

## Cross-Party Group on STEMM – Meeting Minutes

**Date: 1 July 2025**

**Time: 17:25**

**Location: Virtual Meeting**

**Chair: Mark Isherwood MS (joined later; interim chaired by Niall Sommerville)**

### 1. Attendees

Mark Isherwood MS, Niall Sommerville, Cerian Angharad, Aimee Lane, Rhobert Lewis, Mark Dacey, Wyn Prichard, Sue Wardle, Sally Davies, David Phillips, Keith Jones, Emma Yhnell, Faron Moller, Ben Lewis-Hayes, Peter Arnold, Paul Bulmer, Hywel Edwards, Kadun Rees, Dayna Mason

### Apologies

Benjamin Lloyd, Lewis Dean, Helen Taylor, George Baldwin, Lee Jeffs, Rob Benion, Geertje Van Keulen, Peter Bannister, Elaine Crooks

### 2. Agenda and Discussion Summaries

#### Welcome and Introductions

Niall Sommerville welcomed attendees and noted the meeting was being recorded for minute-taking purposes. Several new attendees were welcomed. It was noted that plenary business was running late due to voting on Stage 3 legislation and that members of the Senedd would join following the close of business.

#### Updates from Professional Bodies and Learned Societies

The agenda was altered to allow for MSs to join later. As such some updates from professional bodies were heard at this point, some key points raised:

- David Phillips on behalf of EESW noted that funding cuts from Welsh Government have led to staff reductions and raised concerns raised about sustainability and ability to deliver STEM outreach. Cerian Angharad noted similar concerns for Crest Awards and the impact loss of funding will have on disadvantaged learners in particular. Faron Moller (Technocamps) raised concern over the lack of digital skills funding in recent Welsh Government allocations. Only £1.4M allocated to digital in new call. Sue Wardle (Techniquest) similarly raised disappointment over lack of science and technology funding. Emphasised importance of collaboration across STEM organisations.

**Action point: Attendees who raised funding or programme concerns to send written summaries to Niall Sommerville for inclusion in formal correspondence. Niall Sommerville to follow up with Chair and Vice Chair regarding funding cuts**

- Academy of Mathematical Sciences: Officially launched; Elaine Crooks to represent the Academy in future meetings.

- Mark Isherwood MS joined the call and took on the role of Chair.

#### **Presentation: Engineering and Further Education**

Mark Dacey, Principal/CEO, NPTC Group of Colleges, and Aimee Lane, Head of School: Engineering, NPTC Group of Colleges, joined the meeting to discuss engineering and further education, highlighting the skills and opportunities in the sector and the need for continued investment and development, some key points raised were:

- FE colleges are critical to Wales' economic and social development.
- 12 FE colleges deliver engineering; STEM accounts for 15.2% of enrolments.
- High achievement rate (92.4%) in engineering/STEM.
- Strong employer engagement (e.g., Airbus, Tata Steel, Aston Martin).
- Challenges: funding cuts (24.5% drop in apprenticeship funding), staff recruitment, and underrepresentation of women.
- Opportunities: green engineering, digital manufacturing, and infrastructure growth.

The talks were followed by a short Q&A session with members.

#### **Presentation: Bute Energy and Skills Development**

Ben Lewis Hayes, Strategic Planning and Consents Director, Bute Energy and Wyn Pritchard, Advisor on Skills, Bute Energy, joined the meeting to talk about the work of Bute Energy and to touch on skills development in the sector

- Bute Energy aims to deliver 2.2 GW of renewable energy by 2030.
- Projects could power equivalent of 2.5M homes and create 2,000 jobs.
- Emphasis on local community, social value, and skills development.
- Collaboration with Big Issue Recruit and FE colleges.
- Challenges: lack of awareness, limited educational access, and need for coordinated skills strategy.
- Wyn Prichard highlighted the need for long-term, integrated skills planning and community engagement.

There followed a short Q&A.

#### **Further Updates from Professional Bodies**

- Keith Jones (ICE): Expanded Girlguiding STEM badge initiative across UK; 1,500 badges issued in Wales.
- Paul Bulmer (BCS): Outreach to schools and public events. Emphasised importance of engaging parents in STEM education.
- Colleagues were invited to provide
- Geertje Van Keulen (via Niall): Raised concerns about deepening cuts in HE sector, particularly at Swansea University. Risks to innovation, staff retention, and student experience. This was a concern shared by a number of colleagues.

**Action point: Colleagues were encouraged to write to MSs and the Welsh Government to raise their individual organisational concerns regarding HE funding as well as other funding concerns. They were also encouraged to engage directly with political parties ahead of the 2026 Senedd election.**

### **Update from the Welsh Government Office for Science**

- Robert Hoyle was unable to join the call, Niall Sommerville to contact Robert for a written update to circulate to members.

### **Future Topics and AOB**

- Suggested topics for future meetings:

- Science GCSE reform update from the Cabinet Secretary; Nuclear Decommissioning Authority; HE funding and skills pipeline; Women in STEM initiative;

It was noted the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 7 October 2025.

### **Closing Remarks**

- Mark Isherwood MS thanked all speakers and attendees.

- David Phillips raised a point emphasising the importance of FE and HE funding as investments in Wales' future.