



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

53rd British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference

18- 25 May 2024, Jamestown, St Helena



Photo: CPA St Helena

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 53rd British Islands and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Conference took place in Jamestown, St Helena 18-25 May 2024. The theme of the conference was *Addressing Challenges to Sustainable Development in Times of Global Uncertainty* and included discussions on Digital Reforms and Artificial Intelligence; Decentralised Finance; Green Energy Solutions; Climate Emergency; Tourism Development; Improving Agriculture Productivity; and Benefits of a Youth Parliament. There were also workshops on Social Housing, Population, Marine Environment and Scrutiny Committees.
3. In addition to the above sessions, the conference included the BIMR's Annual General Meeting and a BIMR Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Session.

4. The conference provided delegates with the opportunity to strengthen their regional network and benefit from peer-to-peer discussions on issues affecting parliaments and parliamentarians in the BIMR. It brought together 49 delegates from Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Northern Ireland, St Helena, Scotland, United Kingdom, Wales and CPA HQ. Alderney and Malta were unable to attend.
5. The cross-party delegation from the Scottish Parliament consisted of three Members:
 - Jeremy Balfour MSP, member of the Scotland Branch Executive Committee and Regional Champion of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Network (CPwD)
 - Sarah Boyack MSP, member of the Scotland Branch Executive Committee and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians BIMR Steering Committee
 - Stuart McMillan MSP, member of the Scotland Branch Executive Committee and Regional Representative on the CPA International Executive Committee (ExCo)
6. A copy of the programme is attached at Annex A.



Recommendations

7. Jeremy Balfour MSP agreed to share information on funding available to candidates living with a disability who are standing for election in Scotland with the BIMR secretariat.
8. IRO have liaised with Security colleagues and will share information on the Scottish Parliament's social media monitoring programme with the BIMR secretariat.
9. Following the conference, IRO brought the formation of the LGBTI network to the attention of all MSPs and asked for volunteers to join the working group.

10. Stuart McMillan MSP intends to speak to Members on the Scottish Parliament Future Forum and Education, Children and Young People Committee about further engagement on AI.
11. IRO will forward the views of Members to the Parliament's Resilience Team that Members see a need for a tech strategy and the importance of continuing to share best practice and cooperate with other legislatures.
12. Stuart McMillan MSP intends to write to Members on the Economy and Fair Work Committee to highlight the workshop at the St. Helena Conference and to ask the committee to consider a focused inquiry in decentralised finance.
13. IRO will pass on the suggestion from Members to SPICe that they may wish to consider writing a briefing on Decentralised Finance and its relevance to Scotland.
14. Jeremy Balfour MSP intends to feed back to Members of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee that the issues faced in Scotland relating to social housing are very similar across the BIMR and share the different solutions that were discussed at the seminar.
15. Stuart McMillan MSP agreed to share the reports quoted in his presentation during the tourism session with the BIMR secretariat.
16. Stuart McMillan MSP intends to speak to Members on the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to suggest that *'the effects of an ageing population in Scotland'* may be a suitable inquiry topic.
17. IRO will pass on the suggestion to SPICe that they may wish to consider writing a new briefing on the effects of an aging population in Scotland.
18. Sarah Boyack MSP intends to follow up with colleagues in St Helena regarding their Graduate Scheme and share this with colleagues in the Scottish Parliament.
19. Stuart McMillan MSP has shared the contact details of a Director in Visit Scotland who was happy to liaise with St. Helena on assistance with tourism initiatives
20. Stuart McMillan MSP has passed on the two Marine Tourism Strategies that have emanated from the Cross Party Group on Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism to the BIMR Secretariat.
21. Following the conference, IRO shared the BIMR 2024/25 strategic theme with all MSPs and asked for volunteers to join the working group on Digital Transformation.
22. Sarah Boyack MSP intends to follow up with BIMR colleagues on the issue about the Overseas Territories Scholarship funding being removed.
23. Sarah Boyack MSP intends to share information with BIMR colleagues on the Scottish Youth Parliament and the work that they do.

Programme

Monday 20 May

Official Opening Ceremony of the Conference

24. The conference was opened with a welcome by Hon Ronald Coleman (St Helena). This was followed by Hon Julie Thomas, Chief Minister (St Helena) who outlined the programme for the week. Finally, Hon Cyril Gunnell,

President, CPA St Helena Branch (St Helena) gave an opening address to the delegates.



Update on CPA Matters

25. Following the opening ceremony, Hon. Ian Liddell-Grainger MP, Chairperson of the CPA ExCo (CPA HQ) updated delegates on CPA matters including on the CPA's legal status. He also highlighted the various networks of the CPA, the CPA Academy and the importance of legislatures to network and learn from each other.
26. Jeffrey Hyland, Editor of The Parliamentarian and Communications Manager at CPA HQ, outlined the upcoming 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) which is taking place 3-8 November 2024 in Sydney, hosted by the New South Wales Parliament. He also gave an overview of the CPA's Parliamentary Academy, upcoming residency programmes, and other opportunities for members to get involved in CPA activities.



Annual General Meeting

27. Stuart McMillan MSP chaired the Annual General Meeting (AGM) as the longest serving regional rep on the CPA ExCo present in person. He was joined by Deputy Mary Le Hegarat (Jersey), member of ExCo; Hon. Chris Elmore MP (UK), member of ExCo; Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP (UK), regional rep on the CWP Network; Deputy Adrian Gabriel (Guernsey),

regional rep on the CPA Small Branches Network; and Jeremy Balfour MSP, regional rep on the CPwD Network.

28. Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP (UK), sponsor of the [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross \(Status\) Bill](#), provided a more in-depth overview of the progress of the bill, which she hoped would receive royal consent before mid-July.
29. Sarah Dickson OBE, the BIM Regional Secretary provided an update on the BIMR Strategy; theme for 2023/24, during which Daphne Caine MHK (Isle of Man) spoke about the work of the [Manx Blue Carbon Project](#) on the Isle of Man; and the potential theme for 2024/25.
30. Stuart McMillan MSP provided an update on the progress made on the recommendations agreed during the CPC in Ghana 2023; as well as on what was discussed at the last CPA ExCo meeting.
31. Next, Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP (UK) spoke about her role on the new working group of the CPA Interim Executive Board. She also gave a report on the work of the CWP Network.
32. Deputy Adrian Gabriel (Guernsey) updated the delegates on the work of the CPA Small Branches Network.
33. Similarly, Jeremy Balfour MSP provided an update on the work of the CPwD Network. In particular, that they are hoping to undertake a census of the number of members in the CPA living with a disability and a piece of work across the CPA to encourage more people living with a disability to understand what is preventing them from standing for election.
34. **Jeremy Balfour MSP agreed to share information on funding available to candidates living with a disability who are standing for election in Scotland with the BIMR secretariat.**
35. The next agenda item, jointly introduced by the Scottish and Welsh Branches, was to establish an LGBTQ+ network in the BIMR. Stuart McMillan MSP and Rhun ap Iorwerth MS (Wales) spoke about the purpose of the network. It was agreed that the network would be established on a regional level to start with and that branches who wished to join could do so but that it was not obligatory. The network would be promoted in the Parliamentarian, sharing stories and resources supporting LGBTQ+ members with the hope that branches from other regions might also wish to join.
36. Natasha Asghar MS (Wales) announced that the next BIMR conference will be hosted by the Welsh Parliament.
37. Finally, the delegates discussed the impact that media has when they find out that members are travelling abroad for conferences.

38. **IRO have liaised with Security colleagues and will share information on the Scottish Parliament's social media monitoring programme with the BIMR secretariat.**
39. *"It was encouraging to hear about progress being made across the Commonwealth in regard to engagement. I got the opportunity to speak briefly about disabled issues.*
40. *Out of the session I have had conversations with a number of other jurisdictions on how they can be helped to get more disabled individuals elected. I am following up in particular with someone from Gibraltar and St. Helena." – Jeremy Balfour MSP*
41. *"The AGM is the most formal part of the conference and the updates from colleagues and the opportunity to be quizzed by colleagues is important for transparency. As I was the most senior regional rep, I chaired the session.*
42. *The AGM passed smoothly, and it was helpful to have the Chair of Executive Committee (Ian Liddell-Grainger MP) in attendance. Ian provided a helpful synopsis of the legislative process of the status bill that was taking place in the UK Parliament. At this time, all attendees were hopeful that the bill would successfully conclude its Parliamentary passage. Little did we know what would happen two days later.*
43. *As our regional rep on the Governance Working Group, I provided everyone with an update on the location of CPA headquarters. This work continues.*
44. *Finally, I raised the issue of a regional LGBTQ+ network. This emanated from a workshop at the last CPC on Ghana and after dialogue with Adam Price MS (Wales). Scotland and Wales branches were content to promote the idea of a regional network to have wider engagement for elected representatives. After discussion, the proposal was passed unanimously."- Stuart McMillan MSP*
45. *"Was good to get the update on the CPA Bill at the UK Parliament even though it has been disrupted because of the UK elections and the need for another MP to take forward.*
46. *The issues I picked up in the AGM were: The digital work of Parliaments and the need to think more about how we share resources and knowledge, the option of doing regional meetings online.*
47. *I'd also written down housing as a future issue we could discuss."- Sarah Boyack MSP*
48. **Following the conference, IRO brought the formation of the LGBTI network to the attention of all MSPs and asked for volunteers to join the working group.**



Digital Reforms and Artificial Intelligence

49. The first plenary session was on Digital Reforms and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The panel consisted of Gareth Drabble (St Helena Government IT security officer), Lord Lisvane (UK), and Natasha Ashgar MS (Wales) and was chaired by Hon Andrew Turner (St Helena).
50. Delegates discussed how using AI helps to improve BIMR legislatures' efficiency, cyber security and the potential impact of digital transformation for various sectors such as healthcare, education and governance.
51. Delegates raised concerns about how members and legislatures can be more proactive to highlight that what you see on social media is not always the truth. Dr Steve Aiken OBE (NI) offered to share findings from the [British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly \(BIPA\) Committee on European Affairs](#)' report on the topic.
52. Natasha Ashgar MS (Wales) spoke about how she adds a copyright marker on all social media to prove what she posts vs fake material.
53. Other delegates spoke about the importance of working together to share information on potential hacking occurrences and best practices.
54. The topic of AI written speeches was also raised and it was suggested that AI can be both a positive (Enigma machine) and negative (fake news) and that it comes down to the morals of the user.
55. *"This was a whole new world to me. I think in particular the issue of elections and how we can be influenced by social media in a negative way is something I had not thought about... I have shared some of this with other colleagues and I think more work will come out of this in regards to the Parliament and political parties."*- Jeremy Balfour MSP
56. *"AI is one of the most important issues the global society faces today. A varied discussion took place including how AI can be misused in the run up*

