

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES



*An online AGM of the Society of Authors held 5 – 7pm
on Thursday 20 November 2025*

A. INTRODUCTION, WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

The Chair of the Board (Management Committee), Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, welcomed over 300 members joining us from across the UK and around the world to this year's online AGM. The Chief Executive Anna Ganley provided the housekeeping notices.

B. YEAR IN REVIEW VIDEO

The 2025 year-in-review video was played. This video provided the highlights from the SoA's 2025 activities, the theme of which was: author care.

C. REPORT ON THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

The Chair of the Board provided a report on the SoA's activities in 2025, highlighting the SoA's aim to serve and support its members as professional authors. In the last 12 months the SoA has been:

- Shining a light on the importance of good author care, with the publication of the Author Care Toolkit and a suite of Best Practice guidelines aimed at agents, publishers and competition organisers.
- Advocating for members' rights and interests, lobbying government for the regulation of AI technology companies regarding their unlicensed use of our work and holding tech companies to account.
- Partnering with other organisations like the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, the Creators' Rights Alliance, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, the Association of Authors' Agents, the Publishers Association and the Booksellers Association.
- Continuing to work closely with the industry Sustainability Forum to press for industry divestment from fossil fuel finance in a way that protects jobs and livelihoods.
- Moving the SoA's investment funds and manager to better support the SoA's mission to improve outcomes for authors, whilst investing responsibly, ethically and sustainably.

- Representing author interests at the industry Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity forum. Work has included the promotion of the Disability Arts Online Access Form to normalise conversations about the 'reasonable adjustments' that each of us may need.
- Vital work through the Scottish Committee on the Scottish Government's Fair Work Taskforce, with the publication of the 'Freelance and Forgotten' report.

The Chair discussed upcoming projects:

- The development of an updated brand logo and colour palette
- A collaboration with the US Authors' Guild to launch a UK Human Authored scheme in the first quarter of 2026: a mark to enable all types of writers, illustrators and literary translators to additionally label their work as 'Human Authored'. It will be supported by a database that confirms human authorship, giving readers the assurances they deserve.

The SoA has been working to extend member benefits, now offering a member discount with Premier Inn and developing the idea to host in-person activities in the Event Space on Fridays as a Member Community Hub Space.

The Chair reminded members that the SoA currently has over 50 active local groups both in the UK and abroad. The organisation also continues to financially support over 200 authors each year with works in progress, grants for research trips, or to cope with a period of financial difficulty. The team of assessors award more than £300,000 in grants for works-in-progress and will provide over £100,000 in emergency relief to authors by the end of 2025. The SoA also looks after the literary estates of many distinguished writers, including George Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf, Philip Larkin and Rosamond Lehmann, 58 literary estates in total.

The SoA continues to celebrate authors with our annual Awards and Prizes. The 2025 SoA Awards ceremony and Summer Party was hosted at Southwark Cathedral by Joseph Coelho and board members Helen Epega and Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin. Awarded by authors, for authors, our Awards form the UK's largest literary prize fund worth over £140,000, with 11 prizes for works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and illustration.

Finally, the Chair mentioned that the SoA has been reflecting on its mission and purpose over 2025, discussing and reviewing our next five-year strategy which will run from November 2025-November 2030.

Our mission – as a special register trade union – is to promote, protect and campaign on the business of authorship, by *Supporting* you, helping you to *Organise* and to *Advocate* for your rights and interests. We conduct this work by being:

1. **Member-focused:** members are at the heart of everything we do. We will be proactive and add value by supporting, collaborating with, and advocating for our members.
2. **Authoritative:** we will work to share our expert knowledge and speak out for the profession. We will stay informed about the issues affecting authors.
3. **Supportive:** we will help and support members and collaborate with colleagues to achieve our shared mission and goals.
4. **Inclusive:** we will promote and encourage diversity in its broadest sense. We will work to ensure that all voices are listened to and represented fairly.

