

Report of Ministerial Visits to Brussels by Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson

31 May

1. Note of breakfast meeting with European Friends of Scotland MEPs
2. Note of meeting with Ailish Campbell, Canadian Ambassador to EU
3. Note of meeting with Danuta Hubner MEP
4. Note of meeting with Zakia Khattabi, Belgian Federal Environment Minister
5. Note of meeting with Lindsay Appleby, Head of UK Mission to EU
6. [11 ***words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)***]

1 June 2022

7. Note of meeting with Seamus Boland, EESC and EU DAG member
[13 ***words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)***]
8. Note of lunchtime discussion with representatives of Brussels-based think tanks and NGOs
9. Note of meeting with Urmas Paet MEP
10. Note of meeting with Carl Reiach, New Zealand Ambassador to EU and NATO
11. Note of meeting with Nathalie Loiseau MEP
[13 ***words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)***]
12. Note of meeting with David McAllister MEP, Chair of AFET Committee

1. Note of Breakfast Meeting with European Friends of Scotland MEPs, 31 May 2022

Attendees:

Angus Robertson MSP

Lorna Slater MSP

Udo Bullmann MEP

Corina Cretu MEP

Marc Tarabella MEP

Assistant to Antoni Comin MEP

Lachlan Muir - advisor to Greens/EFA group

From Scotland House Brussels: Martin Johnson, Joni Smith, **[Redacted]**, **[Redacted]**, **[Redacted]**, **[Redacted]**

A warm discussion over breakfast hosted by Friends of Scotland co-chair Udo Bullmann MEP. **[28 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

Key themes covered in discussion:

Renewable energy: Scotland's potential to supply/export green hydrogen to Europe. Importance of Europe's transition to green energy at the European level - now even more important in order to end the reliance on Russian oil and gas. Fact that the old model of energy flows is broken, has provided a huge opportunity to do things differently but there is a window of time to respond. AR stressed the importance of showcasing Scotland's offer and having a strong narrative/messaging around e.g. hydrogen so that European partners aware of our offer. **[22 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

- Fit for 55 package - noted the upcoming votes in the European Parliament during w/c 6 June and challenges around different levels of climate ambition within EP and EU more generally.
- **[144 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

2. Note of meeting with Ailish Campbell (AC), Canadian Ambassador to EU, 31 May 2022

Very warm introductory meeting with Canada's Ambassador to the EU. **[22 words redacted under section 38(1)(b)]**. Also covered:

[61 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

- On **energy security and tackling climate change**, discussion of the shared priorities and challenges, including as northern nations within the arctic sphere. AR also set out Scotland's ambitions on hydrogen – to become a large scale producer and exporter of green hydrogen into neighbouring countries.
- On **constitution** – AR set out the latest position in Scotland and the intentions set out in the PfG in Sept 2021. **[48 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

[10 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Attendees

Ailish Campbell – Canadian Ambassador to EU

Angus Robertson - Cabinet Secretary

Martin Johnson - EU Director

3. Note of meeting between Cabinet Secretary Robertson [AR] and Danuta Hübner MEP [DH], 31 May 2022

- **[19 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**
- AR reasserted that SG's aim is to **remain aligned** with the EU **[17 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**
- AR explained to DH that the Scottish Government will be publishing a series of **Prospectus papers** ahead of the referendum. **[6 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

[10 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

- explained that it is the SG's intention to hold a legal, constitutionally sound referendum. AR said that Scotland intends to show the EU it is a serious partner, which brings added value, both now and in the future.
- AR highlighted **energy production as a key interest** for the Scottish Government to highlight during his visit. He highlighted the potential opportunity from Scotland's commitment to the development (and eventual export) of green hydrogen.

[93 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Attendees

Angus Robertson – Cabinet Secretary

Danuta Hubner – MEP

Joni Smith – Deputy Director SHB

[Redacted]

4. Note of meeting between Cabinet Secretary Robertson [AR] Minister Slater [LS] and Zakia Khattabi [ZK], Belgian Federal Environment Minister, 31 May 2022

- AR, LS and ZK agreed on the key importance of a **non-silo approach** when it comes to climate governance, and exchanging best practices on this

[77 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

- LS highlighted the fact that Scotland has a lot to learn from EU partners on the **circular economy**, starting with increased alignment with the EU

[320 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

- Ministers agreed they must follow up on a set of issues, including climate indicators, risk analysis, just transition, resilience and the wellbeing economy.

5. Note of meeting with Lindsay Appleby (LA), Head of UK Mission to EU, 31 May 2022

Useful and frank discussion with the UK Ambassador to the EU, who is closely involved in the ongoing discussions with the EU on the NI Protocol and Gibraltar. Key topics discussed were as follows:

- **Retained EU Law (REUL)** – AR gave a description of the recent meeting he had with Jacob Rees-Mogg, and the concerns of the Scottish Govt about the potential UKG approach. The intra-UK Ministerial handling has been unsatisfactory, although JRM gave an assurance Sewel would not be breached.

