeting by thanking participants and suggests that Working Group Chairs provide brief reports to be circulated before the next meeting. He also acknowledges Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk's suggestion to allow more time for member participation and discussion in future meetings.