to elections and how this could have an effect on any result. The fast pace of change of AI highlights the challenge for any jurisdiction to keep up. This is not a new issue but will be more acute than previous technological developments. Many aspects were discussed but fundamentally, branches and legislatures need to fully engage with the subject. The Scottish Parliament's Futures Forum has started this already in the current session but more activity must be considered. The Scottish Parliament engaging with schools, as it already does with other projects, could be a way of increasing the potential and challenges threats of AI to help wider societal understanding.”- Stuart McMillan MSP

57. Stuart McMillan MSP intends to speak to Members on the Scottish Parliament Future Forum and Education, Children and Young People Committee about further engagement on AI.

58. “There was quite a contrast between colleagues’ views. Natasha Ashgar saying that AI is the future and it could be helpful for using in bilingual contexts and in education but that we don’t have the regulation we need, for example on people using ChatGP for speeches.

59. Gareth Drabble from St Helena highlighted the sheer range of different types of AI, how they can help respond to cyber-attacks, but the need for more work to understand how they can be used by state actors and criminals.

60. There is a need for a tech strategy given both the risks and opportunities to respond to cyber attacks highlighted by Gareth Drabble from St Helena Government. Worth continuing best practice and cooperation across our legislatures.”- Sarah Boyack MSP

61. IRO will forward the views of Members to the Parliament’s Resilience Team that Members see a need for a tech strategy and the importance of continuing to share best practice and cooperate with other legislatures.



Decentralised finance, international finance and legal frameworks

62. In the afternoon Hon Christine Scipio, Minister of Environment, Natural Resources & Planning (St Helena) chaired a session on decentralised finance (DeFi), international finance and legal frameworks. The panel was made up of Hon Mark Brooks, Minister of Treasury & Economic Development (St Helena), Damian Burns (Director of Economic Development, St Helena Government), Hon Roy Clinton (Gibraltar), Hon Giovanni Origo (Gibraltar).
63. Deliberations included regulatory frameworks for DeFi, approaches to tackling illicit finance, revenue generation, and the potential for enhanced financial inclusion, challenges related to security and consumer protection, and the role of emerging technologies such as block chain for the wider economy.
64. Minister Mark Brooks (St Helena) and Damian Burns (Director of Economic Development, St Helena Government) spoke about St Helena's ambitions to become less dependent on aid. St Helena has an issue of a declining population and are investigating various options of how to attract people to live in St Helena. Businesses are suffering, there are lots of vacancies and as a result the government are losing income from income tax. It has also caused issues with the health care system. As the majority of the population are older, there is a shortage of both care homes and staff to care for the elderly.
65. Hon Roy Clinton (Gibraltar) spoke about how Gibraltar was one of the first jurisdictions to attract anti-money laundering (AML) investments but that it is easy for small jurisdictions to be criticised over new legislation, so they need to be extra cautious.
66. *"The main thing I took from the session was in regard to how you restructure an economy which is failing. Not necessarily lots to take back to our Parliament but there were a number of conversations with the delegates there about what help we could give the island."*- Jeremy Balfour MSP
67. *"This was a thought-provoking session bearing in mind the economic importance finance places for some regional members. In my opinion, the basis of this discussion centred on the potential opportunity for St. Helena to consider the finance sector as an economic driver. The Island is considering Blockchain to decentralise finance. Many points were highlighted during the discussion including the wider fintech sector, blockchain being just a tool and not the end result in itself, the limitations with blockchain, would like a principles based approach to decentralised finance, and consumer protection being crucial."*
68. *I believe a focused committee inquiry in this sector would be helpful. The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee between 2007-2011 undertook the Banking Inquiry and the current Economy and Fair Work Committee has undertaken work on the National Strategy for Economic Transformation. I*

am sure the committee undertaking an inquiry in this area could lead to helpful economic opportunities in the country.”- Stuart McMillan MSP

69. **Stuart McMillan MSP intends to write to speak to Members on the Economy and Fair Work Committee to highlight the workshop at the St. Helena Conference and to ask the committee to consider a focused inquiry in decentralised finance.**
70. **IRO will pass on the suggestion from Members to SPICe that they may wish to consider writing a briefing on Decentralised Finance and its relevance to Scotland.**



Tuesday 21 May

71. On the Tuesday was St Helena day, a public holiday, and the delegates were taken on a tour showcasing the island.

Wednesday 22 May

The role of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network

72. On Wednesday morning Sarah Boyack MSP chaired a panel of members of the BIMR CWP Steering Committee including Deputy Mary Le Hegarat (Jersey), Hon Gillian Brooks (St Helena), Hon Rosemary Bargo (St Helena), Natasha Asghar MS (Wales) and Helen Haywood, BIMR CWP Secretary. Associate Members from CPA St Helena Branch., A small group of women business owners and leaders in the community also attended the meeting.
73. The panel explained how the network and its activities support them as women parliamentarians and promotes women's representation in decision making bodies. They encouraged the promotion and advocacy of gender equality in parliaments by all parliamentarians and spoke about the importance of working with male colleagues.

