

# HONORARY PRESIDENT

## Role Description



The Honorary President is an ambassador for the Society of Authors (SoA). This is a purely ceremonial role as figurehead of the organisation to award our prizes and provide brief welcome speeches. The post-holder is not expected to comment to the press on live issues or current affairs as a spokesperson for the SoA, but to connect with members, supporters, and key stakeholders at SoA events. The Honorary President has no executive or non-executive responsibility in the direction or governance of the SoA.

## Person Specification

The Honorary President is elected from within the Fellows – the honorary body of up to 60 prominent members of high standing who have been exceptional in their support of the SoA. The Honorary President will aim to uphold high ethical standards of integrity and probity and will actively support the SoA's mission of empowering authors.

## Skills and Competencies

- A talent for communicating clearly, with the confidence to speak in front of groups of all sizes.
- A good understanding of the issues facing the SoA and the cultural landscape in which it operates.
- An approachable personality with the desire to meet with members from a diverse range of different communities, backgrounds and career stages.
- Committed to diversity, equity and inclusion, and the representation of all authors.
- Capacity to attend SoA events – in person or remotely – by mutual agreement.

## Term of Appointment

The Honorary President is appointed every three years by the Fellows. The term can be renewed once for a further two years by mutual agreement. At the end of five years, the Honorary President's term ends automatically and there is no provision for re-appointment. They can be removed by a vote of the Fellows or Members.

The maximum term of five years enables the outstanding contribution of multiple Fellows to be recognised through the honour of becoming Honorary President, but a fixed term ensures that no one person is so associated with the role that it limits their freedom of expression.

The Honorary President will receive training and support from staff as needed, by mutual agreement.

## Main Duties

The Honorary President will be requested to represent the SoA on formal occasions such as at the presentation of the SoA Awards and attendance at events organised by the SoA, partner organisations, committees and sub-committees. All events are voluntary and by agreement but, ideally, we would like the post-holder to attend 4-6 events per year, including:

- The Awards party, normally held in June
- The AGM, which is held online-only in November
- One (1) SoA 'Lates' social event
- One (1) new member party

## Schedule of Duties

### 1. Public appearances:

- 1.1 **SoA Awards (June)** – the flagship event of the SoA. The Awards are awarded by authors, for authors. The Awards hold a special place in the literary calendar as it is the UK's largest literary prize fund worth over £100,000 awarded annually for poetry, fiction, non-fiction and illustration. The event is open to members as a Summer Party. The Honorary President's duties will include meeting and greeting guests, delivering a brief welcome and undertaking agreed PR duties associated with the Awards.
- 1.2 **AGM (November)** – the Annual General Meeting is held online on the third Thursday in November 5-7pm. The Honorary President's role will be to provide a brief welcome to members at the beginning of the AGM.
- 1.3 **SoA in-person member event** – by agreement, hosting one of the SoA's in-person member networking events at the Bedford Row office. These events are on a week night, 6-8pm.
- 1.4 **SoA new member activity** – by agreement, hosting one of the SoA's in-person new member lunches held at the Bedford Row office. These events are on a week day lunchtime.

Dates of public appearances will be agreed with you as early as possible and ideally with 6 months' notice.

Examples of further **optional** activity might include any of the following, by mutual agreement:

- 1.5 **The Author magazine** – interview or Q&A approximately 500 words, including photography. Final text for any pieces will be agreed between you and the SoA's Editor before being published. If text is submitted by you, it will be subject to amendments and editing and, as with all publishing matters, the final decision remains with the Editor. Pieces may be published on the SoA website at [societyofauthors.org](http://societyofauthors.org) and other communications media the SoA uses either now or at any future time. Submission to mutual agreement and timescales to be agreed.

- 1.6 **Use of approved imagery and approved editorial in relevant online and offline publications, including marketing collateral and campaign material** (e.g. membership leaflets, annual reports, approved images to accompany forewords, leaflets, etc). Subject to approval by the SoA and you or your representative.
- 1.7 **Guest SoA blog** – the final text of any blog will be agreed between you and the SoA’s Comms team before being published.
- 1.8 **General marketing/PR exercise/magazine feature/events** – to be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- 1.9 **Social media** – we encourage and welcome you mentioning this honorary role on your official website and social media accounts, but we ask that you are at all times mindful of the diverse views of the SoA membership. Please ensure that it is clear that any views you share on social media accounts are personal. See our document: ‘Who Speaks for the SoA’ for guidance on the conditions that need to be in place when you do speak on behalf of the SoA.
- 1.10 **Quotes for media releases** – any and all public comment made on behalf of the SoA should be in writing and approved by the SoA Comms team to ensure that they are accurate and appropriate. We ask that you do not give verbal comments on behalf of the SoA to the press.
- 1.11 **Forewords in relevant SoA publications** – subject to approval by the SoA, your agent or representative, the final terms and version of any foreword to be agreed between you and the SoA before publication.
- 1.12 **Presence (editorial/video message) on the SoA website (President’s Welcome)** – if required on [www.societyofauthors.org](http://www.societyofauthors.org) – by mutual agreement.

## Communication

The Honorary President’s point of contact within SoA is with the Chief Executive and Chair of the Management Committee. The Chair, Chief Executive and Honorary President will arrange to meet or speak from time to time so that the Honorary President’s feedback can be reported appropriately to staff, board and the sub-committee structures of the SoA.

The Honorary President is invited to speak at the SoA’s flagship event, the SoA Awards, in June, to introduce the awards and keynote speaker. Also to briefly address the membership each year at the online AGM in November with support from the Chair of the Management Committee, Chief Executive and staff.

The Honorary President will comply with the SoA’s guidance: [‘Who Speaks for The SoA’](#).

We do not expect the Honorary President to comment to the press on live issues or current affairs as a spokesperson for the SoA, or to comment on any disputes or subjects of controversy and should not speak on behalf of SoA in any way that might cause a dispute.

As with any office-holder, the Honorary President is only authorised to speak on behalf of the SoA in specific circumstances, which are:

- When they have been fully briefed by the SoA first;
- When the content has been first published via authorised media releases such as the SoA communications channels and/or in the media;
- When it is explicit in the communication that they are speaking on the behalf of the SoA.

## Code of Conduct

The Honorary President will conduct their ambassadorial duties with guidance from SoA staff and in accordance with the Management Committee Code of Conduct.

## Confidentiality

The Honorary President may not communicate any confidential information known to them by reason of their position that has not been made public, except as may be necessary in the course of their duties under the authority of the Chair or Chief Executive and with appropriate legal advice.

## Expenses

The role of Honorary President is a voluntary position and is not remunerated. Expenses will be reimbursed in line with the SoA's Expenses Policy.