

Collaborate extra

Malcolm Currie Takes Up Vice Chair Role

Scottish Mediation Chair Tracey Chrystal yesterday welcomed Malcolm Currie in his new role as Board Vice Chair.

Malcolm was welcomed during the Board 'away' day where there was a considerable buzz in the room about the year ahead and some of the great projects Scottish Mediation is currently pursuing.

For many of the Board it was the first team meeting each other and the staff team in person.

Malcolm is part of Strathesk Re:solutions providing a collaborative approach to workplace relations and mediation.



Pictured (L-R) Tamsin Bailey (Vice Chair), Malcolm Currie (Vice Chair), Tracey Chrystal (Chair) and Graham Boyack



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Common Ground in Upland Scotland

Sam Tedcastle and Abdul Rahim

The Common Ground Forum won the 'Innovation' award at November 2024's Nature of Scotland Awards, organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Forum's members are developing a collaborative approach to deer management in Scotland's uplands, based on mutual respect and consensus-building. It shows how mediation is being applied to ever-wider areas of Scottish life, as the process the Forum emerged from was supported by civic mediators from Centre for Good Relations. Collaborate spoke to CfGR's team leaders Sam Tedcastle and Abdul Rahim.

Sam: The award, sponsored by the James Hutton Institute, was for work which applied civic mediation methodology in the context of upland deer management in Scotland, and addressing issues in the relationships between different stakeholders who have historical conflicts that have been going on for quite some time.

What are these conflicts about?

Abdul: A lot of the issues related to trust, and to differences in management objectives. For example, there has been a tension between one set of people whose practice centres on traditional stalking approaches, and other people whose primary objectives relate to addressing the climate and biodiversity crises, including people in environmental non-governmental organisations. They have objectives about how the deer sector should be managed in terms of the cull, and so as to promote reforestation and peatland restoration. That was one line of division, though the issues

are broader than that.

What was the process that you went through in using mediation?

Sam: It's important to take account of deeper issues than the presenting conflict. Different 'language' and concepts are used by various parties to the disputes. There's the underlying cultural and political context, in which you've got members of rural communities feeling that policymakers from the urban cities are making decisions that impact on their life without understanding what it is like to live in a highland, rural community, which can be dependent on small scale activities ... one deer-stalker and their job doesn't sound like it's a lot, but actually they're kind of lynchpin people for their communities. Mismatches between the experience of living in those communities and policies set in the central belt, or



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between established ways and relatively new initiatives such as rewilding, can be seen almost as a kind of a conflict between cultures.



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- Learning and Adapting in Mediation with Dr Roy Poyntz & Gordon McKinlay
- Roundtable discussion with Victoria Harris

Whether you're just starting out or looking to enhance your practice, this event offers something for everyone. Come be part of the conversation, expand your knowledge, and connect with others in the mediation community!

Registration
(including early bird rates):



Further information from :



Common Ground in Upland Scotland

Sam Tedcastle and Abdul Rahim

How did that understanding affect your approach to addressing those issues?

Abdul: Our methodology is based on four strands: civic diplomacy; evaluating current structures and mechanisms; capacity building; and projects and casework. We start by building conversations between key individuals across the different levels in the sector. This early stage of the work – which we call civic diplomacy – means meeting and engaging with people of influence from across all the different organisations, and hearing about the different objectives that they have. We wanted to see whether they would have a willingness to engage with each other around the disputed issues. We also wanted to look at how we might build the capacity of people within the sector to work through the conflicts that they were experiencing.

Sam: We apply the classic mediation five-stage approach of brokering introductions; storytelling; framing the issues; problem solving; and generating conclusions and agreements.

Alongside an initial scoping exercise, a key part of the process is the introductions, getting to know people, building relationships, bringing people together in spaces that they haven't been brought together in before or they haven't chosen to climb into. People need to build their confidence before they're ready to come together. Then there's a whole aspect of storytelling, which in a multi-party process, at scale, on long-established disputed issues which are reproduced across large geographical areas, and given the number of stakeholders ... that's quite a long

process of hearing the different perspectives and getting different people to hear each other's perspectives. That's a big part of the civic mediation process, and it has been central to most of the workshops that we've run.

Once you've got people starting to understand the stories that each of them tell, you kind of explore the issues further. Then, having worked through the issues, you start looking at the question of what people in this sector are going to do to build solutions around the issues. Again, that's



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another long – and ongoing – conversation, but we do it see it as following the five-stage process of mediation, but with just a lot more people.

Read more – and check out the short films made during the process: <https://thecommongroundforum.scot/> and <https://centreforgoodrelations.com/blogs/>

The Oval Office – an alternative scenario...?