74. Sarah Boyack MSP spoke about the successful young women's session which took place as part of the [10th BIMR CWP Conference](#) held in Malta on International Women's Day.
75. Deputy Mary Le Hegarat (Jersey) spoke about how only a few years ago parliamentarians in Jersey were not paid so it was a challenge for women to be able to become parliamentarians, but in 2022 they went from 14 female members to 22 female members as well as from more diverse backgrounds.
76. Hon Gillian Brooks and Hon Rosemary Bargo (St Helena) talked about St Helena having a very gender equal society and the importance of how we send messages to men who wish to take on stereotypically female roles, such as working in the healthcare sector.
77. Natasha Asghar MS (Wales) highlighted that in Wales the organisation She Votes bring young women to the Welsh Parliament to show them how it works. Furthermore, the Welsh Government have introduced the [Senedd Cymru \(Electoral Candidate Lists\) Bill](#) (currently in stage 1) aimed to ensure the Senedd is more representative of the gender make-up of Wales. The Welsh Parliament also has a Women's Caucus.
78. Other delegates asked about provisions for Members relating to childcare, parental leave and job sharing. They also raised concerns about social media's influence on Members' children and the fact that many members still need to choose between being a mother or a member of parliament.
79. *"Sarah Boyack MSP chaired this session which provided a wide variety of similar issues we are aware of in Scotland. In contrast, colleagues from St. Helena highlighted how they found very little roadblocks against women on the island. They indicated that at some point, every key position on the island has been filled by females. Gender Sensitive audits, reports of violence against women and girls, getting men to speak up for women, the need to engage with young people to seek election and female activity on social media were important points raised."*- Stuart McMillan MSP
80. *"This was a good opportunity to make all colleagues aware of the CWP network and the challenges experienced by different members and the best practice that is being developed. For me the main thing is continuing to develop our work on the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit and continue to share our work going forward and give updates on our Women's Caucus and our networking in Scotland."*- Sarah Boyack MSP



Photo: CPA HQ

Green Energy Solutions

81. The session on Green Energy Solutions was chaired by Hon Juan Watterson, Speaker of the House of Keys (Isle of Man). Panellists included Baroness Hooper (UK), Sarah Boyack MSP, Ian Liddell-Grainger MP (CPA HQ) and Janet Lawrence (Connect Saint Helena Ltd (Utilities Service Provider)).
82. The session covered the role of parliaments/parliamentarians in considering how we generate energy with a significantly reduced zero carbon footprint which creates a more environmentally- friendly, self-replenishing and non-polluting environment.
83. Baroness Hooper (UK) spoke about different types of green energy, challenges of storing and sourcing green energy and the importance of education of best practice.
84. Sarah Boyack MSP spoke about the importance of working with communities and businesses, recycling waste from the new technologies, e.g. transforming wind turbine blades into park benches, and the importance of involving constituents to help them see the benefits to them.
85. Ian Liddell-Grainger MP spoke about the cost to the consumer, uncertainty of creating our own energy and that the CPA is a perfect platform to learn from each other ranging from small islands like St Helena to large countries like Canada and Australia.

86. Other delegates asked about who holds the government to account for achieving ambitious goals, to which it was agreed that it was parliamentarians and in turn the voters. It was also raised that it is important to use the sources available to them, for example using the sea in St Helena.
87. They also spoke about the collaboration between private and publicly owned companies in implementing new practices, and how to best bring the public with you when suggesting innovative solutions.
88. *“This was a wide session with many aspects we regularly discuss in the Scottish Parliament. It’s clear the opportunity and ambition to invest in more green energy exists across the region but finance, grid connections, regulatory environment land availability are wider issues. The matter of nuclear power was also proposed by some as part of the solution, but it was recognised that this wasn’t universally commended. Thermal, bioenergy, hydrogen, fusion and battery manufacturing were all highlighted as potential opportunities to help green the region.*
89. *Politicians are crucial in shaping the future but we change our minds and that can have an adverse impact on potential solutions.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*
90. *“I enjoyed being able to speak at this event and talk about the work we’ve done in Scotland. As with our discussion at the Isle of Man a couple of years ago the issues of transmission and delivering the investment to enable energy security and low carbon power for island communities was a key theme.”- Sarah Boyack MSP*



Photo: CPA HQ

91. In the afternoon the delegates divided into two workshops: Social Housing and Population.

Social Housing – (Workshop Group A)

92. In the Social Housing workshop participants discussed the role of parliaments/parliamentarians in addressing the challenges to sustainable

housing, and how it requires a holistic approach that integrates economic, environmental, social, and technological considerations, along with effective policy frameworks and community engagement strategies.

93. The session was chaired by Hon Ronald Coleman (St Helena) and the panel included Damian Burns (St Helena Government), Jeremy Balfour MSP and Deputy Sam Mézec (Jersey).

94. *“I contributed to the session and in fact the issue of population and the number of houses that are required is very similar for every jurisdiction. We looked at the issue off why we need more Social Housing and the issue of how much Government should be involved in fixing the market and intervening to help. I was able to share some of what is happening here in Scotland and different views around policy, which was shared by others in very different economic situations.”* – Jeremy Balfour MSP

95. **Jeremy Balfour MSP intends to feed back to Members of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee that issues faced in Scotland relating to social housing are very similar across the BIMR. He will also share the various solutions that were discussed at the seminar.**



Photo: CPA HQ

Population – (Workshop Group B)

96. The second workshop was on Population. At this session the delegates discussed how an ageing population is one of the most complex and difficult challenges facing policy makers and legislators in the BIMR. The delegates discussed the implications and actions being taken to mitigate these.