As of October 2025, the SoA had 12,494 members, which means that we have grown by almost 9% since the beginning of our last five-year strategy. As we embark on our 2025-2030 strategy, our goal remains to sustain growth during a period when it has never been harder to earn a living income as an author.

D. REPORT ON THE ELECTIONS TO THE BOARD

The SoA's board of directors are elected by the membership and they are responsible for the strategic direction of the SoA. Board members serve a three-year term and every year, four board members complete their terms.

In 2025, Harriet Evans and Abie Longstaff complete their three-year terms. They were elected alongside Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, Chair of the Board, who can stand for a second two-year term if elected by the Board at their meeting in January, and Nicholas Rankin, who retired from the board over the summer. The CEO thanked them for their significant contributions over the last three years.

Abie Longstaff will continue in her capacity as Chair of the Children's Writers and Illustrators Group, and Harriet Evans has been co-opted as Chair of the Policy and Campaigns Sub-Committee, so we're not losing their expertise entirely.

We received nine nominations for the four vacancies. The ballot closed at the end of October – we had a record voter turn-out of 20% of the membership – and we are delighted to welcome the following members.

In alphabetical order:

- Polly Atkin, poet, non-fiction writer, editor and bookseller
- Ian Giles, literary translator from the Scandinavian languages into English
- Lucinda Hawksley, writer of fiction and non-fiction on social history and art literature
- AJ West, novelist, media trainer and presenter

They join board members:

Helen Epega, Charles Harris, Nadine Matheson, Juliet McKenna, Simon Michael, and Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin.

As well, the following non-voting members attend board meetings in their capacity as Chairs of our Nation and Special Interest Groups:

- Mary Paulson-Ellis, Chair of the SoA in Scotland
- Cath Barton, Chair of the SoA in Wales
- Rhona Snelling, Chair of the Educational Writers Group
- Abie Longstaff, Chair of the Children's Writers and Illustrators Group
- Dean Atta, Chair of the Poetry and Spoken Word Group
- Rhiannon Tise, Chair of the Scriptwriters Group
- Ian Giles, Chair of the Translators Association

Their insights are vital to help fill the gaps in our knowledge or experience.

The CEO also thanked the Group Chairs who have retired since the last AGM: Helen Sedgwick co-Chair of the SoA in Scotland and Katrina Naomi, Chair of the Poetry and Spoken Word Group.

The Chair noted that members are vital to the running of the SoA in many different ways: as voluntary legal directors, as honorary Fellows, as committee members for Special Interest and National Groups, as local group organisers, as judges, assessors or charity trustees, and all the many members who have worked with us during 2025. The SoA is very grateful for members' time, expertise and commitment to the SoA, helping us to deliver our activities throughout the year.

E. RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 1: that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024 are approved. Proposed by the Board. Seconder: Harriet Evans. No questions.

Resolution 2: that the annual report and accounts for 2024 are approved. Proposed by the Board. Secunder: Abie Longstaff.

Question from Tim Tate: How many staff does the SoA have?

Response from Katharine King: about 28 full-time equivalent staff.

Resolution 3: that the full members nominated by the Board to become SoA Fellows are ratified. The 2025 cohort are: Nicola Beaman, Maggie Gee, Vineet Lal and Kit de Waal. Proposed by the Board. Secunder: Juliet McKenna. No questions.

The Chair confirmed that the role of Honorary President is still held in abeyance and we revisit this every year at the annual meeting of the Fellows.

Resolution 4: that the Articles of Association are updated to amend the quorum for Board meetings from three (3) to 50% + 1 eligible voting board members. Proposed by the Board. Secunder: Margaret Skea. No questions.

Resolution 5: that the Bye-Laws of the SoA approved on 21 October 2014 are revised to provide that the function of Honorary Treasurer under the Society's Constitution is retired. Proposed by the Board. Secunder: James Kinsley.
No questions.

Resolution 6: that the Bye-Laws of the SoA be amended to allow for the option to appoint a Vice-Chair to support the work of the Chair. Should there be no suitable candidate for the role of Chair serving on the board, this resolution will allow for the appointment of a member not currently serving, with appropriate expertise, as Chair. Proposed by the Board. Secunder: Debra Tracey.

