



Report of the 52nd British Islands and Mediterranean Region Conference

25-27 April 2023
Westminster, London



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Introduction

1. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is divided into nine geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Australia, British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM), Canada, the Caribbean, the Americas and Atlantic (CAA), India, the Pacific and South-East Asia. The BIM region is made up of branches from Alderney, Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Ireland, St Helena, Scotland, Wales and the United Kingdom.
2. The annual conference of the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) of the CPA took place in Westminster, London from 25-27 April 2023. The theme of the Conference was *Inclusive and Sustainable Parliaments*, exploring the steps parliaments can take to be more inclusive of gender, disability, and race. The sessions also considered parliament's role in addressing climate

change, scrutinising climate policy and exploring ways parliaments can become more sustainable.

3. The conference brought together 50 delegates from the legislatures of Alderney, Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, allowing them to share ideas and exchange good practice. Guernsey and St Helena were unable to attend.
4. The delegation from the Scottish Parliament consisted of five cross-party Members:
 - Jeremy Balfour MSP, member of the Scotland Branch Executive Committee and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Network
 - Sarah Boyack MSP, member of the Scotland Branch Executive Committee and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians BIMR Steering Committee
 - Gillian Mackay MSP, member of the Scottish Parliamentary Bureau
 - Stuart McMillan MSP, member of the Scotland Branch Executive Committee and Regional Representative on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee
 - Michelle Thomson MSP, member of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians BIMR Steering Committee
5. A copy of the programme is attached at Annex A.



Recommendations

6. During the Annual General Meeting it was agreed that a working group should be formed to take forward the Climate Emergency theme in the region over the next year.
7. At the *Inclusive Parliaments* plenary it was agreed that the Scottish Parliament will share the findings from the one year follow up report of the [A Parliament for All: Report of the Parliament's Gender Sensitive Audit](#).

Programme

Tuesday 25 April 2023

BIMR Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee meeting

8. The conference began with a Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee meeting attended by Michelle Thomson MSP and Sarah Boyack MSP.
9. Rt Hon. Maria Miller MP, Chair; and Rhian Passmore MS, Vice Chair of the BIMR CWP network chaired the meeting and members discussed activities for 2023 and how to use the Regional Strengthening Funds.
10. "It was great to catch up with the Women's Committee representatives in person, especially given the fact that there had been elections in a couple of places and there were some powerful reflections about getting women to stand more than once and how to support each other." - Sarah Boyack MSP



Wednesday 26 April 2023

Official welcome

11. The conference was officially opened by a welcome from Rt Hon. Maria Miller MP, delegation Chair of the UK Branch; Chris Elmore MP, BIMR Regional Representative; and Jon Davis, BIMR Regional Secretary.

Keynote Speech: Rt Hon. Karen Bradley MP, Chair of the Procedure Committee

12. During the first session Rt Hon. Karen Bradley MP, Chair of the Procedure Committee spoke about the practice and procedure of the House of Commons,

including allowing babies in the chamber, proxy voting and how they reviewed procedure under coronavirus restrictions.

13. During the question-and-answer (Q&A) session delegates asked about sitting times, the benefits and disadvantages of remote working and the effects of these topics on parliamentary staff.

Plenary: Inclusive Parliaments

14. Session two was chaired by Rt Hon. Dame Maria Miller MP and discussed what it means to be an inclusive parliament. Jeremy Balfour MSP gave a presentation on the findings of the Scottish Parliament's [A Parliament for All: Report of the Parliament's Gender Sensitive Audit](#) and highlighted that the Scottish Parliament will be looking to do a follow up report in one years' time to evaluate what has come from the audit recommendations.

15. **It was agreed that the Scottish Parliament will share the follow up report once it has been published.**

16. Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Member of House of Lords spoke about her experiences in the House of Lords; the support provided by other members and the hurdles candidates with disabilities experience when standing for election.

17. Finally, Baroness Sandip Verma, Member of House of Lords spoke about improving data collection across interparliamentary organisations.

18. During the Q&A members asked about the influence of party whips in regard to the selection of members to speak in debates and committee membership; support available to candidates standing for election; the importance of attracting young people into politics and that all groups of society are represented in parliament; that diversity issues are often not connected but looked at independently and need to be joined up; and that diversity of parliamentary staff also needs to be evaluated.