97. The session was chaired by Hon Gillian Brooks (St Helena) and the panel was made up of Damian Burns (St Helena Government), Hon Jeffrey Ellick, Minister for Safety, Security & Home Affairs (St Helena) and Stuart McMillan MSP.

98. **Stuart McMillan MSP agreed to share the reports quoted in his presentation with the BIMR secretariat.**

99. *"This session seemed to be focussed on St. Helena and Scotland and I was surprised that at the macro level, we, and other legislatures in our region faced the same challenges – growing older population and fewer younger people thus generating many more issues upon public services and shortage occupation lists. The reasons why people leave their home is to create a better life and more opportunities. This was highlighted in particular in St. Helena. The average annual salary is £8.5k so people leave to earn more money to send back to the island.*
100. *Fundamentally, this workshop highlighted how important immigration powers and policy actually is to help build a sustainable economy.*
101. *A colleague from Jersey highlighted the global challenge we are all facing and that is for a workforce. They previously had many staff from France and Eastern Europe but now they have a growing number of people from the Philippines.*
102. *I think a detailed SPICe briefing and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee undertaking further work in this area would be beneficial to provide a greater understanding of the global challenge."*- Stuart McMillan MSP
103. **Stuart McMillan MSP intends to speak to Members on the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to suggest that the effects of an ageing population in Scotland may be a suitable inquiry topic.**
104. **IRO will pass on the suggestion to SPICe that they may wish to consider writing a new briefing on the effects of an aging population in Scotland.**
105. *"This was an excellent session with fascinating insights from different legislatures. It was interesting that on one level there were very similar challenges – falling population as young people move from island and remote communities to find more exciting and well-paid opportunities, rocketing prices of housing making it impossible for many locals to compete if there is a tourist demand in the area.*
106. *Recommendations for action: offer better career and training opportunities locally, build affordable and accessible housing both to retain population and enable older people to downsize and make their larger properties available.*
107. *Migration strategies are needed to raise these issues up the political agenda. In St Helena they are looking at pricing issues, the ability to buy land, permission to stay and work permits, extended landing permissions for cruise ships to generate hospitality and tourism opportunities.*
108. *Having a plan to tackle why people leave seemed a key issue but needed to back up the plan with investment and sustained action. The issue*

of the Graduate Scheme in St Helena worth following up.”- Sarah Boyack MSP

109. **Sarah Boyack MSP intends to follow up with colleagues in St Helena regarding their Graduate Scheme and share this with colleagues in the Scottish Parliament.**



Thursday 23 May

Climate Emergency

110. On Thursday morning Sarah Boyack MSP chaired the Climate Emergency session. The panel was made up of Hon Daphne Caine MHK (Isle of Man), Damien Moore MP (UK) and Mike Durnford, Environmental Risk Manager, St Helena Government (St Helena).
111. The delegates discussed how climate change affects all of us, in direct and indirect ways. What actions are being undertaken to mitigate the impacts and how parliaments in the BIMR can better navigate climate challenges.
112. Hon Daphne Caine MHK (Isle of Man) spoke about the Isle of Man's Climate emergency act and 2022-2027 action plan. She also spoke about the importance of thinking through policies, for example improving the insulation of houses before changing the heating systems.
113. Damien Moore MP (UK) spoke about the need to consider green targets with economic balance. That green technology needs to be affordable so that people are not left behind and the importance of engaging with local communities.

114. Mike Durnford, Environmental Risk Manager (St Helena) spoke about developing policy and strategy for climate change, environmental pollution and waste management.
115. Other delegates spoke about the challenges of the public buying into the targets for climate emergency, especially during a cost-of-living crisis; the infrastructure needed to implement green policies; making the incentives relatable to constituents; trusting the experts; weighing up using natural resources to help the economy vs protecting the environment; the importance of education; ensuring that policies are achievable for both high earners and low income households; and remembering to have a holistic approach rather than focusing on individual components.
116. *“Sarah Boyack chaired this session which was a helpful addition to the Green Energy Solutions debate the previous day. There was a unanimous view that we need to do more to deliver policies and solutions to help tackle the climate emergency. The challenge, as was highlighted the day before, was that politicians change their minds. However, financial stability, being pragmatic, support local community initiatives, subsidies for businesses and individuals and the public are leading the politicians in wanting to improve the situation we all face, were my key points form this session.*
117. *“We know the climate emergency will remain with us and the Scottish Parliament must continue to examine what more we can do.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*
118. *“Was a good discussion on the need to act now both to address adaptations needed and lowering carbon emissions. The range of island members of the BIMR highlights the specific challenge potential extreme weather and rising sea levels will create. Given the work we’ve been doing on climate change it did feel like some of the other legislatures would have major challenges.”- Sarah Boyack MSP*



