



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society of Authors in Scotland, held on the 24th September 2019 from 1045 – 1200 in the Principal Hotel, 19-21 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PB

Sederunt: Merryn Glover (Co-Chair), Caroline Dunford (Co-Chair), Al Guthrie (Treasurer), Wendy H. Jones (Secretary), Louise Robertson, Margaret Skea, Mac Logan, Patricia Cleghorn, Karen Baston, Lucinda Byatt, Elizabeth Laird, Hazel McHaffie, Jane Neal-MacLachlan, Myra Duffy, Chris Longmuir, Sylvia Hehir, Hazel Stevens, Bill Daly, Jenny Mayhew, Gillian Duff, Rosemary Gemmell, Anne-Mary Wharton, Elizabeth Mason, Mary Craig, Jerry Brannigan, Ann Burnett, J David Simons, John Burnett, Damian Boyd-Otley, Naomi Tarrant, Linda Strachan, Merryn Glover, Sarah Broadley, Christina Banach, Nicola Solomon (Chief Executive, Society of Authors), Jane Mackenzie, Kristin Pedroja, Alison Belsham, Phillip Caveney, Aline Templeton, James McCarthy, Sian Reynolds

1. The Co-Chair, Merryn Glover, welcomed all those present, including Nicola Solomon Chief Executive of the Society of Authors. Apologies were received from Joan Sumner, Alison Page and Joan Fleming.
2. The minutes of the 2018 were proposed as an accurate record by Chris Longmuir and seconded by Myra Duffy.
3. Co-Chairs, Caroline Dunford and Merryn Glover gave the following report.

Merryn

“Hard times are coming, when we’ll be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now... We who live by writing and publishing want and should demand our fair share of the proceeds; but the name of our beautiful reward isn’t profit. Its name is freedom.” Ursula le Guin

A big welcome to everyone to our AGM. A welcome also to Society of Authors CEO, Nicola Solomon.

As Co-Chairs, we’re splitting the report between us, so here’s Part 1.

- We began the year by welcoming three new members to the committee: Louise Robertson, Mary Craig and Mac Logan.
- Early on, Caroline and I made a response to the Scottish Government Culture Strategy consultation process. The draft strategy is online including all the published responses. Ours is on the third page.
- There were two Christmas lunches – one at Howie’s in Edinburgh organised by Louise, as our major events manager, and another at the Glen Mhor Hotel in Inverness, organised by me as Highland rep.
- Because of ongoing discussions around timing and location of these events, we organised a survey of members in Scotland in the spring. The results of these are included in your papers, but in summary:
 - 124 respondents
 - AGM: nearly 70% favour Edinburgh, nearly 40% Glasgow, Perth, Stirling & ‘other’ about 15% each, one vote for the Bahamas
 - nearly 70% wanting us to rotate around Scotland, 35% preferring not

