SCOTSS

Trustees' Annual Report

1st December 2024 to 30 November 2025

Charity information

SCOTSS, The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland

Scottish Charity Number: SC047951

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Trustees

Objectives and activities

SCOTSS was set up to coordinate and support the activities of consumer protection services in Scottish local authorities, and to advance the capacity of local services through support, education and understanding. The range of functions involved is wide and includes public safety (safety of non-food goods), public health (activities around the sale of tobacco and nicotine vaping products), animal health and welfare, and the protection of vulnerable or disadvantaged consumers from scams or other forms of detriment. Over the current year our members have continued to be at the vanguard of dealing with business advice and consumer protection.

SCOTSS helps our members in Scottish local authorities produce better outcomes for the people they serve, and a more capable trading standards service for Scotland. More details of activities and achievements over the year are contained in our Chair’s report below.

Report of the Chair of the Board of Trustees

My second year as Chair of SCOTSS was characterised by significant work to address the long-term sustainability of Trading Standards services in Scotland. Major themes included public sector reform, workforce development, service transformation, qualification training delivery, illicit tobacco enforcement through Operation CeCe, and raising the profile of Trading Standards services in Scotland with government and parliamentary stakeholders.

Throughout the year, SCOTSS actively positioned itself within discussions on public service reform, commissioned a strategic options appraisal through CIPFA, continued to develop the Modern Apprenticeship programme, and strengthened relationships with Scottish Government, Consumer Scotland and other key partners.

The end of 2025 concluded with recognition of SCOTSS and the previous Society of Directors (of Regional Councils) 50th Anniversary, highlighting the contribution of Trading Standards services to consumer protection, fair trading, business compliance and public safety across Scotland.

Key Achievements

1. Strategic Reform and Future Service Delivery

A major focus throughout the year was ensuring Trading Standards remains sustainable and fit for purpose in the face of workforce and resource pressures.

Public Sector Reform

SCOTSS engaged extensively with Scottish Government reform discussions and public sector transformation initiatives. Engagement included:

- Discussions with SOLACE and Scottish Ministers.
- Participation in Public Service Reform summits.
- Input into national conversations regarding the future delivery of public services.
- Promotion of Trading Standards as a critical public protection service.
- CIPFA Options Appraisal

SCOTSS commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake an options appraisal examining the possible future structures for Trading Standards services in Scotland. Key themes identified included:

1. The unsustainability of maintaining current arrangements without intervention.
2. The need to clearly evidence the value of Trading Standards.
3. Greater emphasis on public protection, safeguarding and economic growth.
4. Recognition of emerging threats including online harms and cyber-enabled consumer crime.

This Options Appraisal and associated workforce survey has become SCOTSS' primary strategic priority. Findings will being shared with stakeholders including Scottish Government, Consumer Scotland, CTSI and Which? and we will be sharing it with the Minister for Public Finance, Mr Ivan McKee MSP.

2. Workforce Development

Addressing workforce resilience remained a central objective.

Modern Apprenticeship Programme

Significant progress was achieved in establishing Scotland's Trading Standards Modern Apprenticeship pathway.

Key developments included:

- Collaboration between Edinburgh College, REHIS and the Scottish Funding Council.
- Creation of a delivery oversight group to improve programme governance.
- Progression of apprentices through both academic and workplace-based learning.
- Development of arrangements for a second intake of apprentices.

By January 2026 we expect:

- Most apprentices will have completed over 50% of their portfolios.
- One apprentice will fully complete their programme pending verification.
- Planning will commence for a second cohort beginning Autumn 2026.

This programme represents one of the most significant long-term investments in the future workforce capacity of Scottish Trading Standards services.

3. Qualifications and Professional Development

In furtherance of our charitable aim, “to advance education, and in particular to seek to increase the understanding and expertise of local authority trading standards officers in Scotland”, SCOTSS continued to support professional competency and workforce development.

Achievements included:

- Product Safety training and examinations.
- Delivery of Weights & Measures practical and oral training.

These initiatives ensure continued professional competence across the Trading Standards profession and support succession planning. Additionally in recognition and encouragement for students to achieve the highest standard of knowledge possible, SCOTSS have agreed to sponsor an award for the candidate with the highest mark across Stage 2 of the CTSI qualifications framework exams. It is intended that this award will be made annually and presented at the CTSI annual conference.

4. Operation CeCe and Illicit Tobacco Enforcement

1. Operation CeCe remained a significant area of activity and aligns well with our charitable aim “to address issues of public safety, public health, and animal welfare, the exploitation of people who are vulnerable or otherwise disadvantaged, and other social ills arising from business activities which contravene statutory trading standards, by increasing the effectiveness of trading standards enforcement across Scotland”

Funding and Delivery

During 2025:

- HMRC committed funding to expand enforcement and disruption activities.
- Challenges arose regarding delivery arrangements for Scottish illicit tobacco officers.
- Funding mechanisms were revised to prevent delays to local authority activity.
- A revised protocol for the allocation of enforcement funding was introduced.