Photo: CPA HQ

Tourism Development

119. The next session was on tourism development, chaired by Hon Julie Thomas, Chief Minister (St Helena). The panel included Stuart McMillan MSP, Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Northern Ireland), Matthew Joshua, Head of Tourism at the St Helena Government (St Helena), Damien Moore MP (UK) and Hon Giovanni Origo (Gibraltar).
120. The panel discussed sustainable tourism practices, community engagement, infrastructure development, destination marketing strategies, and the position of the BIM region in the travel industry post-covid 19.
121. Matthew Joshua (St Helena) gave an overview of the airport project in St Helena, which was completed in 2017 and the challenges of attracting tourists to St Helena.
122. Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Northern Ireland) spoke about the impact of tourism in Northern Ireland post covid and BREXIT.
123. Stuart McMillan MSP spoke about the impact of tourism on rural communities.
124. Damien Moore MP (UK) and Hon Giovanni Origo (Gibraltar) spoke about sustainable tourism.
125. Other delegates raised concerns about the state's role in developing tourism, the importance of involving smaller businesses, the impact of complicated paperwork crossing borders, attracting the "right type" of tourists and the need for infrastructure to support a growing industry.
126. *"I think it was good that Stuart took part in the session as he gave a different perspective than I or Sarah would have given as MSPs for Lothian. There are similar issues that were shared around the number of people coming into a country and how you cope with that plus the issue of being able to find enough people to work in the sector. I think we should come from an area that has less to a different perspective was given from Scotland. We also discussed the issue around revenue from coming into the country clearly against similar issues, but other countries are dealing with and in particular around employment. – Jeremy Balfour MSP*
127. *"The panel was united in the importance of tourism as both an economic driver but also how local opportunities can be highlighted and promoted. All panellists in effect provided a bit of an advertising pitch for their constituencies or countries but all were absolutely cognisant of the opportunities and challenges we all face. Every panellist highlighted how St. Helena was such a wonderful location and we could all see the opportunities it possesses.*
128. ***I have shared the contact details for a Director in Visit Scotland who was happy to have dialogue with St. Helena to provide them with assistance if requested.***

129. *I also passed on the two Marine Tourism Strategies that have emanated from the Cross Party Group on Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism, which I convene.*”- Stuart McMillan MSP

130. *“In this session I was reflecting on the issue of the distance to access St Helena and how lucky Scotland is geographically given our raft of transport connections and choices and proximity to major airport hubs such as London and Schipol.”*- Sarah Boyack MSP



Photo: CPA HQ

131. In the afternoon the delegates again divided into two workshops: Marine Environment and Scrutiny Committees.

Marine Environment (*Workshop Group A*)

132. During the Marine environment workshop delegates discussed the impacts of biodiversity loss on marine ecosystems and what innovative and collaborative activities within the legislatures of the BIM region have been carried out to maintain a sustainable future of the marine environment.

133. The workshop was chaired by Hon Karl Thrower (St Helena) and the panel included Kirsty Jones, Marine and Fisheries Conservation Officer (St Helena), Nick Thorpe, St Helena National Trust (St Helena) and Kenickie Andrews, St Helena National Trust (St Helena).

134. *“The marine environment crossed over partly into both the climate emergency and tourism workshops. It did however also highlight the importance of our marine ecosystems and people who depend on the marine environment for their livelihoods.”*- Stuart McMillan MSP



Scrutiny Committees (*Workshop Group B*)

135. During the Scrutiny Committees workshop delegates discussed the importance of effective scrutiny and how this can be best achieved with limited resources.
136. The workshop was chaired by Hon Dr Corinda Essex and the panel consisted of Mark Yon (Chair St Helena PAC), Dame Meg Hillier MP, Deputy Mary Le Hegarat and Lord Lisvane (UK).



Photo: CPA HQ

Reception

137. In the evening the delegates attended a reception at Plantation House hosted by Governor Nigel Phillips CBE.



Friday 24 May

Improving Agriculture Productivity

138. The final day of the conference started with a session on Improving Agriculture Productivity. The panel spoke about the parliamentary role in promoting the mechanisms for increasing agriculture productivity through sustainable practices such as innovative solutions, improving crop yields, crop rotation, soil conservation and efficient irrigation systems, providing education and support for farmers to improve agriculture productivity.
139. The panel was chaired by Hon Juan Watterson, Speaker of the House of Keys (Isle of Man) and included John Birmingham MLA (Falkland Islands) and Andrea Timm, Agriculture Development Officer, St Helena Government (St Helena).
140. Delegates asked about a wide range of topics including how to attract young people into farming, benefits of both industrial and small farming, and sustainable policies impacting on farmers such as introducing solar panels on fields.
141. *“This was an interesting session particularly with the after-effects of the Falklands War and how land reform helped agricultural productivity and land development.*
142. *Once again key issues were global – food security, self sufficiency will not apply for everyone, need to take the population with us, climate change having an adverse effect upon some land and how co-operatives are not always successful. The unanimous view was that there was not a once size fits all strategy to deal with the issues across the region.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*
143. *“The experiences of farming in places like the Falkland Islands and St Helena were striking. Issues such as changing seasons and extreme weather, how to get investment and incentivise the change needed in the farming community.”- Sarah Boyack MSP*



Continuation of the AGM

144. Next the delegates held the follow up AGM. The strategic theme for the BIMR in 2024/25 was agreed to be “Digital transformation” and a working group was established. It was also agreed that the working group would be advertised across the BIMR to allow more Members to join.
145. The UK general election had now been called for 4 July and Ian Liddell-Granger informed the delegates that the CPA Status Bill had now fallen.
146. *“This was a short session to update the conference of the events of UK Parliament being dissolved and seeking volunteers to assist with decisions taken at the AGM on Monday.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*
147. **Following the conference IRO shared the strategic theme with all MSPs and asked for volunteers to join the working group.**



Benefits of a Youth Parliament

148. The final session of the conference was a discussion on the benefits of a Youth Parliament. The panel examined how to empower young people, fostering civic engagement and leadership skills, and promoting youth perspectives on policy issues to encourage future sustainable politics.