John Sturrock

The events in the Oval Office on Friday 28 February may have profound consequences for all of us for years. In retrospect, it seems unfortunate that things developed as they did. Let's assume that we could not influence the way in which President Trump and Vice President Vance conducted themselves. What might we have suggested to President Zelensky if we had the opportunity to coach him in advance – or even whisper in his ear as the press conference became increasingly fraught?

First, we need to recognise that this is a man who carries the weight of his country and its suffering on his shoulders. He may well be traumatised by his experiences. If we were in his position, we might all have been susceptible to triggers, especially when the many sacrifices made by the Ukrainian people were called into question. We know that the fight or flight (or freeze or faint) default setting comes into play when we feel threatened or under-valued – or quite simply under attack, even if there is no actual physical danger. The approach taken by the President and Vice President could have caused many of us to react with a mix of defensiveness and self-protection, manifesting in words and actions we would later regret.

So, what might we have suggested to President Zelensky – or indeed anyone placed in this kind of situation, which is not unfamiliar to us as mediators? 'Separate people from the problem' might be the first thought. How people behave and what they say may not necessarily represent what they really mean or feel. 'What lies beneath the mask?' is a question we might need to pose. We might remind the President that, as Ken Cloke puts it: "...everyone in conflict experiences essentially the same intransigent emotions, ego defences, moral ration-

alizations, and alienations...".

Perhaps even they, Trump and Vance, are fearful in some way and trying their best in the circumstances in which they find themselves. Let's assume that anyway, we might suggest. The poet Longfellow captures it well: "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

And remember, they think that they are 'right' from where they sit – and they will be right, on some things at least. Nobody has a monopoly on truth and we must all guard against the 'danger of the single story'. Maybe, if he had the opportunity, we would



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advise the President to watch the TED talk of that name delivered by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

In any event, however they behave, it is usually a good policy to treat others with respect and courtesy, especially in a potentially hostile environment such as that in the Oval Office that day. That does not mean passive acquiescence of course – far from it. Maintaining a dignified silence can be a very powerful way of meeting aggressive behaviour. Not only that but MIT research apparently shows that increased silence leads to better negotiations; silence is the ultimate power move in negotiation,

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says William Ury. And pausing before responding can give us time to breath and to engage system 2 thinking, as Daniel Kahneman would describe it.

The London-based mediator Maria Arpa once summed this up well, in a blog entitled 'Mind The Gap': *"There is a place. It is sacred. It is the space of a thousand possibilities. It resides 'in between'. In between the exhale and the inhale. In between the stimulus and your response. In between what someone says and how you reply. In between what you see and how you interpret it. ... This is the place of mindful choosing or Pavlovian conditioning."* Ury, in his latest book *Possible*, describes

When discussing this incident during a recent training course, we explored how acknowledgement and acceptance of the others' position, as seen by them, can help to de-escalate a situation, combined with recognition of the constraints under which they operate. We might add the reassurance that we all wish to address the issues raised. This detoxification approach, done well, might have helped to make President Trump and Vice President Vance feel that they, and their country, was valued and appreciated for all they – and it – had done. None of this suggests agreement with what they have said, especially if what was said is obviously untrue. But

approaching the situation in this way, calmly and quietly, could have enabled President Zelensky to then set out his stall: how he – and his fellow Ukrainians – see things. The Power of the Positive No in action.

He might have started with emphasising the common ground which the US and Ukraine share and the importance of not letting understandable disagreements on the little things divide them, when agreement on the big things should bring them together. He might have reflected on Margaret Wheatly's wise words that it is often our judgments

about each other which divide us rather than our differences. He might even have acknowledged that each came into the room with some baggage from the past.

Zelensky might also have recognised that the matters they were all dealing with are inherently complex, paradoxical and nuanced and suggested, gently, that adopting a binary, or dualist, mindset is just not helpful. He might have had in mind the words of the American commentator and satirist, HL Mencken, who said that *"For every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong"*. President Zelensky might of course also have realised that such a relatively sophisticated analysis might not land well with people who may



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this as *"The power to choose to stop and stop to choose"*.

Back to President Zelensky: it is usually helpful to appear to be really listening and to let the others run out of steam - or at least let them calm down a bit before responding. Listening, itself an act of humility, and observing in silence, with curiosity, provides all sorts of useful information which can provide the basis for some important questions later. And demonstrating the kind of behaviour which would increase the prospect of productive negotiations, being the change he would like to see, might well have worked to Zelensky's advantage.

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seem at times rather unsophisticated in their approach, at least in public.

