Business in the Parliament Conference 2019

Agents of Change: Scottish Business Leading the Way (BiPC in the 20th Year of the Parliament)

Workshop Note – Climate Change and Business Leadership

Hosts: Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
       Gillian Martin MSP, Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee

Speakers: Alison McRae, Glasgow Chambers of Commerce
          Ian Smith, Diageo

Summary

Alison McRae gave an overview of the Circular Glasgow initiative and focused on the importance of a circular economy in helping to tackle climate change. She focused on the importance of using waste as a resource and how to mobilise cities to adopt circular economy strategies. She called businesses to action and asked that there be a focus on collaboration across sectors. She said there was a requirement for business led action and asked businesses to focus on:
- how they talk to their customers
- the products they use
- the process they have for waste.

Ian Smith highlighted the need for every business to be leaders and that innovation can transform a business. Diageo sets annual targets for sustainability each year which are stretching but helps to incentivise action. He said businesses need to set targets for their supply chain, share best practice across industries and share achievements with consumers. He said there’s no such thing as waste – only resources.

Key points discussed

Perception – There was an acknowledgment that there has been a significant step change in public attitude towards climate change in the past three years. There is an expectation from consumers and customers for businesses to be taking action.

Guidance – Clear guidance on what is required and what businesses need to do is essential. It was agreed that there needs to be a constant dialogue between Government and business and that there needs to be a space where people can come together and feedback on what works and what doesn’t.

COP 26 – This provides a considerable opportunity for everyone. Everyone can get involved in the discussion and it provides a specific opportunity for the private sector to showcase their business and network with a vast range of organisations. Those
who have not experienced a COP were encouraged to consider attending COP 25 in Madrid, if only briefly, to see the scale and help thinking for COP 26.

Previous Transitions – It was noted that we have been through transitions before and how important it is that we do not make the same mistakes. To avoid this, a holistic approach is needed and it is crucial that whole communities are brought along throughout the transition.

Pace of change – It was made clear that business shouldn’t wait on the Government as everyone has a part to play. The delegates were asked that if they see gaps, they need to help Government and have a conversation so we can all move forward.