19. "The session incorporated the Gender sensitive audit and the work the Scottish Parliament and parties have undertaken to make Parliamentary groups and the Scottish Parliament more inclusive. There was an understanding that progress has been made in Scotland and across the region but there still remains a great deal more to be done to deliver Parliaments that are representative of their electorate."- Stuart McMillan MSP

20. "Parliamentary diversity and standards were very interesting sessions. The differences in the way relationships are developed maintained in different legislatures and how the size of those legislatures affects that came through strongly in conversation and I think this may be something to reflect on as individuals but how Parliament facilitates that at the start of a session. The ongoing need to improve diversity and inclusion amongst politicians also came through strongly and while this is something that the Scottish Parliament is making strides in, we must ensure that it continues to improve and doesn't go backwards. " - Gillian Mackay MSP

21. “There was an interesting discussion on career politicians and need for all ages and backgrounds being represented. Our Parliament has started work on this but more needs to be done in and outside the Parliament.”- Jeremy Balfour MSP



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Facilitated Workshop: Workplace Equality Networks

22. During this session delegates were asked to work in groups to discuss what parliaments use to boost diversity & inclusion. The workshop was facilitated by Anne Moghaddami, Senior Diversity & Inclusion Manager of the House of Commons and Jo Jengo from CPA UK.
23. Delegates compared practices across their legislatures including diversity & inclusion networks; accessibility of buildings; the issue that lack of funding can limit the candidates able to stand for election; the work of Youth Parliaments; provision of British Sign Language and equality legislation.
24. “The session on diversity talked about the challenges of getting elected and then working in a Parliament. Many of the issues are the same across the Commonwealth which was interesting. Some of the work we have done needs to be shared with others, while we have lessons to learn from other Parliaments as well.”- Jeremy Balfour MSP



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Address by The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the House of Commons

25. The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the House of Commons addressed the delegates and spoke about cyber security; resources available through CPA; respectful debate; the influence of social media; and gender equality.
26. Delegates asked about the House of Commons accommodating different accessibility needs; and selection of parliamentary questions.
27. "We had an excellent talk from the Speaker of the House of Commons. He described the issue of cybersecurity and the need to invest in appropriate software. Every Jurisdiction must take this seriously and I will be talking to our team about this."- Jeremy Balfour MSP

BIMR Annual General Meeting

28. At the Annual General Meeting Stuart McMillan MSP and Hon. Leona Vidal-Roberts provided delegates with an update on the work of the CPA Executive Committee (ExCo).
29. "I am one of our three Regional Representatives to the CPA Executive Committee... I focussed my comments on the long running situation regarding the status of the CPA. I am on the Executive Committee working group looking at the issue and am pleased that progress is being made to conclude this matter."- Stuart McMillan MSP
30. Hon. Leona Vidal-Roberts highlighted that this will be her last BIMR conference before her role as regional representative comes to an end at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Ghana in September 2023.

31. Delegates then discussed options for themes for 2023/24 and decided to keep *Climate Emergency* for another year until the next BIMR conference in St Helena 2024.
32. **It was also agreed that a working group, made up of members across the region, would take forward this work.**
33. Finally, Deputy Adrian Gabriel from Guernsey was elected as the new Regional Representative of the Small Branches Steering Committee.



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Address by CPA Secretary Stephen Twigg

34. During the final session for the day, CPA Secretary Stephen Twigg discussed the value of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) networks.
35. He also encouraged delegates to take part and spread awareness of the online parliamentary academy; and provided an update on the CPA status.
36. Finally, he highlighted that 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of CPA.

Reception at Speaker's house

37. In the evening delegates attended a networking event at the Speaker's house hosted by the Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP.
38. "As ever the networking was really good to make connections and have informal discussions about what we are doing in different legislatures."- Sarah Boyack MSP

27 April 2023

Plenary: Parliamentary Standards and Behaviour

39. Day three began with a session on Parliamentary Standards and Behaviours. The panel included Daphne Caine MHK, Isle of Man; Daniel Greenberg CB, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, UK; and Deputy Rob Ward, Jersey.

