

THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S PLAN FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA

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This briefing has been prepared for the European and External Relations Committee and provides background information on Scotland's relationship with China, a summary of the Scottish Government's plan for engagement with China and information on the key differences between the Government's plan and the previous Scottish Executive's China strategy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Government's China Plan which was published in May 2008 aims to build on the predecessor China strategy published by the Scottish Executive.

“The plan also builds on the experience of the previous administration's China Strategy (launched in 2006) supporting and developing what works; and aligning that more closely with the purpose of the Government.” (Scottish Government 2008)

Whilst there are clear similarities between the two documents, the Scottish Government has adapted some of the underlying objectives of the plan and has modified some of the targets.

The overarching aim of both Administrations' documents was to help increase sustainable economic growth and to do this by tapping into the huge potential opportunities offered by working closely with China.

In terms of objectives the main changes between the two documents are the decisions by the Scottish Government to omit from their plan objectives aimed at attracting skilled Chinese to live and work in Scotland and efforts to assist China in addressing environmental challenges. These specific objectives have been subsumed within some of the new objectives of the China plan.

The other key difference between the two documents is the decision by the Scottish Government to move away from emphasising Scottish links with specific regions of China. With the exception of ongoing work with Shandong province, other links with China appear to be followed on a case by case basis.

The plan is now in operation and is likely to be reviewed in 2011 when many of the individual targets will be assessed for progress.

BACKGROUND

The Scottish Government published its first International Framework in April 2008. According to the Scottish Government the Framework:

“sets out the context and rationale for the Government’s international activities and shows how international work contributes to the Government’s purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth.” (Scottish Government 2008a)

The Framework provides the context for plans outlining the Scottish Government’s proposal for engagement with the European Union, China and the developing world and will in the future also provide the basis for a United States of America plan.

According to the Framework, the Government’s international engagement is driven by the key aim of increasing sustainable economic growth and as a result forms a component of its economic strategy. The Framework embraces three international strategic objectives, these are:

- Creating the conditions for talented people to live, learn, visit, work and remain in Scotland – so that Scottish population growth matches EU average;
- Bringing a sharp economic growth focus to the promotion of Scotland abroad – so that the Scottish GDP growth rate matches the UK’s by 2011; and
- Managing Scotland’s reputation as a distinctive global identity, an independent minded and responsible nation at home and abroad and confident of its place in the world. (Scottish Government 2008a)

One of the key components of the International Framework is the Scottish Government’s Plan for Engagement with China. This plan has replaced the previous Scottish Executive’s strategy for stronger engagement with China which was published in 2006. This briefing will look at the Scottish Government’s new plan and will examine the key changes from the previous Scottish Executive’s strategy. Firstly however, the briefing will look at the current relationship between Scotland and China across the sectors highlighted in the Scottish Government’s plan.

SCOTLAND'S CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA

Scotland is a tiny country compared to China in terms of population (5.3 million compared to 1.3 billion in 2007) and land area (78,000 km² compared to 9.6 million km²) (Economist Intelligence Unit 2008).

