

# Scottish Poetry Library

**DRAFT: MINUTE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2022 OF THE SCOTTISH POETRY LIBRARY**  
(25 February 2023)

Friends in attendance: Jane Aaronson (online), Anne Connolly, Patrick Corbett, Claudia Daventry, Christine De Luca, Julie Johnson (online), Laura Fyfe, Gordon Munro, James Ripley, Charlie Roy, David Rutherford, Sheila Wakefield, Chris Wardhaugh, Eric Wishart.

Apologies: Michael Hamish Glen, Ana Maria Maguire, Bobby McPherson

The meeting began with a reading by Laura Fyfe of "The Hill" by Nan Shepherd.

## **Charlie Roy chaired the meeting**

### **1. Voting**

The results of the SPL AGM 2022 voting were as follows:

<b>Accept the Minutes of 2020/21:</b> 25 For, 0 Against	ACCEPTED
<b>Approve the Annual Accounts:</b> 25 For, 0 Against	APPROVED
<b>Re-elect Charlie Roy:</b> 23 For, 0 Against	ELECTED
<b>Re-elect David Rutherford:</b> 24 For, 0 Against	ELECTED
<b>Approve amendments to Company Papers:</b> 24 For, 0 Against	APPROVED

### **2. Report from the Co-Chairs**

Gordon Munro reflected on the strategic review of the year that was presented in a paper that had been circulated to Friends in advance of the meeting.

Gordon thanked the trustees who had stepped down: Jane Ryder, who had led on modernising the governing policies and had introduced the co-Chair model; Stuart Paterson, who supported our membership drive in Dumfriesshire, and Nuala Watt, who was an active contributor to the Board, often from the perspective of a published writer and educationalist.

Gordon welcomed the addition to the Board of Claudia Daventry and Chris Wardhaugh.

He thanked the Board and staff team for their work in what had been a difficult time for everyone during the pandemic. We have pulled through and come through with resilience and strength. Exemplar work included the development of new writing activity such as the Long Covid Writers' Group. We were also the first library to re-open in Edinburgh, which was fitting for a city of literature.

Gordon place on record the Board's thanks to the staff team for their outstanding work. They had been incredible during this time. As well as the physical re-opening, there was creative practice and drive to increase accessibility through various hybrid and remote options. This digital activity included workshops over the Zoom platform and film commissions. In a sense, although the building was closed, we did not shut down and have been able to engage in a national conversation, which Gordon was proud of.

### **3. Report from the Director**

Asif Khan reflected on the year's operations, which was presented in a paper that had been circulated to Friends in advance of the meeting.

Asif echoed Gordon's sentiments on the resilience, passion and drive of the staff to help maintain the SPL's public profile during the pandemic.

He said that it was testimony to the growing reputation of the organisation that the First Minister chose the library for her first non-health related public engagement when announcing the new National Makar in August 2021. It provided the SPL with the stimulus to press ahead with what our adapted programme of work.

We supported staff to work from home through budgeting for IT equipment and furniture. The Job Retention Scheme meant that despite the furloughing of staff, we were able to maintain half to two-thirds of our capacity.

Some of the new services and ways of working that we introduced have been kept and mainstreamed, for example free postal loans and hybrid creative writing and reader development workshops.

We had a wellbeing focus for our programme with the Long Covid Writers Group, Words for Wellbeing seminars in partnership with Lapidus, Mindfulness activity with Colin McGuire, and the addition of nurses and midwives to our Tools of the Trade publications series.

Other innovations included the Poetry Ambassadors scheme, the City Makars Network and the Next Generation Makars initiative.

We also partnered with the National Library of Scotland to digitise hundreds of our audio cassettes collection. Our pivot towards digital resources included growing our film and film-poetry content.

We have been supporting the communications for Kathleen Jamie, our National Makar. An example being the call out for public submissions to a collective nature poem for COP26, for which we commissioned a film-poem.

Looking ahead to the next regular funding round with Creative Scotland, we will be leaning towards more strategic partnerships, particularly around health and wellbeing.

The Board and the staff had been magnificent throughout the pandemic, and we will continue to provide opportunities for flexible working where appropriate.

### **4. Comments from Friends**

Jane Aaronson applauded the way that the SPL had thought 'out of the box' and said that she had enjoyed participating in Nothing But the Poem workshops.

Patrick Corbett welcomed the opportunity for The School of Poets to return to in-person activity in the library. The poets were enthusiastic. There would still be scope for online participation too.

Eric Wishart requested a copy of the full set of accounts. The Director printed them out for Mr Wishart to take away at the end of the meeting. Mr Wishart also made some suggestions for the events and partnerships programme, which the Deputy Director Aly Barr responded to.