

SoAiS AGM Thursday 3 April 2025: CO-CHAIRS REPORT

Welcome & Committee Members

1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome from Mary Paulson-Ellis and Helen Sedgwick as Co-Chairs (and Helen as Treasurer)

2. Current committee members

Introduction to SJ Groenewegen (Secretary) and Michelle Hodkin who joined in November 2023 and Ray Anyasi who joined in spring 2024.

3. Outgoing committee members

Thank you to Sumayya Usmani who left in spring 2024, Claire Watts (former Chair) who stood down in summer 2024, and Tita Berredo who completed her term in December 2024.

Activities Nov 2023 to March 2025

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, to engagement with members and the wider literary sector in Scotland, and our working relationship with the wider SoA. Thank you to Elizabeth Frattaroli who is the SoA Group Co-ordinator for Scotland who attends all committee meetings, produces minutes and liaises between the committee and core SoA staff teams such as Events.

1.2 Policy

We continued to provide crucial advice and context for the work of the Scottish Policy Manager, lobbying, campaigning and supporting members interests in Scotland on issues such as pay, freelancer rights and funding. Farewell and thanks to Heather Parry, first Policy and Liaison Manager in Scotland; welcome to Sam Gonçalves the new Policy Manager as of April 2024. Committee were involved in recruiting Sam in early 2024.

Generally the committee decides on and discusses policy issues with Sam in a two-way, collaborative process, and Sam then acts as our representative in various meetings etc within the wider sector such as at the STUC Creative Unions Group.

However we do sometimes join Sam in crucial meetings including negotiating with SBT on Live Literature Rates - which rose from £175 in 2023 to £200 as of 2025.

We also spoke publicly in August 2024 about the planned cut by Creative Scotland to the Open Fund and continue to lobby for better funding for authors and all artists in Scotland.

1.3 Communications with Members

We send a quarterly newsletter to all members based in Scotland with news, reports of activities and events. Since 2025 we have started to use this a vehicle to ask questions of members around issues such as the purpose of SoAiS and funding.

We also include links to local groups which continued to run throughout the period in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highlands and Moray, Islands, and West Fife. Several committee members were involved in convening and/or attending local groups. A new local group for the Scottish Borders was set up in 2024.

We continue to run a private facebook group for members.

1.3 Events

We were involved in setting up and running several events for members including two lots of Christmas lunches in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness; a summer Retreat at Glenalmond Col-

lege in Perthshire and a picnic during the Edinburgh Festival; two online socials and an online event on climate change.

1.4 Change of Chair

Our Chair from 2022, Claire Watts, stood down in July 2025. Helen Sedgwick and Mary Paulson-Ellis agreed to step up to the post as co-chairs and were elected by the other members of the committee in August 2025.

2. Wider Sector in Scotland

2.1 Representation

Committee members represented SoA at various events throughout the period including the 20th anniversary celebrations in October 2024 to mark the founding of Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature.

In autumn 2024 our committee member Ray Anyasi joined the board of Literature Alliance Scotland.

2.2 Awards

We partnered with Edinburgh City of Literature to establish the Writers Room award for authors with an EH postcode. The first iteration of this was exclusively available to SoA members and attracted over 80 applicants.

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. Since August 2024 SoAiS committee members have attended and spoken at every ManCom meeting and attended an in-person Strategy Day in February 2025.

The SoAiS Chair reported to ManCom on Scottish activities and priorities in summer 2024.

3.2 Subcommittees

SoAiS committee members attended and contributed to the UK Policy and Campaigns subcommittee

3.3 Reviews

SoAiS committee members were heavily involved in the UK Author Communities Review throughout the period, designed to streamline and improve the internal structures around groups including Nation Groups such as Scotland and Wales, Special Interest Groups such as the Translators Association, and Networking Groups such as the Comic Creators Network.

4. Future Plans and Priorities

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

We will work to diversify our membership in Scotland, and engage and communicate more directly with our existing member, including through a Scottish membership survey in 2025.

We will develop policy and campaigning around author rights in general, but freelancer rights, pay and conditions in particular in the run up to the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2026.

Mary Paulson-Ellis

Helen Sedgwick

April 2025