149. The panel was chaired by Hon Rosemary Bargo (St Helena) and included Hon Andrew Turner (St Helena), Deputy Sam Mézec (Jersey), Hon Giovanni Origo (Gibraltar), and Lesley Hogg, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly.
150. The panel was also joined by youth speakers: Selene Gough and Shanice Phillips who presented their vision for the Youth Parliament of St Helena; and four school students, aged 11-17, gave a presentation on why a youth parliament would be beneficial to St Helena.
151. *“The last session on Youth Parliaments was really buzzy. Some really interesting stories from those who had stood to get elected.*
152. *There were some great examples of best practice and it emphasised the need for us to do more work with our youth parliament in Scotland.*
153. *I think the St Helena meetings between the Youth Assembly and the meeting with the Government Chief Minister and enabling students to speak directly in their Parliament and ask questions sounded very interesting.*
154. *The presentation by Selene and Shanice was interesting about the difference they have made to empower young people, campaign for effective support systems, access public sector employment which may not be available and remove the barriers to vocational training.*
155. *The Students from St Andrews Schools – made a strong case for being consulted.*
156. *“Communication, confidence and experience, won’t just bring a voice, will deliver a push towards the future.”*
157. *“No entertainment for young people! Need to bring a younger person’s view on the topic”- Sarah Boyack MSP*
158. **Sarah Boyack MSP intends to follow up with BIMR colleagues on the issue about the Overseas Territories Scholarship funding being removed.**
159. **Sarah Boyack MSP intends to share information with BIMR colleagues on the Scottish Youth Parliament and the work that they do.**



Feedback

160. *“For the whole conference networking is very important and beneficial. I came away having learnt lots about issues over countries are facing. I have shared some of this with MSPs from different Parties since coming back.”- Jeremy Balfour MSP*
161. *“I cannot highlight enough how impressed I was with the organisation of the BIM Regional Conference in St. Helena. The local branch did an exceptional job and in my opinion, have raised the bar for future events.*
162. *It’s very easy to become focused solely on domestic matters, however meeting colleagues from across our region ensures that many of the issues we face in Scotland are similarly being addressed elsewhere. This ensured a consistency of debate but clearly local factors in each jurisdiction differed which increased understanding of any potential solutions.*
163. *The experience of the conference will be invaluable and sharing information with members, cross party groups and people I meet in my professional capacity will happen. Already, I have had a range of discussions with people and have raised the concerning statistic about the level of diabetes faced in St. Helena and also how serious health matters are dealt with on the island, i.e. people are sent to South Africa for treatment.*
164. *One policy area that arose with a variety of colleagues was that of Assisted Dying. It is a discussion that is happening elsewhere, in addition to Scotland, so it was interesting to hear of the views of other Parliamentarians. Having this opportunity to have such engagement on such a serious issue was extremely helpful and undertaking such a conference solely online would not have allowed this opportunity.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*

165. *“I learnt a lot from some of the sessions, was able to share knowledge in others and there were a couple that were off my radar. It was a long way to travel and I think trying to retain the connections we have made should be a priority for us both as individuals and as members of the SP branch.*
166. *It felt like a real privilege to visit St Helena. Something I don't think I would ever have done and I thought it gave a real insight into the support they need from the UK Government, but also the opportunities they could have with some investment in tourism and transport infrastructure.”- Sarah Boyack MSP*

Conclusion

167. The 53rd British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference took place in Jamestown, St Helena 18-24 May 2024, and the Scottish Parliament was represented by the three CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee Members Jeremy Balfour MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP.
168. The conference provided delegates with the opportunity to strengthen their regional network and benefit from peer-to-peer discussions on issues affecting parliaments and parliamentarians in the BIMR. Sessions covered a wide range of topics including Artificial Intelligence, Decentralised Finance, Green Energy Solutions, and Tourism Development. There were also workshops on Social Housing, Population, Marine Environment and Scrutiny Committees.
169. The conference brought together 49 delegates from Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Northern Ireland, St Helena, Scotland, United Kingdom, Wales and CPA HQ, and the remote location of St Helena allowed delegates numerous opportunities to network through out the week.
170. The CPA Scotland Branch would like to thank our hosts the St Helena CPA Branch for their very warm welcome and kind hospitality.