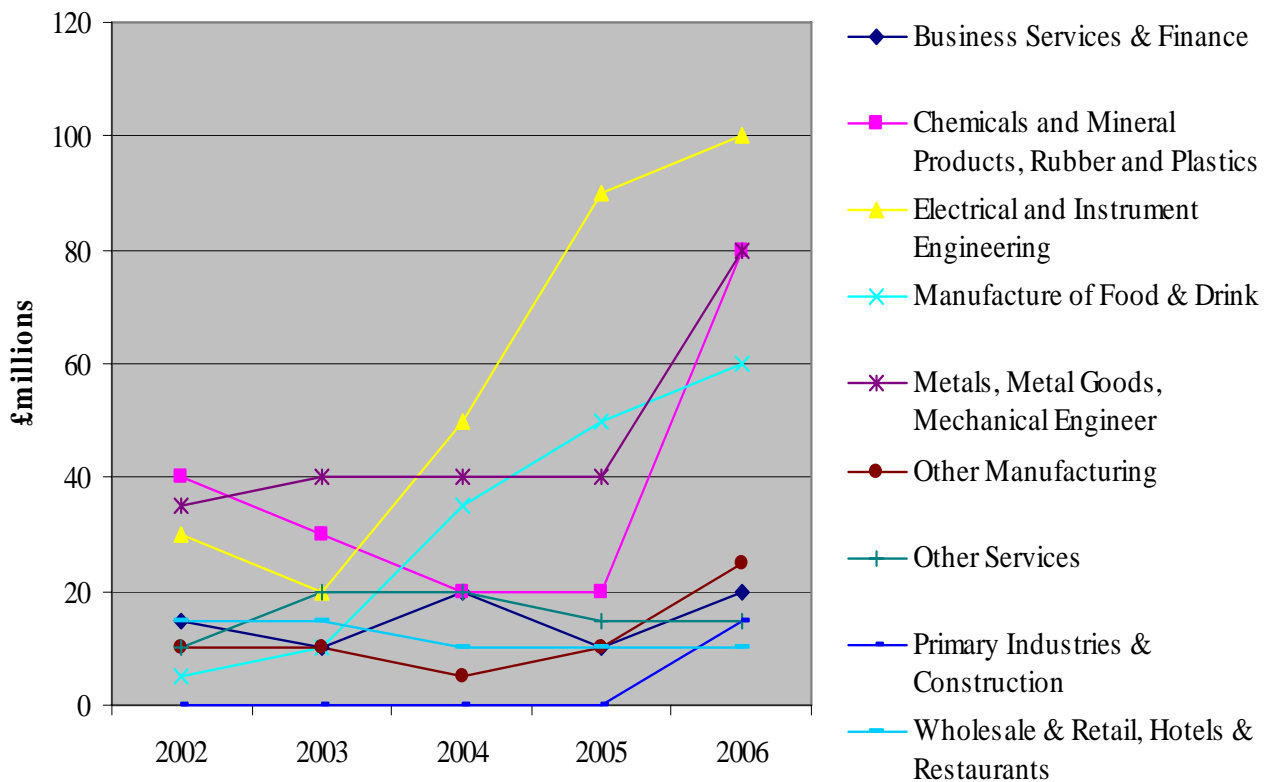
This demonstrates the huge difference in size between the two countries but also the massive potential benefits Scotland can gain from closer links with China. Links have already been established between Scotland and China, some examples of these links are provided below.

EXPORTS

Exports to China have increased substantially in recent years. In 2002 China was Scotland's 30th most significant export destination but by 2006 had become the 14th largest, purchasing goods and services to the value of some £400m. To put this into context however this compares to the total value of Scottish exports in 2006 of just over £20.5 billion, including exports to the EU of £10.4 billion, and to the USA of £1.8 billion (Scottish Government 2006).

Figure 1 shows the value of Scottish exports to China for different sectors between 2002 and 2006.

Figure 1: Scottish exports to China by sector, 2002 – 2006 (Scottish Government 2006)



SCOTTISH BUSINESSES IN CHINA

There are a considerable number of Scottish companies doing business in China. They cover a range of sectors (energy, electronics, oil and gas, education) and include Aggreko, Clyde Blowers, Edinburgh University, The Erdington Group, Glasgow University, Martin Currie, the

Royal Bank of Scotland, Standard Life, the Weir Group, Wolfson Microelectronics and the Wood Group.

CHINESE TOURISM

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation outbound travel from China is now the fifth largest market in the world in terms of international travel. (United Nations World Tourism Organisation 2008). Whilst much of this outbound travel goes to countries within Asia, long-haul travel is increasing.

According to figures from the International Passenger Survey (2008) collated by the Office of National Statistics during 2006 and 2007 an average of 13,500 visits to Scotland were from China each year spending a yearly average of 81,000 nights in the country with an average yearly spend of £6 million.

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AVAILABLE IN CHINA

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has had a presence in China since 2003. According to the SQA (2008) “the main focus has been on expanding the awarding of Scottish qualifications in China and raising understanding of Chinese language in Scotland.” The SQA works to achieve this aim by delivering Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) in China. Table 1 provides figures on the number of SQA approved test centres across China along with the number of HND certificates issued.