- When? Sept – 52%, Aug – 51%, May & Oct 50%
- nearly 90% like the informal lunch after AGM
- 40% will pay up to £20, 25% up to £25 and less than 20% up to £30
- nearly 80% keen on an author's skills event following the AGM – something the committee will look at for next year
- Willing to pay: £20 for event (30%)
- Co-inciding with festival season? Over 70% said no.
- Christmas lunch: Edinburgh 70%, Glasgow 43%, others much lower, St Kitts
- Pay? £25 & £35 both at 35%
- A lot of useful comments which the committee is taking on board
- As a result, we therefore changed the date of the AGM avoiding the busy-ness and high prices of festival season. Do give us feedback on this date and venue.
- We held a third writing retreat at Moniack Mhor, organised mainly by Margaret Skea, which is proving so popular there is always a waiting list. Because of its success and the strong relationship with Moniack, we are aiming to make it an annual event.
- Mac Logan valiantly took on developing the Facebook Group. He undertook an analysis of how it was being used, by whom and the kinds of engagement we had. After considerable discussion within the committee, he gradually started posting more on the page to develop engagement. He aims to encourage discussion and participation from interested members. As a volunteer, he hopes members will become involved in building our approach. There is more information on the page itself.
- Essentially, as the pinned post says, "it is a closed group for members of the Society of Authors living in or strongly connected to Scotland. Please keep your posts relevant and useful for everyone: about writing and publishing, opportunities and information, helping one another. Please only post ONCE about each book." When people request to join, Francesca Howell, who is the new SoA Regional Development Manager and our first port of call, checks that they are a member. If their name doesn't appear on the SoA register, she contacts them to check if their registration is under a different name. If they're not members, they can't join.
- Wendy Jones, Margaret Skea and myself were all at LBF, giving us all a good opportunity to connect with London SoA staff and volunteer on their stall.
- Wendy and I shared attendance at SoA Management Committee meetings which has given us a really helpful insight into how the organisation works.
- In October, Mary Craig organised our first National Coffee Morning which was largely successful. We learnt a lot from that trial run and will probably make it a regular feature.
- In the past, it was logical to co-incide our AGM with the Edinburgh International Book Festival because the committee was often running a session that evening. However, that has not happened in recent years and the committee's efforts to maintain a profile there have had a mixed response. We felt our presence on the opening day in the George St bookshop last year was successful and offered to do it again but got no feedback on it from EIBF and no invitation to repeat. Caroline and I had a very friendly meeting with Nick Barley in October and sent proposals for workshops that SoAiS could lead - at his invitation. I met with him again in January, with Nicola and Francesca. That also was a very positive meeting. However, despite a couple of follow-up emails from us, we never got further communication from EIBF about involvement there, apart from invitations to the Co-Chairs and Nicola to attend some events, which Caroline did. So, it would seem that while *authors* are central to the EIBF programme, the *Society of Authors* is not. We are disappointed and a bit baffled by what seems a missed opportunity for mutual benefit, so the ongoing committee will, I'm sure, continue to work on this.
- Meanwhile, we had started work on a series of business-skills training events called Pen to Publication, but these had to be put on hold, for several reasons. The first one, which had involved extensive preparation, ran into the minefield of working with Amazon. SoA can and does work with the Amazon, but let's just say... it's complicated. The second reason our Pen to Publication series was delayed is that we are communicating with other literature and arts organisations about best ways to collaborate on events, rather than all running independent programmes. This is also complicated and takes time but will be beneficial in the end. Finally, the major hold up has been the

increasing focus of our time and energy since March on developing plans and a funding application for a new project and post. More on that from Caroline.

- Finally, I want to thank the hard-working committee for their time, energy and companionship over the past four years; Francesca in London for her patience - especially through hours of re-writing Creative Scotland applications – and Nicola Solomon, for unflagging support, three visits to us this year alone and unending overtime.
- And now I'll hand over to my glamorous Co-Chair Caroline for the gripping sequel!

Caroline:

- Thank you, Merryn. A lot of what the committee does isn't always visible on the surface. We spend time liaising with a number of other literary bodies – for example this year we have worked with SBT on codes of Conduct, delivered a workshop at the Publishing Scotland Conference exploring the relationship between publishers and authors, attended a round table discussion on how writers should be supported at overseas festivals, talked to Creative Scotland about upcoming projects to name just a few. Plus, of course, all the committee meet every two months to discuss what else we can do to support you.
- One of the projects we have been discussing recently, and alluded to by Merryn, is the subject of a new paid post to support the SOA in Scotland. It has taken more hours than I care to count from both committee members and London staff to come up with a proposal that we feel will both advance the situation of authors in Scotland and will chime well with the work the committee does. Under the title of Joined Up Writing, we hope to expand the society's reach to well beyond the central belt, exploring the possibility for new events and support for a wide range of artists – from illustrators through to authors. On each table there are copies of the job description the SOA hopes to advertise shortly. The post is dependent on a grant from Creative Scotland. If anyone has any questions about the post Nicola is available to give the London perspective.
- In other startling news, Wendy Jones (hon secretary) and myself are foolishly committing ourselves to run another conference not next year, but in 2021 before we both step down.
- You will also have seen that we are now running a new writing retreat. This again was set up by Margaret, but this time it is in the borders and in Walter Scott's house. Depending on the feedback from our first participants we hope to also keep this retreat running too.
- We are hoping to do a variety of other events over the next year, but plans are a little up in the air while we wait to see if Creative Scotland approves the application for Joined Up Writing. If they do, we would hope to see the post holder in place early next year.
- This year we are continuing with the idea of running multiple Christmas Meal sites. Details will follow shortly in the newsletters.
- Talking of which we have postcards on each table, and we would love you to write comments, suggestions and ideas on these for us to gather up afterwards.
- From now forward I will be the sole chair of SOAiS for the next two years until my term ends. Our experiment with co-chairs, the first time we've ever tried this at SOAiS, has taught us many things. Merryn came on board for a year only and is now due to step down from the committee. I'm going take on the chair myself for the next two years.

