

SoAiS AGM Thursday 16 April 2026: CHAIRS REPORT

Welcome & Committee Members

1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome from Chair, Mary Paulson-Ellis

2. Current committee members

Introduction to Ray Anyasi, SJ Groenewegen (Secretary) and Marlene Lowe (who joined in April 2025 as a co-opted Associate member and became a full voting member of the committee in November 2025 following a successful motion to the SoA UK AGM allowing Associate Members to become voting members of all SoA Groups). Apologies from Michelle Hodkin and Tom Jeffreys who are travelling abroad.

3. Outgoing committee members

Thank you to Helen Sedgwick (formerly Co-Chair and Treasurer) who stood down in July 2025. Also to Kristie de Garis who left for health and family reasons in November 2025.

Activities April 2025 to March 2026

1. Internal Committee Business

1.1 Meetings

The committee met online every two months during the period to discuss everything from internal committee business such as policy and communications, to the literary sector in Scotland and our working relationship with the wider SoA.

We held an in-person/hybrid meeting in Glasgow in May 2025 to welcome new committee members. After this we established four new subcommittee to lead on Campaigns, Communications, Membership, and Events.

We said goodbye and thank you to Elizabeth Frattaroli who was the SoA Group Co-ordinator for Scotland until July 2025. We welcomed Elsa Roberts who joined us as Group Co-ordinator in January 2026.

1.2 Policy and Campaigns

Committee member, Tom Jeffreys, led our work alongside our Senior Policy Manager for Scotland, Sam Goncalves, collaborating on key policy and campaigning areas including the Freelance and Forgotten Report from the STUC Creative Unions Group, the Fair Work Taskforce including the possibility of a Minimum Basic Income for Artists, the review of Creative Scotland, Culture Counts proposals for a Scottish Culture Act, and the Scottish Book Trust Live Literature rate (often used as a benchmark for all author events in Scotland). We're pleased to announce that the Live Literature fee will rise to £210 in 2026 (from £200 in 2025), with discussions for further uplifts ongoing, alongside plans for SoAiS involvement in an SBT participatory budget process.

We spoke publicly about the planned cuts to the Aberdeen Arts Centre and the closure of the SBT Ignite Fellowship in summer 2025, Fair Work in autumn 2025, and the proposals for a Culture Act in February 2026. We continue to lobby for better funding for authors and all artists in Scotland.

We are very sorry that Sam will be leaving SoA from the end of April, but want to thank him for the excellent work he has done on our, and all members, behalf over the past two years. The committee looks forward to being involved in the recruitment of his successor.

1.3 Communications

Over summer 2025, committee members, SJ Groenewegen and Marlene Lowe led a review of SoAiS communications, with suggestions for improvement including new systems for internal committee business, greater engagement with Scottish specific social media, and improved processes for managing member comms such as the Scottish e-newsletter.

Results from our membership survey indicate that the e-newsletter is the preferred method of communication for members at the current time. We continue to send it quarterly with reports on activities, policy issues and upcoming events, alongside bulletins on Scottish news in The Author.

We continue to run a private facebook group with over 500 members. Thank you to all members who take part in this, and to committee member, Marlene Lowe for renewed engagement with this forum on behalf of the committee.

1.3 Membership

In September 2025 we ran a Scottish Membership Survey as part of the wider SoA UK Satisfaction Survey. This was the first time SoA had ever generated Scottish specific membership data and we plan to use this to guide our work on behalf of SoAiS members going forwards.

We were pleased to have a return rate of just under 10% and look to increase that in the future as we repeat the survey each year. Thank you to all members who participated. Key takeaways include:

- Half of all respondents have had some contact with the Scottish committee over the years.
- Members have a clear understanding of the purpose of SoAiS as a community for Scottish authors, defending rights specific to Scottish authors, and representing our voices at national level and within SoA UK.
- Members want a focus on lobbying and campaigning, particularly on issues such as better pay and conditions for freelancers, and funding.
- Members are interested in events, both online and in-person, including for professional development and learning from the experiences of other authors.
- Members want the committee to engage with SoA UK via ManCom and shared events
- Local group meet-ups are popular for social activities and sharing.

The Scottish member network continues to thrive with local groups in Dunfermline and West Fife, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highlands and Moray, Scottish Borders, and Scottish Islands. A new group for Aberdeen was established in summer 2025. Several committee members have attended local groups and we have recently begun a process designed to facilitate direct engagement between the SoAiS committee and local group co-ordinators, which we look forward to developing.

1.4 Events

In early 2025 we were pleased to run an online social for members, followed in May by an online event on Gender Balance in the Scottish Literary Sector led by co-Chair, Helen Sedgwick with author of the associated report, Dr Christina Neuwirth.

In August 2025 we hosted an in-person Summer Picnic in Edinburgh to coincide with the Edinburgh International Book Festival, followed by a Christmas Lunch in Inverness in December.

Committee members Ray Anyasi, Tom Jeffreys and Marlene Lowe led discussions on a planned event programme for 2026.

2. Wider Sector in Scotland

2.1 Representation

Our committee member, Ray Anyasi continues as our representative on the board of Literature Alliance Scotland. In autumn 2025 we engaged with the LAS Transformation Manager on its plans for the future, and helped disseminate an LAS author survey to members via our Scottish newsletter.

We met regularly with Scottish Book Trust throughout the year, and were joined at our January 2026 committee meeting by Philippa Cochrane, the new Head of Programme at SBT.

For a second year we partnered with Edinburgh City of Literature to promote the Writers Room award for authors with an EH postcode, which attracted over 100 applicants.

We continue to be members of Publishing Scotland.

3. Liaison with wider SoA

3.1 ManCom

SoAiS committee members have the right to attend and speak (but not vote) at UK Management Committee (ManCom) meetings and this continued throughout the period.

The SoAiS Chair reported to ManCom on Scottish activities and priorities in summer 2025.

3.2 Subcommittees

SoAiS committee members attended the UK Policy and Campaigns subcommittee.

3.3 Reviews

SoAiS continued to request involvement in the planned SoA Constitutional Review throughout 2025. We were disappointed not to be included in the Working Group set up in November 2025, but appreciate being a stakeholder for the purposes of consultation.

We know there is interest in constitutional issues amongst Scottish members as 60% of respondents to our membership survey suggested voting rights for SoAiS at ManCom as one way they would like to see SoAiS engage with the wider SoA.

4. Future Plans and Priorities

We will develop policy and campaigning around author rights in general, with statements around freelancer rights, Fair Work and a Culture Act in advance of the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2026. We will continue to work with other creative unions via the STUC Creative Unions group, including supporting calls for a trial of Minimum Basic Income for Artists in Scotland. We will engage with the Scottish literary sector, including working with SBT towards an uplift in Live Literature rates and on participatory budgeting.

We will increase our work to engage more directly with our existing members, with a particular focus on communications with local groups alongside efforts to expand and diversify the membership more generally. We will run another Scottish Membership Survey.

We will run events including two virtual Industry Insider sessions on Imagining new funding futures in May, and A collective noun for writers looking at collaboration and community in July. These will be followed by a Scottish-led online Write Along in October.

We will continue to engage directly with the wider SoA ensuring the voices and concerns of Scottish members are heard at every level. This includes being involved in the SoA UK Constitutional Review, after which we will update our SoAiS Scottish constitution.

Thank you to all members for continuing to belong to and support the Society of Authors in Scotland.

Mary Paulson-Ellis
April 2026