Table 1: SQA HND Certificates Issued to Candidates (Approved Centres in China)

Completion Month/year	No. of Centres Delivering HND	HND Certificates Issued	Number of Candidates Progressing Overseas	Number of Candidates To UK Universities
June- Sept 2006	8	645	355	201
June- Sept 2007	17	1605	840	644
June- Sept 2008	19	1692	Currently being collated	Currently being collated

(Scottish Qualifications Agency 2008)

In evidence provided to the Scottish Parliament’s European and External Relations Committee, the SQA state that just over half of all Chinese students who achieve an HND will progress to a university abroad. Of these about 57% attended a university in the United Kingdom in 2006. In 2007 this figure rose to 77%. However, according to the SQA (2008):

“Post-course destination information is difficult to collect, and although exact figures are not known, it is understood that the proportion of candidates articulating to Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) so far is relatively small, only 2 institutions being listed. SQA continues to promote Scotland as a destination for study and employment and Scottish education institutions. However, thus far it appears that the financial savings to Chinese

students of being able to undertake the one-year top-up to Bachelors degree with honours, and two-year top-up to Masters that is offered in the rest of the UK have outweighed the attraction of the broader 4-year degree programme in Scotland.”

The SQA’s submission to the European and External Relations Committee explains the benefits that can be accrued from providing qualifications to bodies abroad.

“SQA believes that a strong European and international dimension brings benefits to users of our qualifications and to our organisation. It enables us to inform and influence policy and to promote Scottish ideas, qualifications and related services globally. It also helps us to improve national products and services through benchmarking, new ideas and income.”
(SQA 2008)

CHINESE STUDENTS STUDYING IN SCOTLAND

Despite the SQA’s view that the number of Chinese students coming to Scotland is very small, Universities Scotland (2008) presented evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s European and External Relations Committee which stated that China with 5000 students has the largest number of international students studying at Scottish Universities.

With a population of over one billion, the Chinese market provides universities with the potential to attract an increasing number of Chinese students to study in Scotland. According to Universities Scotland (2008) one of the ways in which Scottish universities do this is by working with their counterparts in China to make courses available in China thereby allowing a student to begin their studies in their home country before coming to Scotland to complete their degree.

THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S PLAN

In May 2008, the Scottish Government published a refreshed Plan for Engagement with China. According to the Scottish Government the plan is designed to build on the work of the previous Scottish Executive administration's China Strategy which had been launched in 2006. (Scottish Government 2008b)

The Scottish Government's plan identifies China as a crucial partner in both the medium and long term and suggests engagement is possible across "many sectors, activities and geographical areas" (Scottish Government 2008b). Whilst acknowledging that Scotland and China are vastly different in size, the plan suggests that both countries share some common challenges.

"We have both experienced significant changes in the shape of our domestic economies within the past 20-30 years, albeit on different scales. We are both actively pursuing research and commercialisation opportunities in the fields of low carbon and renewable energy technologies and life sciences – sectors which both countries have identified as key to their future prosperity." (Scottish Government 2008b)

The plan also highlights ways in which Scotland can assist China, for instance in the areas of higher education and lifelong learning.

THE SEVEN OBJECTIVES OF THE CHINA PLAN

Throughout the plan, the Scottish Government states that its overall objective from cooperation with China is to increase sustainable economic growth. The Government states this will be achieved by "building on areas where we already have comparative advantage in the global economy (eg. financial services, life sciences, education, low carbon and renewable energy technologies) and working to develop emerging ones" (Scottish Government 2008b).

The Scottish Government's plan sets out seven objectives which it says will contribute to its strategic objectives which are set out above. The seven objectives are:

1. Increase Chinese language learning and learning about China in Scottish schools.
2. Increase Sino-Scottish collaboration between our universities, build relationships with our colleges and their Chinese counterparts and develop shared lifelong learning opportunities.
3. Increase Sino-Scottish research and development projects and programmes.
4. Attract increased tourism to Scotland.
5. Encourage greater internationalisation of Scottish companies in China.
6. Expand connections between businesses in Scotland and China.
7. Develop understanding of Scotland's national identity through raising awareness of Scottish culture in China.

