

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Steel
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 19th February 2024 – 16:00
Location:	Hybrid (MS Teams & Ty Hywel)

In attendance:

Name:	Title:
David Rees MS	CPG Chair
Emily Hearne	CPG Secretariat
Vaughan Gething MS	Welsh Government Minister for Economy
Huw Irranca-Davies MS	CPG Member
Jack Sargeant MS	CPG Member
Sarah Murphy MS	CPG Member
Luke Fletcher MS	CPG Member
Altaf Hussain MS	CPG Member
Jessica Morden MP	Invitee
Stephen Kinnock MP	Invitee
Stephane Portet	Syndex
Paul Dillon	Syndex
Dickie Davies	Welsh Government
Kate Hearnden	Welsh Government
Alasdair McDiarmid	Community Union
Alan Davies	Community Union
Jason Bartlett	Unite the Union
Tom Hoyles	GMB
Rob Edwards	Community Union
Cllr Huw David	Leader, Bridgend County Borough Council
Cllr Jane Gebbie	Deputy Leader, Bridgend County Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Dacey	Neath Port Talbot Council
Cllr Jeremy Hurley	Neath Port Talbot Council
Cllr Laura Williams	Neath Port Talbot Council
Cllr Rob Jones	Neath Port Talbot Council
Cllr Saifur Rahaman	Neath Port Talbot Council
Cllr David Hopkins	Deputy Leader, Swansea Council
Cllr Sharon Freeguard	Neath Port Talbot Council
Cllr Stephanie Grimshaw	Neath Port Talbot Council
Mark Shephard	Chief Exec, Bridgend County Borough Council
Andrew Thomas	Neath Port Talbot Council
Ioan Bellin	MSS Office for Delyth Jewell MS
Andrew Betteridge	MSS Office for John Griffiths MS
Julia David	MSS Office for Jayne Bryant MS
Ryland Doyle	MSS Office for Mike Hedges MS
Lily Gray	MSS Office for John Griffiths MS
Arin Gulsen	MSS Office for Sioned Williams MS



Billy Jones	MSS Office for Luke Fletcher MS
Tom Perry	MSS Office for Tom Giffard MS
Jena Quilter	MSS Conservative Group Office
Brandon Renard	MSS Office for Sarah Murphy MS
Jennifer Ramsey	MSS Office for Paul Davies MS
Yazmin Zahra	MSS Office for Luke Fletcher MS

Apologies:

Name:	Title:
Cllr Steve Hunt	Leader of Neath Port Talbot Council
Karen Jones	Chief Executive, Neath Port Talbot Council
Alan Coombs	Community Union
Johnathan Reynolds MP	Shadow Minister for Business and Trade
John Griffiths MS	MS for Newport East
Tom Giffard MS	MS for South Wales West
Jayne Bryant MS	MS for South Wales East

Summary of Meeting:

Introduction by Chair, David Rees MS (DR)

Chair welcomed everyone to the CPG this afternoon and thanked them all for attending, and for such a good turnout. Apologies taken. Explained that CPG for Steel had not sat for a while because of negotiations and ongoing discussions between UK Government, Welsh Government and Tata Steel in relation to potential blast furnace closures and funding for new Electric ARC furnace, and felt like it would be the wrong time to host a CPG whilst doing so in months prior. Chair also mentioned that whilst the CPG meets today, there may be some time until the next CPG meets again in the next year, depending on developments to ongoing negotiations.

Chair Welcomed Jess Morden MP and Stephen Kinnock MP who are also members of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) on Steel and Metal-related Industries, Chair also welcomed WG Minister Vaughan Gething and Welsh Government officials in attendance. Chair also welcomed and thanked the representatives from Syndex in Ireland who are presenting today, as well as the various stakeholders from Neath Port Talbot Council and neighbouring councils who took the time to attend.

The chair explained that MCEON Vaughan Gething MS would be giving a short briefing to the CPG first as he needs to leave at 4.30pm for another engagement.

Briefing by Vaughan Gething MS, Welsh Government Minister for Economy (MECON)

MECON thanked DR for inviting him to the CPG.

MECON explained challenges with the current situation at Tata Steel and stressed the importance of being cognisant of what we're saying in the public domain in light of the current consultation, and that the consultation could take much longer than 45 days.

Explained that he and others very much still feel that there is a future for primary steelmaking in Port Talbot and without it, the UK would end up being the only G7 country without primary steelmaking facilities.

MECON stressed that WG will keep pushing current the UK Government to work with Tata Steel to save production at the plant, from both an economic and sovereign asset point of view, and the scale of investment required for this type of situation lies with the Prime Minister and SoS for Business and Trade as decision-makers.

Stressed that all parties in the Senedd voted in favour of the Senedd motion earlier this month in that the current proposals at Tata Steel in Port Talbot is not a fair and just transition for workers to green steelmaking, and so emphasised this is truly a cross-party endeavour.

MECON highlighted the most credible opportunity for change lies in a change of the current UK Government which could happen sometime this year. But stressed this would still be a challenge as the pace of current developments is fast-moving. Commented that Tata Steel are continuing to double-down with current proposals but keep reiterating to Tata that there is alternative proposals and they should wait for a change of UK Government within the year before making irreversible decisions.

MECON thanked everyone in the trade unions for their ongoing efforts, and praised the recent reports done by trade unions into alternative proposals. He also thanked the MS' and present stakeholders for their continued championing for steelworkers in Port Talbot and more widely across Wales.

Briefing by Stephane Portet, Syndex (SP)

Stephane gave an in-depth analysis of the Syndex report commissioned by the UK Steel Committee, the presentation included a technical briefing on the logistics of primary steelmaking vs steelmaking using alternative methods such as the currently proposed Electric ARC furnace, as well Direct Reduced Ironmaking with Hydrogen. He also gave a briefing on future of UK steelmaking more broadly and how much steel the UK will need in the future to meet military and manufacturing demand, with discussion on UK Imports and Exports of steel currently.

Stephane also gave a briefing on how Tata could logistically wind down current steelmaking using blast furnaces in Port Talbot whilst transitioning to the Electric ARC Furnace. He also provided case studies on how transitions have been done previously in other countries.

Stephanie took a brief Q&A at the end of the presentation and was thanked by the Chair and the representatives of the Trade Unions.

Briefing by Trade Unions (Community, GMB & Unite)

Representatives from Community, GMB & Unite all gave a short briefing to the CPG on their individual and collective efforts currently in Port Talbot and more widely in other steelworks in Wales, and the joint work being done through the Steel Committee.

The trade unions took a couple of questions from members present at the CPG.

The Chair thanked everyone again for attending and closed the meeting at 17:15.