4. Honorary Secretaries Report

May I start by saying what an honour it has been to represent Scottish Authors for the past year, and I look forward to serving and representing you for another year. During my term as Secretary I have served as a Scottish Representative on the Society of Authors stand at London Book Fair. I have also made the trip to London on several occasions to represent the committee at the Management Committee. It is a true pleasure to meet with authors from other geographical areas and to work alongside the staff of the Society of authors, all of whom work tirelessly on behalf of authors.

Talking of authors, we currently have 775 Society of Authors members who reside in Scotland. I am sure you will agree that is a healthy number and my wish is that this should continue to grow. It is a testament to Scotland's commitment to literature. I would like to thank each of you here today for being a part of that.

As every year, there is always a sadder part to my role. We have had five members who have passed away in the last year

Beatrice	Colin	26/03/2019
Dugald		
L.	Gardner	08/04/2019
Julie	Watt	24/09/2018
Maureen	Raper	15/02/2019
Nick	Klepper	23/10/2018

I would like to finish by saying, here's to the next year and to all Scottish Authors. May your pens always be full of ink and your technology full of power. May the words flow and may imagination run riot. Have a fabulous year.

5. Treasurers Report

Attached to minutes

6. Election of new committee members

Jane Mackenzie – Proposed by Merryn Glover and Seconded by Mac Logan

Patricia Cleghorn – Proposed by Wendy H. Jones and seconded by Chris Longmuir

7. Nicola Solomon was happy to field questions.

David Simons asked what proportion of the overall money paid to SoA from members in Scotland. Nicola Solomon said that a percentage of what was paid in was returned to Scotland. The remainder went on to pay for staff and the work SoA does for all authors.

Jane Mackenzie asked what the membership was as a society. This currently stands at approximately 1100.

Nicola gave an overview of what the SoA does on behalf of authors. This included an author survey which asked authors what they needed in order to write. The results included emotional and peer support as well as financial support. The SoA are working hard to meet these needs, not only in Scotland but in the UK as a whole. The SoA are also part of International Organisations which work together to make authors voices heard throughout the world.

Nicola reminded all present to apply for grants for research and time for work. She also said that they are employing a new member coordinator who will ensure that members are more fully represented.

Linda Strachan asked if it would be possible that the representation on the management committee next year could include Scottish members. Could there be a drive from both Scotland and head office. Nicola responded that it is up to Scottish members to put themselves forward.

Mac Logan pointed out that members cannot be on both the Scottish Committee and the management Committee. Nicola said this was not the case, but it might be difficult for anyone to undertake both roles.

Jane Mackenzie asked who the specialist groups were. Nicola outlined these – Scotland,

Elizabeth Laird thanked Nicola for the work that SoA does on behalf of copyright and piracy. Nicola said that if books are found as possible piracy is reported to both publishers and SoA so individual cases can be looked at. She reported that there are some libraries and sites in the USA which scan books which libraries have discarded and put them into the public domain which is an infringement of copyright. SoA is working tirelessly on issues such as this.

Sarah Broadley said that there are a lot of SCWBI members whose books are on sites before it is even in print. Nicola said that this is a lack of security from publishers and this needs to be taken up by publishers.

Linda Strachan there has been a discussion in a children's group about publishers expecting authors to do large numbers of free events in schools. What is the society's advice on that? Nicola said that if contracts are sent to SoA they can advise on the amount of time that is relevant.

Merryn Glover said that in the Facebook Group that Catherine Czerkawska highlighted authors are now being asked to do articles for free.

Louise Robertson pointed out the difference between being a headmistress of a primary school and an author. She also points out the frustration of her book being read aloud on YouTube and therefore this is used by schools rather than her being invited to do the reading and an event around this.

8 AOCB

Phillip Caveney said he is new to Scotland and wanted to know why Scottish publishing was put into a separate pop-up in George street rather than part of the main EIBF? Jerry Brannigan backed this up but said his publisher said the books were in the main room. This was not, in fact, the case according to several people present. Caroline Dunford stated that the SoAiS Committee would continue to work with EIBF on behalf of Scottish Authors.

Edinburgh based writer, Ever Dundas, is keen to set up a network for disabled writers. She has agreed to pass her details on to anyone who is keen to be involved. Please contact Merryn Glover for details.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 12.05.