The previous Scottish Executive's Strategy identified a total of 10 objectives for delivering their strategy. In essence the objectives of both the previous Executive's strategy and the current Government's plan are very similar and reflect the shared objective of growing Scotland's economy.

In terms of differences between the two documents the main differences in the objectives were the inclusion in the original Scottish Executive's strategy of an objective to "Attract skilled Chinese to experience living and working in Scotland" and to "Work with China to address environmental challenges" (Scottish Executive 2006). Whilst these objectives are not specifically included in the new plan, the objective relating to skilled Chinese workers was linked to the Fresh Talent initiative and has been embedded in the new objective 2. Under this objective it states:

"In addition, an increased student population will contribute to Scotland's population growth target in the short term, and also in the longer term should students decide to remain in Scotland to work for a period following graduation." (Scottish Government 2008b)

The removal of the objective relating to environmental challenges in the Government's plan is because the two targets under the original objective have been subsumed into the new objectives. The target of achieving at least 10 new environmental research projects, involving Scottish and Chinese institutions by 2010 has been included under new objective 3 related to scientific research whilst a second target which aims to get Scottish firms supporting the installation of 60 GW of clean coal/green power generating capacity in China by 2010 has been subsumed within new objective 6 on business connections.

The next section looks in more detail at the objectives highlighted by the Scottish Government's plan.

Increase Chinese language learning and learning about China in Scottish schools

The [Curriculum for Excellence](#) specifically refers to young people "developing a knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it" (Learning Teaching Scotland 2008). In addition under language one of the aims is to "develop competence in different languages so that they can understand and communicate including, for some, in work settings" (Curriculum for Excellence 2008)

These aims set out in Curriculum for Excellence are the background behind the China plan's first objective. Two specific ways set out by the Scottish Government to achieve the objective are supporting the [Confucius Institute](#) at the University of Edinburgh and through the establishment of a teaching agreement between [Learning Teaching Scotland](#) and the [Office of Chinese Language Council International](#).

Increase Sino-Scottish collaboration between our universities, build relationships with our colleges and their Chinese counterparts and develop shared lifelong learning opportunities

The Scottish Government's strategy on International Lifelong Learning ([International Lifelong Learning Scotland's Contribution 2007](#)) makes a commitment to attract more international students to Scotland. According to the plan one way of encouraging this flow of international students to Scotland is to establish links between Scottish and Chinese Universities and Colleges. In addition to the benefits gained by greater student numbers coming to study in Scotland, the plan suggests that another benefit of the increased collaboration will be the "increase in opportunities for dialogue on a range of issues concerning higher education, vocational education and skills, thereby enhancing the further development of lifelong learning in both Scotland and China" (Scottish Government 2008b).

According to the plan, Scottish Development International (SDI) will be responsible for assisting Scottish colleges and universities with establishing and exploiting commercial opportunities overseas.

One of the key ways in which the Scottish Government has outlined it will achieve the China plan's second objective is through agreement of Sino-Scottish collaboration in education. The [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) on Sino-Scottish collaboration in education was agreed with the Ministry of Education in China and was signed in Beijing on 7 April 2008. This new MoU built on the work of the MoU agreed between the previous Scottish Executive and the Chinese Ministry of Education which was signed on 25 January 2005.

Increase Sino-Scottish research and development projects and programmes

The China plan emphasises that whilst Scotland's universities, institutes and public sector research establishments are competing globally in research and development, collaboration with China can help give Scotland a competitive advantage in certain niche areas. The areas identified in the plan are life sciences, low carbon and renewable energy technologies and plant biodiversity.

A specific initiative which the Scottish Government has said it will support to help achieve this objective is through the "development of Sino-Scottish Scholarships for PhD scientific studies, which aim to exploit business/university links and enable PhD students to study in one another's countries" (Scottish Government 2008b).