This wording has been finessed to reflect the points raised in the questions.

The CEO noted that we received four member-proposed resolutions by a group of 17 members; however, these resolutions were not movable as each resolution was either part of ongoing work or subject to an ongoing recruitment process.

The first resolution was about member networks

This resolution could not be moved because the staff team are currently working on a plan for additional member networks, and we have recently recruited new members of the team to work on these. We will liaise with this group of members as we work to set up these new networks.

The second resolution was about membership growth

We have presented our top-level goal for member growth this evening. Authorship is a precarious profession at the best of times, and so we will aim to exceed our 9% growth over the next five years.

This member resolution asked for a five-year plan that focused on doubling its membership to 25,000 by 2030.

As a membership organisation, membership growth is key to everything we do, if we can reach 25,000 – in the current climate – that would be amazing – although our primary objective is to support members whenever they need us.

Early in the new year, we will share our business plan for 2026 – and you can comment on and query this at any time – you do not need to wait for an AGM – but we will report on our progress to meet our goals every year at each AGM.

There are many thousands of potential members who are not in the SoA but should be – and so there is huge opportunity for the growth of SoA membership.

We agree that a trade union is only as strong and as influential as its member base. And at a time when author incomes are so low, and AI is presenting an existential threat, we need to be as strong and as influential as possible.

A larger, broader membership will enable us to increase our resources, influence and relevance, and help more authors to access to the SoA's services.

The third resolution was about the SoA communications policy

The Board of Directors are responsible for the strategic direction of the SoA and its policy decisions. In September, we recruited a new and very experienced Head of Communications and PR – Tara Nabili – she is currently conducting a strategic communications audit. We are also lucky to have a communications consultant and media trainer as a member of the new board. In 2026, the board will review Tara's recommendations, and we may update our communications policy in light of this.

As a small organisation with limited resources, we need to spend our time and resources carefully. All feedback is important to help us improve the delivery of our services to members. We invite member feedback throughout the year, to help us improve our services to you. Your comments help us to monitor how we're doing. If you want to raise an issue or provide feedback (good or bad), please get in touch.

The fourth resolution was about the SoA's investments

This resolution could not be moved because we have already done what this resolution asked for. The SoA is in the process of moving its investments following a two-year review,

and so we are currently mid-process to move these into new funds that align with our mission and values on sustainability. We will update members in due course.

Results

- **Resolution 1** – on the minutes from last year’s AGM. **This vote has CARRIED.** 591 votes for, 1 against, 55 abstaining.
- **Resolution 2** – on the Annual Report and Annual Accounts. **This vote has CARRIED.** 596 votes for, 0 against, 50 abstaining.
- **Resolution 3** – ratifying the new Fellows. **This vote has CARRIED.** 600 votes for, 3 against, 44 abstaining.
- **Resolution 4** – that the Articles of Association are updated to amend the quorum for Board meetings from three (3) to 50% + 1 eligible voting board members. **This vote has CARRIED.** 584 votes for, 7 against, 55 abstaining.
- **Resolution 5** – that the Bye-Laws of the SoA approved on 21 October 2014 are revised to provide that the function of Honorary Treasurer under the Society’s Constitution is retired. **This vote has CARRIED.** 529 votes for, 15 against, 101 abstaining.
- **Resolution 6** – that the Bye-Laws of the SoA be amended to allow for the appointment of a Vice-Chair to support the work of the Chair. Should there be no suitable candidate for the role of Chair, this resolution will allow for the appointment of a member with appropriate expertise, not currently serving on the board, as Chair **This vote has CARRIED.** 542 votes for, 64 against, 38 abstaining.

E. Any Other Business

We received no questions in advance.

Question from Tita Berredo: I just wanted to celebrate the Human Authored initiative. I think it's much needed, and I was wondering what an author or an illustrator has to go through to verify it, and I ask this because I've seen, people claiming, especially with

illustrations, that it's not AI, but it's clearly AI, and they avoid revealing who's the illustrator.

