**Business in the Parliament Conference 2023**

**Sustainable recovery: maximising the opportunities of the next decade**

**Workshop 5 Note – Scotland’s business on the world stage: trade & exporting**

**Co-chairs:**

Neil Gray MSP, Minister for Culture, Europe & International Development and Minister with Special Responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine,

Graham Simpson MSP, member of Economy & Fair Work Committee

**Host/ Facilitator:** Seona Shand, Scottish Chambers of Commerce

**Speakers:**

Graeme Clark, The Ochil Fudge Pantry

Susanne Cameron Nielsen, Scotch Whisky Association

**Summary**

The Minister introduced the session highlighting the strong partnership between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and noting the strong international trade links he had seen on his international visits to different countries including Poland, Germany and India.

**Seona Shand** provided an overview of the work of the Scottish Chambers network on internationalisation, including the success of the International Trade Partnership with the Scottish Government and contributions to the UK Government Strategic Trade Advisory Group. Seona highlighted some of the challenges businesses have faced including Brexit and Covid-19.

**Graeme Clark** provided an insight into his experience of internationalising a microbusiness in the Food and Drink sector, highlighting the impact of Covid on the hospitality sector and the challenges caused by the cost crisis and the fact that Brexit had made EU markets less accessible, while North America still offered opportunities. He noted the strength of the Chambers network in Scotland and the support he had received to internationalise from his local Chamber - Forth Valley, and also the Scottish Chambers, including a trade mission to New York.

**Susanne Cameron-Nielsen** noted the importance of the potential Free Trade Agreement with India to the whisky industry as well as domestic barriers including cost of business and regulation that can inhibit growth. She emphasised the need for ongoing dialogue between industry and government on these challenges.

**Key points discussed**

There was a wide-ranging discussion which included the following points:

International networks

* The importance of leveraging the wider Scottish diaspora overseas to support businesses, as well as tapping into the GlobalScot network. The Minister recognised and noted the importance of the growth of the GlobalScot and Trade Envoy networks in the last four years in supporting Scotland’s trade and investment and the work the Scottish Government is doing to engage the diaspora.
* The Minister also highlighted support provided by SDI in-market and the importance of international visits and events to both international trade and culture.

E-commerce

* The importance of e-commerce for growing particular sectors, including food and drink, internationally was raised as international sales can be made directly to consumers. With e-commerce skills highlighted as a current skills gap there was a call for better join-up between the public and private sectors. The need for better data on e-commerce at a Scotland level from the ONS was also raised.
* SDI noted it had recognised the opportunity of e-commerce, including for remote businesses in the Highlands and Islands and flagged SDI’s *International E-commerce Programme* and online support, which can be found at: <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/>
* Sectoral differences were also noted with a suggestion that e-commerce was not as key for some sector as others.

Renewable energy / green hydrogen

* Participants highlighted the international opportunities in renewable energy, and green hydrogen in particular, as well as the importance of Government, agencies, and industry working together to maximise as much of the supply chain opportunities in Scotland, highlighting Scotland’s innovative and creative businesses.

Offshore energy

* Scotland’s decommissioning skills and expertise offer was noted, including strengths in engineering and project management and with some participants noting the need for government and industry to work together to increase the skills and expertise in Scotland particularly relating to energy transition.

Carbon capture

* The international trade opportunity around carbon capture credits was raised with the importance of Government and industry working together seen as essential in this area.

Tourism

* Some participants noted the importance of the tourism sector as an international export sector and the opportunity for Government and the private sector to work together to promote Scotland more proactively overseas. The importance of major events such as the World Cycling Championships was also noted both in terms of economic value and benefits to local communities and in sport participation.

Space sector

* The huge opportunity for Scotland in the space sector for Scotland was discussed with a suggestion that Scotland needs to be ambitious, including around maximising the opportunity created by the first vertical launch and the significant number of job opportunities.

**Seona Shand** concluded by noting the success of the Expo 2020 in Dubai and highlighting the need to look at the next Expo and other future international events as an international opportunity for Scotland which business organisations can take advantage of, with the Scottish Chambers network helping the Scottish Government get ahead of competitors.

**Mr Simpson** summed up his reflections on the sessions noting both the opportunities and challenges highlighted by businesses including the opportunities in markets such as the USA. He also noted the broad range of topics covered including from hydrogen to e-commerce and tourism and even the space sector. He also noted the importance of building on the opportunities around major events such as the World Cycling Championships.

**The Minister** welcomed the prospect of discussing the opportunities around major events in Scotland and the opportunity for further discussions with individuals on the green hydrogen opportunities.