Attract increased tourism to Scotland

The China plan recognises that increased tourism will contribute to an increase in tourism expenditure in Scotland resulting in a growth in GDP. Encouraging tourists from China provides a huge potential market for the Scottish tourism industry. The Scottish Government suggests new tourists can potentially be attracted through group or niche tourism such as golf, families of students and convention meetings. (Scottish Government 2008b)

Some of the main initiatives highlighted by the plan to achieve this objective are to increase publicity and marketing of Scotland in China, development of Chinese language printed materials and by encouraging VisitScotland to work closely with VisitBritain "to ensure Scotland benefits from the platform offered by VisitBritain's presence and operations in China" (Scottish Government 2008b).

Encourage greater internationalisation of Scottish companies in China and Expand connections between businesses in Scotland and China

Objectives five and six are presented together in the China plan. The plan identifies development of trade and business links with China as a way of contributing to Scotland's sustainable economic growth.

The plan outlines how Scottish Development International (SDI) along with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will take forward this objective.

"SDI will support the internationalisation of Scottish companies, colleges and universities in China with a particular focus on financial services, energy, life sciences, electronics and education where Scotland's strengths match critical growth areas for key developing industries in China. SDI will also support Scottish companies in sectors such as food and drink and textiles where there are niche consumer based business development opportunities. SDI will also continue to work closely with the China-Britain Business

Council as a key partner in identifying and raising awareness of opportunities to Scottish companies.” (Scottish Government 2008b)

The plan also outlines a role for Local Authorities in continuing to develop business and trade links with their counterparts in China. For example, the plan specifically refers to Yantai and Angus. Other Scottish local authority areas also have links with China, for example, West Lothian has links with Tianjin, Glasgow has been twinned with Dalian since 1987, and Edinburgh has been twinned with Xi’an since 1984 whilst Perth and Kinross Council have links with Haikou. (China-Britain Business Council Online)

Develop understanding of Scotland’s national identity through raising awareness of Scottish culture in China

According to the China plan,

“Culture can add significant value to educational, scientific and business activities. It can help to articulate our distinct national identity, enhancing mutual understanding and creating an atmosphere of trust and celebration.” (Scottish Government 2008b)

Sharing of culture will also provide Scottish artists with the opportunities to share their work with new markets and also potentially to learn from their counterparts in China.

One of the key ways in which the Scottish Government plans to take forward work on this objective is through encouraging Scottish cultural bodies to engage in events such as Shanghai Expo 2010.

Another method for closer working is through the [Connections Through Culture](#) programme which is a joint initiative between the Department for Culture Media and Sport, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council with support from the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government. Its aim is to “further develop cultural co-operation between the UK and China with a view to improving overall relations, including diplomatic and trade ties, between the two countries”. (British Council Online)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHINA PLAN

The final section of the China plan sets out the way in which the Scottish Government will seek to raise awareness of Scotland in China and also the role of key stakeholders in delivering the plan.

Raising awareness of Scotland in China, the plan suggests this will be critical “in order to progress the specific objectives” (Scottish Government 2008b). The plan states that as a means of achieving this, the Government will “develop a clear brand plan tailored to China to ensure that our key messages are appropriate for the market and that they reflect a clear offering and purpose that is both relevant to China and reflects the Scottish Government’s aims.” (Scottish Government 2008b). A series of specific actions for the Scottish Government, and its agencies both in Scotland and in China are then listed and are designed to ensure the plan is implemented properly.

There is also a summary of Scotland’s current representation in China. Currently, the Scottish Government has two members of staff who are based in the British Embassy in Beijing. SDI has offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

A SHIFT FROM THE REGIONAL DIMENSION

The previous Scottish Executive's strategy included a commitment to working with five specific regions of China. These regions were Beijing, Guangdong, Hong Kong, Shandong and Shanghai. According to the previous strategy the rationale for this approach was that the differences between the size of the Chinese and Scottish populations meant it was more appropriate to focus engagement at Chinese provincial level.