Enforcement Priorities

Funding supported:

- Intelligence-led inspections.
- Detection dog operations.
- Execution of warrants.
- Joint working with Police Scotland.
- Assessment of seized tobacco products.

The programme aims to remove illegal tobacco from the retail market and expand disruption activity across all Scottish local authority areas.

5. Policy, Legislation and Environmental Enforcement

Single-Use Vape Ban

SCOTSS worked closely with Scottish Government regarding the implementation of the Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) (Scotland) Regulations 2024.

Key outcomes included:

- Identification of enforcement funding.
- Discussions on delivery mechanisms.
- Engagement on future environmental legislation requiring Trading Standards enforcement activity. This highlighted the growing role of Trading Standards in environmental protection and market regulation.

6. Performance and Governance

Balanced Scorecard

Work continued throughout the year to review and improve the SCOTSS Balanced Scorecard.

Analysis identified areas for refinement and further development, ensuring future performance reporting remains robust and relevant.

7. Stakeholder Engagement and Profile Raising

A significant achievement during the year was the successful promotion of Trading Standards and SCOTSS at both Scottish and UK levels.

Dover House Reception - SCOTSS partnered with BSI and UKAS to host a high-profile event attended by:

- Secretary of State for Scotland.
- Parliamentarians.
- Government representatives.
- Business leaders.

Holyrood Reception

The annual Holyrood event successfully showcased the work of Trading Standards and its strategic partners to MSPs and stakeholders.

Challenges Identified

Throughout the reporting period, several challenges continued to affect the profession:

- Workforce shortages and succession planning pressures.
- Delays in apprenticeship implementation.
- Resource constraints across local authorities.
- Uncertainty surrounding future service structures.
- Increasing demands from emerging consumer and cyber-related risks.
- Complexity of securing and managing externally funded initiatives.

Strategic Priorities for 2026

SCOTSS will enter 2026 with several priority areas:

1. Securing government support to address the challenges raised within the CIPFA Options Appraisal along with a timeframe for implementation of changes required.
2. Expansion and refinement of the Modern Apprenticeship programme.
3. Continued delivery of Operation CeCe.
4. Strengthening political engagement ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary Elections.
5. Maintaining a strong evidence base demonstrating the value and impact of Trading Standards services.

Conclusion

The 2024–25 period represented a pivotal year for SCOTSS. While significant workforce and resource challenges remain, substantial progress was made in workforce development, strategic planning, training delivery, enforcement activity and stakeholder engagement. The commissioning of the options appraisal, expansion of the Modern Apprenticeship programme and growing recognition of Trading Standards by government and parliament provide a strong foundation for future reform and long-term sustainability. The 50th Anniversary of trading standards coordination also provided an important opportunity to celebrate the profession's achievements while setting a clear direction for the future. Whilst there is still much work to be done to achieve a secure future for delivery of an effective trading standards service in Scotland the work done in this past year has laid a good foundation towards achieving that and we await to see what actions the Scottish Government may now take.

I must conclude this report by stating that none of the work highlighted in this report could be achieved without the input and assistance from our National Co-ordinator, the SCOTSS Trustees, Lead Officers and SCOTSS members. I truly thank them all for their efforts and the amount of time they give to our society.

Alexandra Connell

SCOTSS Chair 2024 - 2026

Structure, governance and management

SCOTSS is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It is governed by its constitution, a form of which was first adopted on 20th June 1996. The constitution was amended to meet SCIO requirements and the organisation was granted charitable status by the OSCR on 24th November 2017.

The SCOTSS Executive committee, which meets on a 4-monthly basis, are the charity's Board of Trustees. Membership of the Board is open to any member and trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting which is normally held in February. Under paragraph 70 of the constitution the Board is made up of the Chair, the Immediate Past Chair, the Vice Chair, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and an individual serving as the main representative of the organisation on the Council of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, along with up to six ordinary members. The Board can appoint trustees during the year if necessary, up to this limit.

There is a general meeting of the organisation's members every four months in varying venues across Scotland, or by remote video means, with one of these meetings also including the Annual General Meeting. A National Coordinator is employed to provide general administrative functions, coordination of activities, dialogue with government, and general representation of SCOTSS to other organisations.

Financial and risk review

Income for the period was £345,622.40 with a total expenditure of £348,625.91 and a total deficit of £3,003.51 for the year, giving an ongoing net assets balance of £432,190.69.

Our main source of funding this year has been from grant funding from HM Treasury for 'Operation CeCe' around commissioning local authorities to conduct enforcement activities to disrupt the supply of illicit tobacco at retail level. Scottish Government grants, around activities related to tobacco and vapes control made up the bulk of the rest, along with income from membership fees and miscellaneous activities including training. Around 90% of this funding is restricted to the purposes set out by the relevant government departments.

