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SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VISIT TO UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

The Scottish Affairs Committee visited the University of St Andrews on Monday 30 January 2023. During its visit the Committee held discussions as part of its ongoing inquiries on *Promoting Scotland Internationally* and *Defence in Scotland: the North Atlantic and the High North*.

Members who attended:

- Deidre Brock MP
- Wendy Chamberlain MP
- David Duguid MP
- Sally-Ann Hart MP
- Douglas Ross MP
- Dr Philippa Whitford MP
- Pete Wishart MP (Chair)

The Committee started its day with a discussion on the international work of the University of St Andrews and the Committee's inquiry *Promoting Scotland Internationally*. Members were joined by Professor Brad MacKay and Professor Stephen Gethins. The Committee was given an overview of the recently established Scottish Council on Global Affairs, a new hub for research on international relations and affairs between the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews.

In relation to promoting Scotland internationally, the group discussed whether enough was being done by the UK and Scottish governments to promote Scotland on the international stage. Topics included the potential role of the global Scottish diaspora in strengthening Scotland's business and international links; the soft-power asset that exists in Scotland's higher education sector and global alumni; and the role of sub-state actors globally on the international stage.

Later the same morning, the Committee met with several defence academics to discuss its inquiry on defence in the North Atlantic and the High North (Arctic), including Drs Adam Bower, Marc DeVore and Mathilde von Bulow from the School of International Relations, and Minna Ålander from the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. The Committee heard how Russia's invasion of Ukraine has given the Arctic greater strategic importance, and Finland and Sweden's subsequent bids for NATO membership have changed the nature of security in the region.

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Topics discussed included:

- Scotland's strategic importance for High North security policy, because of its geographical location and the UK's defence capabilities based there, including at RAF Lossiemouth and HMNB Clyde;
- The UK and NATO's capability for operating in Arctic environments and maintaining security in the region;
- Opportunities for Scottish Spaceports as well-situated locations for launching satellites into polar orbits;
- How the UK can work with allies in the region, using existing structures like the Joint Expeditionary Force and potentially creating new structures;
- The role that unmanned systems (drones) might play in defence and security in the High North.

The Committee met with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University, Professor Dame Sally Mapstone



In the afternoon the Committee held a lunch meeting with the University's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Dame Sally Mapstone, and several members of the University's senior management team, where they discussed the University's offer to students and its goals for the future.

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The Committee then held a roundtable discussion with a number of St Andrews students. Topics discussed included the student experience at St Andrews, the appeal of St Andrews and Scotland as a destination for students, and challenges facing students who wanted to stay and make a career in Scotland.



The Committee held a roundtable discussion with St Andrews students

We had an excellent day and visit and would like to thank the University of St Andrews for hosting us.