"Given the magnitude of this differential and the resources available, while in some instances it will remain important to engage with China at the national level, in many respects it makes more sense to focus our activities on a small number of China's provincial-level regions." (Scottish Executive 2006)

This focus included the agreement of a five year [co-operation agreement](#) with Shandong Province which was signed in August 2006.

When the new Scottish Government's Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture gave evidence to the European and External Relations Committee on the new Administration's external affairs policies the issue of geographic focus in China was raised. The Minister told the Committee:

"The previous Administration entered into a geographical agreement with Shandong province. The China strategy group discussed whether linking up with only one region was a good thing or whether it could stymie other advances into China. We considered whether thematic relationships should be entered into. One reason why Shandong was chosen was that it could have a relationship with the north-east of Scotland on energy, but it may well be the case that relationships in science or business could be developed with other parts of China. The question whether we should tie ourselves into particular geographical agreements or whether we should adopt a thematic approach is under discussion." (The Scottish Parliament Official Report 2007)

The Scottish Government's new China plan only refers briefly to any kind of geographical focus for the Plan when it suggests, "we will continue to build on the links developed with Shandong Province, and to identify areas of bilateral mutual benefit". There is no other mention about working with specific regions other than the twinning arrangements adopted by some Scottish local authorities.

This appears to signal a shift in the Government's policy away from establishing a series of links with a number of Chinese regions but it is not clear if the new policy will focus specifically on one region – Shandong – or whether there will be links with Shandong alongside other Scottish Government work across China on a case by case basis. Giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee, Lucy Watkins, the Scottish Government's representative in Beijing said:

"our line has never been that our geographical focus should be exclusive. We always encourage Scottish organisations, institutions and businesses to engage where there are opportunities. We put in place a geographical focus because we cannot put resource into developing relationships throughout China, as it is far too big. However, we still encourage people to go where the opportunities are." (Scottish Parliament Official Report 2008)

This suggests that the policy will focus on Shandong but will not preclude other co-operation taking place.

OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

At the end of the plan, the Scottish Government has provided an annex outlining the specific targets they will use to measure progress against the seven objectives. In some cases figures were available to indicate what the baseline figure was from which progress would be measured, whilst in other cases the plan was published before the baseline figures could be established.

Some of the key targets identified in the plan include:

- Increase the number of students studying Chinese language in Scottish schools by 2011. In 2006 no pupils studied Chinese; by 2007 8 pupils were studying Chinese.
- Grow the number of Chinese students in Scotland and Scottish students in China over the period to 2011. In 2006-7, 4870 Chinese students were studying in Scotland.
- Expand the awarding of Scottish qualifications in China. In 2005-6, 1,254 qualifications were available.
- Increase Sino-Scottish academic exchange and collaborative research in key sectors including energy and life sciences. In the period 2001-2005 4.0% of Scotland's collaborative research was with China whilst 1.4% of China's was with Scotland.
- Increase Scotland's share of the value of Chinese visitors to the United Kingdom, as a proportion of the UK spend to 6%. In 2005, the figure was 4.4%.
- Raise the share of Scotland's exports to China by 2011 in relation to the European OECD average. In 2006, Scotland's share of exports to China was 2.6% whilst the European OECD average share was 2.4%.
- Increase business collaboration between Chinese and Scottish companies and institutions in key sectors such as life sciences, financial services, energy and electronics. Scottish Development International were tasked with establishing baseline figures.

The previous Scottish Executive's China Strategy included targets next to each of the ten objectives. The Scottish Government's Plan has adapted some of these targets whilst others have been modified. Giving evidence to the European and External Relations Committee, Lucy Watkins explained why this had happened:

"The difference between the China plan that we put in place with the previous Administration and the new China plan that we are trying to put in place now is that we are trying to be much more specific in this plan about the particular actions that we want the Government to take in order to improve Scotland's engagement with China. When I say that we are considering adjusting the targets, I mean that we want to ensure that the targets reflect the specific actions that we want the Government to take." (Scottish Parliament Official Report 2008)

The Scottish Government's China plan has a total of ten different targets underneath the seven objectives of the Plan. This compares with the twelve targets listed under ten objectives contained in the previous Executive's Strategy.

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