And that might have led President Zelensky to the best strategy of all: not to try to set out the Ukrainian position in public, but to suggest to the two American leaders that it might be easier for them all to have a frank conversation in private. That might have avoided the exchanges which have led to him needing to try to claw back lost ground after the very public disagreement, especially knowing that one thing to which President Trump is unlikely to react well is public disagreement with what he says. Zelensky might even have suggested going for a walk in the White House gardens: after all, who



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on Northern Ireland, has been advising President Zelensky. No doubt, in preparing for future meetings, the President will have been going to the balcony and viewing the big picture, thinking about what he and his country really need out of this, building golden bridges to make it easier for the other side(s) to make the decisions he'd like them to make, thinking about 'victory speeches' - what others on the outside may need to hear for progress to be made - and reinforcing that he can only achieve a satisfactory outcome for his people by working cooperatively with other nations, including hopefully the US.

Nelson Mandela's words resound down the years: *"I never sought to undermine Mr de Klerk, for the practical reason that the weaker he was, the weaker the negotiations process. To make peace with an enemy one must work with that enemy, and the enemy must become one's partner."* Or, as the Dalai Lama once put it: *"Realising that the other person is also just like me is the basis on which we can develop compassion, not only toward those around us but also toward our enemy. Normally, when we think about our enemy, we think about harming him. Instead, try to remember that the enemy is also a human being, just like you."* Hard though these words are to apply, what other course is open to those who seek a peaceful resolution to all manner of crises in the world today?

Finally, we would need to acknowledge to President Zelensky that all of this requires a huge amount of self-discipline, especially when under real pressure. That's why practice and preparation for really tough meetings is so important - and why, in some instances, it is really useful to have an independent third party in the room to help. Anyone for mediation in the Oval Office?

John Sturrock KC will be exploring all of the themes in this article - and more - in Core's next open course *"Better Conversations, Better Partnerships, Better Outcomes"* on 15 and 16 May in Edinburgh. Contact emma.anstead@core-solutions.com for more information.

It is good to read that Jonathan Powell, now UK National Security Adviser and former Chief of Staff to Tony Blair and one of the key architects of the Good Friday Agreement

fights while they walk, as Ury puts it, or, in the words of St Augustine: *"Solvitur ambulando"* - *"It is resolved by walking"*.

Reframing In Mediation Practice

Tony Buon

Introduction

In my 25 years as a mediation trainer, I found that trainees often struggle with reframing, which is crucial for effective mediations. It takes time to develop, and poor implementation can reduce mediation effectiveness.

In his book *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution* (2000), Bernard Mayer said: "*The art of reframing is to maintain the conflict in all its richness but to help people look at it in a more open-minded and hopeful way*".

When parties engage in mediation, the way in which a party describes or defines a conflict is known as framing. It becomes the Mediator's job to reframe what each party has said in a way that causes less resistance or hostility. Reframing transforms unproductive dialogue into constructive conversation. It shifts perspectives while maintaining parties' voices, leading to better clarity, less hostility, and greater mutual understanding. This fosters creative solutions. Research indicates reframing improves settlement outcomes but must be applied carefully to avoid power dynamics issues and mediator bias.

The mediator is attempting to help the parties make an initial small shift away from their fixed positions and explore their underlying needs. This is the reframing of their positions into needs and interests. Once the issues have been reframed into more neutral and common language the process of prioritising their needs and interests can commence.

Brief Example

A classic illustration of reframing comes from the example in Fisher and Ury's classic *Getting to Yes* (2012). Two people argue over whether a library window should be open or closed, until a third party asks what they want. One wants fresh air, the other wants to avoid a draft; by reframing the issue around these interests (fresh air vs. no draft), they find a mutually satisfactory solution (opening a window in an adjacent room) example demonstrates a basic mediation principle: reframing a positional dispute to focus on underlying interests can turn an impasse into a mediatable issue.

Summary of Reframing Procedure

1. Invite each person to make any remarks they wish to in response to the



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2. Allow them to enter a brief exchange for a while and then commence the process of identifying the issues
3. Commence process of reframing their positions into interests

Reframing In Mediation Practice

Tony Buon

4. It is often helpful to use a flip chart to list the needs and interests in this new neutral language

5. If this is not possible, then try using a pad and list the reframed interests and invite comment and discussion

6. It may be helpful or necessary if they are stuck, to privately meet with each party

Once the reframe has occurred start the process of prioritising the interests
Mediation becomes difficult when the mediator proceeds without a prioritised list of reframed issues. These reframed issues guide the process.

Effectiveness and Limitations

While reframing is beneficial, its effectiveness and limitations should be examined. Some worry that mediators may unintentionally manipulate parties' words or intentions. When a mediator reframes a statement, they choose what to highlight, omit, and substitute. Critics argue this could subtly favour one party if done insensitively or with bias.

