Emergency Policy Committee Meeting

DFID/FCO merger

23rd June 2020

Chair:

Simon Anderson (IIED & Alliance BoT Chair)

Confirmed attendees:

Geraldine Hill (SCIAF), Diana Ellis (IDEAS), David Hope-Jones (Scotland Malawi Partnership), Chris Loughran (Halo Trust), Ben Wilson (WaterAid), Jamie Livingstone (Oxfam), Hazel MacIver (Tearfund), Cathy Ratcliff (Thrive), Benjamin Carey (Carey Tourism), Dorcas Pratt (Water Witness International), Sarah Freeman (SCIAF), Chris Hegarty (Christian Aid), Jane Salmonson (the Alliance), Lewis Ryder-Jones (the Alliance)

# Notes

## 1 . Summary of events, update on recent meetings/intel from MPs and other sources

* Timeline 16th June – house of commons statement
* Statement on website by Alliance same day
* 18th June Urgent questions in House by Wendy Chamberlain
* Dom Raab answers scant
* Bond letter – we signed
* We have spoken with Ruth, Patrick Grady, David Mundell. Lewis Mac MSP offered his voice – need to get back to him.
* We need to move fast – decision makers – likely small number – they are testing water – if no resistance they will try push through other things down the line… e.g Scrutiny, ICAI, 0.7% legal commitment to poverty etc..
* Unanimous view that there will be no reversal to this decision.
* Bond think we should be looking for ‘other voices’ – celebs, faith leaders etc to push back on decision.
* Simon – lets shape what is happening, not roll back the clock.
* Much commentary already out there on how to make this merger work well – let’s use this.
* DFID staff – they were shocked and surprised by the timing and scale of the announcement.
* Responses from IIED international partners – worry that this will affect DFID’s commitment to climate finance.
* OECD DAC – they worry about that being a domino effect for other DAC members.

## How do Alliance members interpret the creation of the FCD Office and what are the advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of delivering on the UK’s ODA and climate finance commitments?

* IDEAS – in touch with Welsh partners
* SCIAF – concerned
* Cathy – is there scope to influence ethical foreign policy?
* Benjamin Carey - Bloody awful news. Racist government is playing to Little England. Won't be reversed. ID funding will be reduced. Looking ahead, explore promotion of CSR as part of international trade, and also highlight how Britain/Scotland's international trade and foreign policy has contributed to underdevelopment.
* Tearfund – reacted strongly, social media campaign etc. Will affect funding.
* David (SMP) – wholly negative move, unconvinced that DFID could influence FCO, will defo be other way round. No consultation clearly, explicit blurring of lines.
* WaterAid – feeling that hope is still worth having! Joined Bond letter, but won’t spend too much political capital on this, decision made.
* Halo Trust – timing not helpful in Halo’s view. Halo has come out in support of this merger. Didn’t support Bond letter, but supports bullets on scrutiny, 0.7%, transparency etc within the letter. A lot to be learnt from how it went wrong in Australia. Overall – Halo want to see less polarizing debate on this stuff.
* Christian Aid – Chris just highlighted that in PCD terms this doesn’t have to be bad…
* Oxfam Scotland – against decision.
* Dorcas – poverty reduction focus being lost is more important – what can’t be lost and what can be gained? We have to plant red flags – brings in media potential.

## What are different organisations planning/doing in response?

* Benjamin - How can private sector contribute to development? should we be preparing a briefing note to share with partners and stakeholders in other countries about this? Private secotr clearly going to be more prominent than previously…
* David HJ – wider cross sectoral voice on this is vital – SMP have sought support for their 5 point statement sent out in January. 4 points (discussed with Mundell) – 0.7, Scrunity, ICAI, DFID funding in Malawi. Rory Stewart well aligned on this – David planning to ask him to get 7 of 11 SoS since 1997 to support principles of effective Aid statement.
* Diana (IDEAS) – Tanya away – plea for support to Alliance members – IDEAS working with nations – want to put together a letter to PM.
* Are we able to incorporate asks on DFID support for GCE.
* Geraldine – statement out, wrote to all Scottish MSPs – good response, letter with Faith orgs, spoke with IDC, Chris Law, etc. SCIAF think there is quite a lot of momentum.
* Work with Alliance could involve work on principles, red flags, the fact that DIFD are in East Kilbride gives us a hook. Quality and effectiveness
* Chris Loughran – Supporting GCE important – would be happy to work with LAliance on that- we don’t want a gernation of Aid scptics coming out of this…
* Red flags and principles need to be put out there – keen to support alliance etc do this – they are well positioned to put this stuff out there.
* Simon – Jane, Simon & Lewis (anyone else) can start putting together our red flags – wave them asap.
* Doracs – how do we position ourselves to work within a bigger group – the other voices - stop us going down rabbit hole.
* Jamie – pro-bono legal support being sought by Oxfam on legal implications of merger -
* What are the red lines for the SG? What can we ask of MSPs?
* Let’s not bypass the moral case – poverty poverty – purpose and focus on aid.
* Chris Hegarty - Got to scoot to another meeting now. I'd distinguish between CA overall and CA in Scotland. Wider CA will continue to work on this and that will be done by my colleagues in London. In Scotland we have much-diminished capacity so need to choose what we do v carefully. We've done bits and pieces of media and faith leader pressure. Not sure I (yet) see enough to go for, for us, in a Scottish context, in terms of what further CA Scotland work would add to that of our CA colleagues in London. But I'm v keen to remain in this loop. thanks...
* Tone is as important as substance.
* Benjamin - Personally I think Independence would help protect Scotland's commitment to SDGs, but I suspect this would be unlikely to be adopted as official Alliance policy. We could however encourage a moral/social responsibility through the Alliance's manifesto work within the National Performance Framework, which isn't simply about economic/trade.

## Are there any immediate joint advocacy opportunities in Scotland? (All) 10 mins

* Cathy – let’s list red flags and green flags – positive deviance can be an effectiveness tool
* David HJ – PCSD – hyprocrisy clearly there- but can use this argument to our favour
* Lets use red flags not red lines
* Quick better than perfect
* Benjamin - DFID budget is about 5x FCO budget, so we should definitely argue for global poverty eradication becoming central to UK foreign policy.
* Hazel - From my perspective the merger/scrapping is a done deal so going ahead what is it we can effectively do to shape new department on its work on aid so agree totally with Benjamin on his point about DFID budget and working on new department's priorities.
* Jane – COP needs to be brought into this.
* Quick statement fine, but also in Newsletter – need to ask membership for views.
* Lewis M and CPG -
* Lewis – actring fast with a statement good idea. We can do this. Comms support from bigger agencies vital for this to be useful though.
* Ben – on scottish Parliament work - Very keen to work on this and offer support, especially on Scot Parl specific opportunities. Can put time in to this.