CEO response: Thank you, Tita. Yes, we'll be putting full FAQs on the site in the new year. This is a process that we're reviewing. We're not saying that authors can't use any AI, as they might use it for spell checking, for research, as a creative prompt, but AI shouldn't be doing the writing, illustrating, or translating for you as the creator. The sign-up process should be a straightforward process, but we'll put that in a step-by-step process early in the new year.

Question from Wendy Blumfield: At the last General meeting I brought up the issue of Jewish authors being marginalised by publishers and agents. I felt that, as you are my trade union, that this was the job of the SoA to investigate this and try and solve this problem. Since then, I've written to Anna and Vanessa, I've written to The Author, and there's been no action on this at all, and it was to the point that I nearly cancelled my membership. I decided to stay on another year to see if there could be some action within, but this is grossly unfair to a population that have written iconic literature in the last century and a half for Britain. Thank you.

CEO response: Thank you, Wendy. Since last year we have heard from the Jewish Publishers Circle, and we can send you details. This is a group of authors, publishers, and agents who exist and are formed to support each other within the publishing industry to address issues as a group as they see them. We have received your pitch for The Author, our editor has been away from his desk recently, so he'll get back to you as soon as he's back.

Question from Anthony Capildeo: I just want to ask about Resolution 6, because I'm not entirely sure about the logic for the change and under what circumstances it might come into effect and what the benefit would be for the membership.

Chair response: It's a resolution that came up as part of our risk analysis on the organisation. We think it's highly unlikely that it'll happen, that we might be in a situation where the board might not have somebody who's interested in standing for Chair, but we are in that situation at the moment with Fellows - there is a reluctance to stand for President because of the high-profile nature of the role and the issues of social media. It's a mitigation against it potentially happening, that the group of board members, for whatever reason, might not want to stand in that position. And as the organisation's growing, which obviously we want it to do, it's becoming more prominent, and the role of Chair is becoming a more public position. We want to be able to throw it open to the membership to see if there's anybody in the greater membership who might be interested.

Anthony Capildeo response: Thank you very much for that answer, and I'm very glad to hear that, as it's part of a risk analysis, that there probably will be a safeguard built in against an un-elected non-member Chair or Vice-Chair being appointed to the Management Committee at any point, and I truly do hope the situation with the Presidency is resolved.

Question from Venika Kingsland: I want to know what the SoA stands on AI and copyright issues is, has this been addressed somewhere?

Chair and CEO response: It certainly has. It's been part of the film that we showed earlier, but you'll be able to watch it again on the website: our Meta protest, the petition we raised, Anna was just in the House of Lords - we're part of the working groups working with the Government on any future AI legislation. But yes, that's formed the majority of our work since 2022 on the policy front.

Question from Maggie Gee: I asked almost the identical question as Anthony Capildeo, in the Q&A chat: when you're narrowing down in Committee, how this is formed, would it be worth saying that it must at any rate be a member, and it must certainly be a writer, because with 12,000-odd members, it's just to protect us against the danger of somebody coming in as a professional Chair who isn't a writer and isn't a member. So, although that's clear in your thinking it would be great to get it somehow formally into the description of what a Chair must be.

Chair and CEO response: Yes, absolutely we think it's essential they understand the industry. We have a role description for the Chair that we will update after this resolution, and add the detail.

Question from Steven (?): Would we have an in-person AGM?

CEO and Chair response: We review it every year, having an online AGM is a lot more accessible for people around the world. We get a lot more members attending if we run an AGM online, but it's something we revisit every year as part of the board discussions. All our meetings are hybrid so we could certainly look at seeing if we can figure out a way of having a hybrid AGM. It's always lovely to go back to being in person, it has to be said. We used to have them at Conway Hall so that would be super easy, and as you say, hybrid is possible, so we can revisit that.

With no further questions, the Chair thanked members for joining the AGM.