Some empirical research suggests a potential ethical concern: if reframing is done without transparency or balance, it may compromise the mediator's impartiality. Parties might perceive that the mediator is altering their statements or diminishing their grievances. For instance, if a party states, "*I want justice for what happened,*" and the mediator reframes it as "*You're keen to move forward,*" the speaker may feel that their fundamental demand was diluted or misunderstood.

Overuse or misuse of reframing can hinder direct communication and ownership of the parties' story, indicating that reframing is not neutral and requires careful application with cultural sensitivity and fidelity to the parties' intent.

Tony Buon Bio

Tony is a mediator, psychologist, and author who has practised mediation since 1995. He has trained mediators worldwide and frequently conducts CPD courses and Supervises experienced



mediators. He is based in Edinburgh but works internationally.

Tony has taught at several major universities, including Robert Gordon University, where he taught the MBA, MSc (HRM), and Employment Law Courses and consults and trains globally on negotiation, leadership, culture, and ethics.

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WHAT OUR GRADUATES SAY?

"I absolutely loved my time at Strathclyde. Taking the time to think deeply, read widely and engage with others has proved to be extremely valuable".

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Scottish Mediation News

Welcome to Scottish Mediation

Scottish Mediation are delighted to welcome Abel Uloko, Sneha Bonomally, Constance Eloise and Tony Rogers as Practitioner members.

David Halliday, Jay Drydende Pellette-Super, Liris Aliska, Amy Copsey, Sabi Johnson-Ratcliffe, Davis Martin, John Miers, Erin Slater, Caitlin Tiffany, Amandine Baudais Baconnet, Gemma Beher, Dave green, Lisl Macdonald and Roanna Trerise join as individual members.

Thorntons LLP join a organisation members.

Whether you are an organisation, a practitioner of mediation or someone interested in finding out more we have a range of memberships available which can be viewed [here](#).

Practice Standards and New Registrations April 2025

Thinking of joining the Scottish Mediation Register?

Attend this free online seminar to find out more about membership and registration. We will provide information on the practice standards and the requirements to be a registered mediator. As well as the many benefits and opportunities for sharing practice and learning.

The hour-long seminar will consist of a 15 minute presentation, followed by an opportunity to ask questions. Zoom link to be sent out nearer the time.

The course takes place on Tue, 1 Apr 2025 12:00 - 13:00 to book a place click [here](#).

Online Mediation Skills Course 4, 5, 11, 12, 17, 19 June 2025



“It was a good mix of listening to theory then practicing in the breakout rooms. I really enjoyed it and I’m using lots of the things I learned at work and at home.” (<learner, November 2024 course)

Designed for people who will be using mediation skills in their work, this course has been accredited by Scottish Mediation and is equivalent to SCQF level 6. It consists of 10 modules and will be delivered using a hybrid model, with the first four days online (Zoom) and the final two days in person, based in central Edinburgh. The training provides information on key concepts in mediation and the opportunity to discuss and practice basic skills in a safe, relaxed atmosphere. It covers the whole mediation process from first contact with the service to closing a case.

The course is assessed.

To book a place or for more information please contact: Robert Lambden at Scottish Community Mediation Centre: e-mail infoscmmc@sacro.org.uk Course Fee is £700 per participant www.scmc.sacro.org.uk

Mediation News

Cyrenians SCCR 'Can't, Not Won't' Online Festival 2025

The festival is designed for professionals working with families in conflict, as well as parents and carers eager to deepen their understanding of young people's challenges. Attendance is free, and registration is now open.

The Conference will feature events on subjects that regularly cause conflict within the home: **screen time, neurodiversity, how schools handle pupils' mental health, young carers, violence and language difficulties.**

The conference's theme, **'Can't, Not Won't'**, challenges the common assumption that when young people behave in ways deemed 'difficult' or 'defiant,' it's simply a matter of choice. The conference aims to shift this narrative by exploring the deeper reasons behind these behaviours — whether rooted in developmental changes, the pressures of social media, or the lingering effects of trauma. The goal is to help

attendees reset their expectations and better support young people in overcoming the barriers they face.

As the Festival goes into its last week you can still catch a couple of events .

Tuesday, 25 March, 2pm – *'Flipping the Script'* SCCR's Aimee McDonald and Katie Walker lead a session on micro-choices, shifting perspectives, specific conflict resolution strategies, and interpersonal methods for shifting perspectives to promote engagement. For more information click [here](#).

Wednesday, 26 March, 10am — *'Balancing Screen Time'* Sheena Peckham, Content Lead at Internet Matters, will explore young people's relationships with digital spaces, offering practical tools for managing screen time and supporting their wellbeing in an online world. For more information click [here](#).

Place for Hope Training Courses 2025

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- Journeying and Leading through Change and Transition
- Spirituality, Scripture and Conflict
- Nonviolence: Jesus' Radical Invitation

For more information about courses, visit: placeforhope.org.uk