Charlotta Craig
International Relations Office
June 2024

Annex A: Programme

Saturday 18 May 2024

Arrival of Delegates at St Helena Airport

Met by Hon. Cyril Gunnell, President CPA St Helena Branch, Anita Legg, Branch Secretary, and other Elected Members

Transported to Hotels in Jamestown (Accompanied by a Host member)

15.30 Registration at the Council Chamber, The Castle

18.30 Meet and Greet Buffet Supper

Hosted by Members of the Legislative Council of Saint Helena

Sunday 19 May

St Helena's Day celebrations

Monday 20 May

09.00 Official Opening Ceremony of the Conference

Welcome Introduction Hon Julie Thomas, Chief Minister

Opening Address Hon Cyril Gunnell, President, CPA St Helena Branch

Followed by Group Photograph in the Castle Gardens

Delegates and Host

10.30 Update on CPA Matters – Ian Liddell-Grainger MP

11.00 Annual General Meeting

Sarah Dickson (Regional Secretary), Stuart McMillan MSP and Deputy Mary Le Hegarat (Regional Reps) and Jeremy Balfour MSP (CPwD Regional Rep)

12.30 Lunch

13.30 1st Plenary: Digital Reforms and Artificial Intelligence

Chairperson: Hon Andrew Turner

Guest Speakers: Gareth Drabble (SHG), Lord Lisvane, Natasha Ashgar MS

Secretary: Al Davies

Question and Answer session

15.00 Networking and refreshments

15.30 2nd Plenary: Decentralised Finance DeFi (International finance and legal framework)

Chairperson: Hon Christine Scipio

Guest Speakers: Minister Mark Brooks, Damien Burns (SHG), Hon Roy Clinton, Hon Giovanni Origo

Secretary: Simon Ross

Question and Answer session

17.00 Close

19.00 Dinner

Hosted by Members of the Legislative Council of Saint Helena

Tuesday 21 May – Public Holiday

Pre-arranged excursions

Wednesday 22 May

09.00 The role of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network

Chair: Sarah Boyack MSP

Speakers: Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, Hon Gillian Brooks, Hon Rosemary Bargo, Natasha Asghar MS and Helen Haywood.

Associate Members from CPA STH Branch, along with a small group of women business owners and leaders in community will also be invited to the meeting.

10.30 Networking and refreshments

11.00 3rd Plenary: Green Energy Solutions

Chairperson: Hon Speaker Juan Watterson

Guest Speakers: Janet Lawrence- Connect Saint Helena Ltd (Utilities Company), Baroness Gloria Hooper, Sarah Boyack MSP, Ian Liddell-Grainger MP

Secretary: Jonathan King

Question and Answer session

12.30 Lunch

13.30 4th Plenary: Workshops

Social Housing – (Workshop Group A)

Chairperson: Hon Ronald Coleman

Guest Speakers: Jeremy Balfour MSP, Deputy Sam Mezec, Dame Meg Hillier MP, Phillip Brett MLA

Secretary: Yannick Fillieul

Population – (Workshop Group B)

Chairperson: Hon. Gillian Brooks

Guest Speakers: Damien Burns (SHG), Hon Jeffrey Ellick, Stuart McMillan MSP

Secretary: Anita Legg

15.00 Networking and refreshments

15.30 Workshops Groups A and B Feedback

17.00 Close

19.00 Dinner

Hosted by Members of the Legislative Council of Saint Helena

Thursday 23 May

09.00 5th Plenary: Climate Emergency

Chairperson: Sarah Boyack MSP

Guest Speakers: Mike Durnford (SHG), Hon Daphne Caine, Damien Moore MP

Secretary: Charlotta Craig

Question and Answer session

10.30 Networking and refreshments

11.00 6th Plenary: Tourism Development

Chairperson: Hon Julie Thomas

Guest Speakers: Matthew Joshua (SHG), Stuart McMillan MSP, Steve Aiken MLA, Hon Giovanni Origo, Damien Moore MP

Secretary: Loukia Mouyi

Question and Answer session

12.30 Lunch

13.30 7th Plenary: Workshops

Marine Environment (*Workshop Group A*)

Chairperson: Hon Karl Thrower

Guest Speakers: Kirsty Jones (SHG), Neil Thorpe (SH National Trust), Kenickie Andrews (SH National Trust)

Secretary: Carol Henry SHG

Scrutiny Committees (*Workshop Group B*)

Chairperson: Hon Dr Corinda Essex

Guest Speakers: Mark Yon (Chair St Helena PAC), Dame Meg Hillier MP, Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, Lord Lisvane

Secretary: Helen Haywood

15.00 Networking and refreshments

15.30 Workshops Groups A and B Feedback

17.00 Close

18.30 Reception

Hosted by Governor Nigel Phillips CBE

Friday 24 May

09.00 8th Plenary: Improving Agriculture Productivity

Chairperson: Hon. Speaker Juan Watterson

Guest Speakers: Andrea Timm (SHG), John Birmingham MP
Secretary: Anita Legg
Question and Answer session

10.30 Networking and refreshments

11.00 Final Plenary: Benefits of a Youth Parliament

Chairperson: Hon Rosemary Bargo
Guest Speakers: Hon Andrew Turner, Deputy Sam Mezec, Hon Giovanni Origo, Lesley Hogg and youth speakers – Selene Gough, Shanice Phillips and Prince Andrew School students
Secretary: Jeffrey Hyland
Question and Answer session

12.30 Closing Ceremony

Closing Remarks – Hon Catherine Harris Cranfield, Deputy President,
CPA St Helena Branch

13.00 Lunch

Free afternoon for delegates

19.00 Dinner

Hosted by Members of the Legislative Council of Saint Helena

Saturday 25 May

10.30 Departure of delegates