NI Protocol – [76 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

On Horizon Europe Association – [59 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

[34 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Ukraine – [61 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

[227 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Attendees

Lindsay Appleby – UK Ambassador to EU
Angus Robertson - Cabinet Secretary
Martin Johnson - EU Director

[124 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

7. Note of meeting between Cabinet Secretary Robertson [AR] Seamus Boland [SB] President of the EESC Diversity Europe Group, 1 June 2022

- A warm introductory conversation between AR and SB.
- SB provided AR with an overview of the work of the three pillars of EESC and his role as a member of the EU's Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) under the TCA.
- AR highlighted that the SG was strongly supportive of the DAG element of the TCA and asked further re the work of the EU Group, the main issues raised and discussed so far.

[109 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Attendees

Angus Robertson – Cabinet Secretary

Seamus Boland – President EESC

Joni Smith – Deputy Director SHB

[213 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

9. Note of lunchtime discussion with representatives of Brussels-based think tanks and NGOs, 1 June 2022

Attendees:

Angus Robertson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs & Culture (AR)

Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy & Biodiversity

Fabian Zuleeg (European Policy Centre)

Helen Spence-Jackson (Environmental Defence Fund)

Jorgo Ross (Greenpeace and Chair of Green 10)

Sebastian Remoy (Kreab)

Bart Szewczyk (German Marshall Fund)

Dr Martin Porter (Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership)

The discussion was moderated by Martin Johnson, EU Director.

Joni Smith, ***[Redacted]***, ***[Redacted]*** from Scotland House Brussels also attended.

Focus of session

1. **EU developments** – how the crisis in Ukraine and other geopolitical factors are influencing the EU's current focus and how they might shape the EU's future direction, structure, size and governance;

2. **Energy & climate** – challenges and opportunities for the EU and Scotland in response to the climate emergency, biodiversity loss and the acute pressures we all face with regard to energy security;

The Cabinet Secretary and Minister were also invited to offer their own perspectives on the Scottish political scene, and Scotland's links to Europe.

The session was held under Chatham House Rules.

[396 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

10. Note of meeting between Cabinet Secretary Robertson [AR] and Urmaz Paet MEP [UP], 1 June 2022

- AR set out SG's high interest in maintaining close relationships with **Northern European neighbours**, on a range of issues including energy, innovation, cohesion, digital citizenship and security and defence.
[24 **words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)**]
- AR laid out Scotland's plans for a **referendum**, through a legally constitutionally sound procedure.
- AR gave information about the upcoming **Prospectus papers**, [5 **words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)**]
On **energy**, [30 **words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)**]
- [30 **words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)**]
- AR mentioned the **Copenhagen office** and update on the priority areas of the **Brussels office**.
- JS highlighted the **importance of cross cutting issues** that link Scotland and the EU, including the Arctic. AR agreed that Scotland seeks to learn best practice from any country that is willing to share knowledge on their work.
- Meeting ended with Urmaz Paet accepting invitation to join the European **Friends of Scotland group**.

[12 **words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)**].

Attendees

Angus Robertson – Cabinet Secretary

Urmaz Paet – MEP

Joni Smith – Deputy Director SHB

[Redacted]

11. Note of meeting with Carl Reaich (CR), New Zealand Ambassador to EU and NATO, 1 June 2022

Warm, engaged first meeting with CR. Key topics discussed:

- **Connections between NZ and Scotland** – cultural, trade and civic links are strong, and countries of similar size. **[6 words redacted under section 38(1)(b)]** CR also very positive about SHB operation, and noted the event he had done with us on well-being economy in Sept 2021.
- **On WEGO** – CR indicated a continued desire to engage and willingness to do a further event with SHB later in 2022.
- **[96 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**
- **Trade** – spoke about UK-NZ FTA and latest issues related to that.

[24 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

Attendees

Carl Reaich, New Zealand Ambassador to EU
Angus Robertson - Cabinet Secretary
Martin Johnson - EU Director

12. Note of meeting between Cabinet Secretary Robertson [AR] and Nathalie Loiseau MEP [NL], 1 June 2022

- NL welcome AR to the Parliament [140 ***words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)***].
- AR **updated NL on his trip to Brussels**, key engagements and how discussions have gone so far. [11 ***words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)***]
- AR laid out the **importance of the Brussels office**, updated on constitution and briefed NL on **Scotland’s potential as a partner** to the EU on energy and hydrogen policies. [92 ***words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)***]

Attendees

Angus Robertson – Cabinet Secretary

Nathalie Loiseau – MEP

Joni Smith – Deputy Director SHB

[Redacted]

[174 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]

14. Note of informal meeting with David McAllister (DM) MEP, Chair of AFET Committee, 1 June

Warm discussion - they had spoken recently (18 May). Topics they covered here:

- DM had just arrived back from **EPP conference in Rotterdam**. Manfred Weber had been elected EPP President with 447 votes out of 502.
- **On NI Protocol** – **[21 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**
- **On Ukraine** – **[39 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]**

[9 words redacted under section 30(b)(ii)]