40. The panel discussed preservation of the democratic process; the introduction of an independent Pan Island commissioner for standards that work between Jersey and Guernsey; the importance of trust in the process and the person completing that role; induction programmes for new members; and registrars of interest.
41. It was suggested that the BIMR secretariat should consider an online seminar on this topic to allow members to delve deeper into the subject area.
42. "It was a fascinating session and highlighted that across the Commonwealth, Parliaments and elected members are grappling with similar issues. However the scale and size of some regional jurisdictions highlighted that there are places with no such commissioner office."- Stuart McMillan MSP
43. "A fascinating session and quite my favourite. I was struck by the in-depth knowledge of Daniel Greenberg and it was a privilege to listen to him. It was a timely reminder of the standards expected of parliamentarians which appears too easy to forget in the hurly-burly of parliaments." – Michelle Thomson MSP



Plenary: Parliamentary Movements to Address the Climate Emergency

44. Sarah Boyack MSP chaired the session on Parliamentary Movements to Address the Climate Emergency. The panel included Chris Venables, Deputy Director of Politics and Partnerships, Green Alliance Secretariat; Deputy Hilary Jeune, Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Jersey; and Baroness Hayman, Co-Chair of Peers for the Planet.
45. The panel discussed the importance of cross-policy work; evidence based research to develop policies; the importance of financing to deliver policies and commitments; a strong scrutiny process; democratic buy in from the public through citizens' assemblies; the importance of parliamentarians sharing experiences; and incorporating climate targets etc into all legislation.
46. "This presented all the different jurisdictions at varying stages in their journey yet with shared challenges. Possibility one of the best sessions for gaining contacts to engage with in the future. Well chaired by our own Sarah."- Michelle Thomson MSP

47. “The session on climate in particular gave some practical and useful insights into how other legislatures are dealing with the climate crisis. The measures that are being taken and how these are communicated was interesting to hear and I will take some of this forward to issues I am looking at.” – Gillian Mackay MSP



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Committee Exercise on Climate Emergency: The Decarbonisation on the Energy Sector

48. In the afternoon delegates were divided into two groups and carried out a witness evidence session. Following the session they compared practices in their parliaments, including set up of the rooms; types of questions asked; and membership of committees.
49. “This was both informative but also an enjoyable way to finish of the main session of the conference. In essence, we were split into groups and became an Energy Scrutiny Committee. The ‘panellists’ were the former COP26 President, Alok Sharma MP and a climate scientist. Both were played by CPA UK staff. In addition to the viewing the various styles of questioning from colleagues, the most enlightening aspect were the answers from the COP 26 President. Some of the replies were actually words used by Mr Sharma when he was giving evidence to a committee in the past. Other aspects were ad-libbed by the actor. It was genuinely concerning that some factual comments were utilised as it was clear there was a great sense of ambiguity on show. Ultimately though, it did provide an interesting way to learn and engage with colleagues.”- Stuart McMillan MSP
50. “I think the principle of training is good, but wasn’t convinced by the Committee session. Could have maybe been a better use of time by getting say three different report backs on what has worked in different legislatures? The exercise was also at the end of the event and if we’d had more time we could have finished with something like a “top five ways” to make progress on climate change discussion.”- Sarah Boyack MSP



Feedback

51. "I was pleased to have been given the opportunity to participate in the conference. As one of the intake of 2021 which had an uneasy start due to COVID Restrictions, it made my heart sing to be drawn out of the fairly routine fare. I have already agreed to work with a member of the Welsh Senedd on some equalities issues. I intend to follow up with a member of the Jersey delegation on shared challenges around our journey to net zero." – Michelle Thomson MSP
52. "Thought it was an excellent conference. The Conference Theme – Inclusive Parliaments was good. I thought it was an opportunity to learn from each other in terms of best practice."- Sarah Boyack MSP

Conclusion

53. Jeremy Balfour MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Gillian Mackay MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP and Michelle Thomson MSP represented the Scottish Parliament at the 52nd British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference.
54. The theme of the conference was "Inclusive and Sustainable Parliaments", exploring the steps parliaments can take to be more inclusive of gender, disability, and race. The sessions also considered parliament's role in addressing climate change, scrutinising climate policy and exploring ways parliaments can become more sustainable.
55. The members took part in all sessions over the three days. Furthermore, Sarah Boyack MSP chaired the *Parliamentary Movements to Address the Climate Emergency* plenary, Jeremy Balfour MSP was a panellist on the *Inclusive Parliaments* plenary and Stuart McMillan MSP provided members with an update from the CPA Executive Committee at the Annual General Meeting.
56. The conference allowed for in depth discussion and shared learning across a range of parliaments and topics. Members particularly found it useful sharing

best practices and developing relationships with colleagues across the region, enhancing their work as parliamentarians.

