

## **Holyrood Ministers Discuss Policy Challenges for Scotland at CSPP Events**

CSPP (10/11/2015) - Scottish Government ministers and a range of stakeholders were brought together in Aberdeen last month to discuss key policy challenges at a series of CSPP events.

The CSPP discussion events were held at the SNP conference on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, and saw the participation of Deputy First Minister John Swinney MSP and Cabinet Secretaries Shona Robinson MSP and Fiona Hyslop MSP, who hold the portfolios for health and culture respectively.

Hosted by CSPP Chair Richard Kerley, and with several other CSPP members in attendance, the meetings were a chance for politicians, stakeholders and conference attendees to discuss key policy challenges for Scotland in the coming period.

### **Scotland's Digital Future**

At the first of these meetings, John Swinney MSP explained the importance of increasing use of digital technologies for future prosperity, social inclusion and sustainable public services.

In a discussion with representatives from public, private and third sector organisations, key challenges for this agenda were cited. These included: how to reach full broadband coverage among the population, particularly in remote areas; how to ensure digital skills gaps are plugged; and how to maximise the social and economic benefits from digitalisation while addressing issues such as data privacy risks and disruption to labour patterns.

As a result the meeting was a valuable opportunity to learn more about the challenges and opportunities emerging from the increasing use of digital technology across society.

### **The Role of the BBC**

The CSPP was also pleased to host, together with the BBC, a debate about the future of the public service broadcaster in Scotland in light of the charter renewal process.

Addressing a packed lecture hall in the AECC, on the panel were: **Fiona Hyslop MSP** (Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs), **Ewan Angus** (Commissioning Editor, Television, BBC Scotland), **John McVay**, (Chief Executive, Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television), and **Alastair Smith** (Scotland Director, Creative Skillset).

Fiona Hyslop opened the debate by stating that the Scottish Government wished to work with the BBC in a constructive manner to deliver increased commissioning and budgetary control for the BBC in Scotland. She also opposed any possible future privatisation of BBC or Channel Four services.

Ewan Angus said that BBC Scotland would seek increased investment to deliver more high quality programming, and that the BBC intended to address issues identified with news output such as website presentation.

John McVay offered the view of independent producers and the need for Scottish media production to reach a global market, while Alastair Smith spoke of how the BBC and others could increase support for the development of the skills base in the creative sector.

The audience participated in a diverse and varied debate on the issues raised by the panel, including fielding several questions on BBC Scotland's news output regarding the 2014

independence referendum and Scottish politics more generally, which were taken into consideration by Mr. Angus.

### **Healthcare and Wellbeing**

The CSPP's activities were completed by an evening dialogue session with Shona Robinson MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport) and a range of stakeholders in Scottish health policy.

At the meeting, Shona Robinson underlined the world class nature of public healthcare in Scotland, and the need to maintain quality of service in the context of changing demographics and rising demand. Opportunities for this include the possibilities offered by improved technology, the sharing of best practice, and greater promotion of the overall wellbeing of the population.

Those attending offered a range of views on these and other issues, highlighting both challenges and possible responses to guaranteeing the health and wellbeing of the Scottish population, and the need for partnership to shape the health agenda for coming years. In this regard, the Cabinet Secretary invited all to participate in the National Conversation on the Future of Health and Social Care.

### **More from the CSPP**

As a cross and non-party think tank, the CSPP offers year-round opportunities to our members to discuss and shape policy with a range of stakeholders in public affairs and wider society. Following our events at the SNP conference, we have since held a well-attended [discussion forum](#) on how towns and communities can work to promote a fairer and more socially inclusive Scotland.

More such events are being planned for later this year and in 2016. You can read a full list of the benefits of getting involved with the CSPP [here](#), or [sign up to our newsletter](#) to keep up to date with our activities.

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Website link and photos:

[http://www.cspp.org.uk/ministers\\_discuss\\_policy\\_challenges\\_for\\_scotland\\_at\\_cspp\\_events](http://www.cspp.org.uk/ministers_discuss_policy_challenges_for_scotland_at_cspp_events)