Costs

57. The cost of the outward visit totalled £1,214.26. This covered travel and expenses for five Members and the Branch Secretary.

**Secretariat for CPA Scotland Branch
June 2023**

Annexe A: Programme

ARRIVAL DAY	
TUESDAY 25 APRIL	
Time	Description of Activity
1600 - 1730	BIMR Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee Meeting. <i>By invitation only.</i>
1800 -1930	Welcome Reception <i>All Delegates.</i>
END OF DAY 1	

DAY 2	
WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL	
Time	Description of Activity
0900 -1000	Tour of Parliament
1000 - 1030	Official Welcome Speakers: Rt Hon. Dame Maria Miller MP, Chair of CPA UK Chris Elmore MP, British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Representative and Treasurer of CPA UK Jon Davies, British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Secretary
1030 - 1100	Keynote Speech: Rt Hon. Karen Bradley MP, Chair of the Procedure Committee <i>The House of Commons Procedure Committee considers the practice and procedure of the House of Commons. It has recently carried out enquiries on proxy voting and babies in the chamber, and reviewed procedure under coronavirus restrictions.</i>
1100 – 1130	Break
1130 – 1300	Plenary: Inclusive Parliaments <i>What does it mean to be an Inclusive Parliament, and how can this be sustained? As an introduction to the conference’s theme, this session explores what meaningful inclusion means to diverse groups and what parliaments can do to ensure it is embedded in its culture. Delegates will also explore the Scottish Parliament’s recent gender review ‘A Parliament for All: Report of the Parliament’s Gender Sensitive Audit.’</i> Chair: TBC Speakers: Jeremy Balfour MSP, The Scottish Parliament Baroness (Sandip) Verma, House of Lords, UK Parliament
1400 – 1515	Facilitated Workshop: Workplace Equality Networks <i>The previous session highlighted the different experiences of diverse groups and what is needed to build a sustainable inclusive environment. This interactive session looks to highlight one approach taken in the form of Workplace Equality Networks.</i>

	<p>Facilitator: Jo Jengo, Projects & Programmes manager, CPA UK</p> <p>Speaker: Anne Moghaddami, Senior D&I Manager, Diversity and Inclusion, Governance Office, House of Commons</p>
1515 - 1545	Break
1545 – 1615	Address by The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the House of Commons Followed by Q&A.
1615 – 1730	BIMR AGM
1730	Address by CPA Secretary- General Stephen Twigg Followed by Q&A.
1800 – 1930	Reception at Speaker’s House
END OF DAY 2	

DAY 3	
THURSDAY 27 APRIL	
Time	Description of Activity
0930 – 1030	<p>Plenary: Parliamentary Standards and Behaviour <i>Considering how different legislatures apply and monitor codes of conduct, registers of interests and how they investigate alleged breaches.</i></p> <p>Chair: Mrs Daphne Caine MHK, Isle of Man</p> <p>Speakers: Daniel Greenberg CB, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, UK Deputy Rob Ward, Jersey</p>
1100 – 1215	<p>Plenary: Parliamentary Movements to Address the Climate Emergency <i>This session will explore the role parliamentarians and parliamentary groups can play to address and mitigate climate change. During the session we will discuss challenges parliamentary groups and parliamentarians face to push climate policy, as well as opportunities and objectives for the future.</i></p> <p>Chair: Sarah Boyack MSP, Scotland</p> <p>Speakers: Chris Venables, Deputy Director of Politics and Partnerships, Green Alliance Secretariat Deputy Hilary Jeune, Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Jersey Baroness Hayman, Co-Chair of Peers for the Planet</p>

1430 – 1630	<p>Committee Exercise on Climate Change Emergency: The Decarbonisation of the Energy Sector</p> <p><i>This session will explore the role parliamentarians and parliamentary groups can play to address and mitigate climate change. During the session we will discuss challenges parliamentary groups and parliamentarians face to push climate policy, as well as opportunities and objectives for the future.</i></p> <p>Facilitators: Joe briggs, Committee Specialist, House of Commons UK Eleanor Ferguson, Committee Specialist, House of Commons UK</p>
1630 – 1700	<p>Facilitated Feedback and Learning</p> <p><i>Facilitated discussion.</i></p> <p>Led by: Helen Haywood, Deputy Chief Executive, CPA UK Jo Jenga, Projects & Programmes Manager, CPA UK</p>
1730 – 1830	<p>Closing Reception</p>
END OF CONFERENCE	