The Trustees consider that the balance of unrestricted funds is sufficient to carry on the activities of the SCIO for 2025-26. Neither running costs for the charity nor planned activities to November 2026 will increase sufficiently to impact on existing balances and the current balance of unrestricted funds exceeds the forecasted operating costs for 2025-26.

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed in particular those relating to employment of a National Coordinator and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate the charity's exposure to any major risk, including the purchase of employers' and public liability insurances.

Independent Examiner's report to the Board of Trustees of SCOTSS

Below is the Financial Report for the accounting period, which was signed as accurate by Shonagh Merriman, Service Manager (Corporate Finance) Orkney Islands Council's Senior Accounting Officer, after she had audited the accounts, on 12th February 2026.

Declaration

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:

Name	Alexandra Connell
Designation	Chairperson
Date	26th February 2026

Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland

Charity Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure account)
Financial Report for Year Ending 30th November 2025

Balance from previous year ending 30 November 2024 **£433,464.51**

INCOME				EXPENDITURE		
Membership fees	(1)	£	5,970.00	Coordinator HMRC	(11)	£12,230.65
OPSS Funding	(2)	£	50,000.00	Coordinator Pension	(12)	£9,898.94
Training	(3)	£	4,948.38	Coordinator salary/expenses/equ	(13)	£38,290.98
CeCe Scotland	(4)	£	232,500.00	Coordinator other expenditure	(14)	£8,250.48
Fireworks	(5)	£	-	Members travel and expenses	(15)	£14,703.67
Other Income	(6)	£	559.38	Catering & room hire	(16)	£201.30
Tobacco Enforcement	(7)	£	46,500.00	HMRC Expenditure	(17)	£0.00
IPO Self Storage	(8)	£	-	Tobacco enforcement expenditu	(18)	£0.00
CeCe CTSI	(9)	£	-	Tobacco Training	(19)	£0.00
Joint Approved Body	(10)	£	2,500.00	Tobacco Projects	(20)	£0.00
Current Account Income		**£**	**342,977.76**	Accountancy Fees	(21)	£1,818.00
Bonus Saver Account Interest		**£**	**2,644.64**	Trustee Insurances	(22)	£1,753.68
				Other Expenditure	(23)	£31,996.80
TOTAL INCOME		**£**	**345,622.40**	Other Training	(24)	£35,059.00
				OPSS Project	(25)	£47,830.00
				CeCe Scotland	(26)	£122,613.96
				Fireworks	(27)	£800.00
				Scottish Government Scams	(28)	£0.00
				Bank Charges	(29)	£112.95
				IPO Self Storage	(30)	£14,200.00
				Life Changes Trust	(31)	£1,400.00
				Joint Approved Body	(32)	£2,200.00
				CeCe CTSI	(33)	£5,265.50
				TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**£348,625.91**

Net income/(expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year **-£3,003.51**

Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland

Balance Sheet
AS at 30 November 2025

CURRENT ASSETS	
Current Account	**-£14,352.89**
Bonus Saver Account	**£446,543.58**
Total current assets	**£432,190.69**
NET ASSETS	**£432,190.69**
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY	
Unrestricted income funds	**£432,190.69**

Signed ....

Gary Foubister Treasurer Date 20-01-26

Signed ....

Auditor Date 12/2/26

NOTES

(1) 46 members renewed membership in the accounting period.
(2) SCOTSS received one off funding from OPSS for online business support on a cost neutral basis.
(3) SCOTSS facilitated Training and courses mainly at Carronvale House.
(4) SCOTSS received funding for Operation CeCe Scotland from HMRC.
(6) Funding from Electrical Safety First for Training.
(7) Tobacco Enforcement including Coordinator funding.
(10) £100 annual membership for the 25 Approved Body members.
(11) As an employee of SCOTSS monthly payment is made to HMRC for the Coordinator.
(12) The monthly pension contribution for the Coordinator is split approx 25% from SCOTSS, 75% from the Coordinator.
(13) The amount shown includes an element paid for SCOTSS domain renewals and equipment required by the Coordinator to fulfil SCOTSS activities.
(14) Coordinator expenditure not included above, Salary sacrifice.
(15) SCOTSS members have represented the society at meetings throughout the year, notably at Whitehall and at Scottish Parliament.
(16) AGM Catering
(21) Payment of accountant for payroll and advice
(22) Annual fee payable by SCOTSS trustees for employer and public liability insurance.
(23) The majority of this is the CIPFA Options Appraisal
(24) Mainly payment to Ayrshire College for MA Course.
(25) An online sellers funded project cost neutral to SCOTSS.
(26) 71 Uses of the detection dog by 24 local authorities.
(27) One belated invoice received for 23.24 activity.
(29) Small monthly amount payable on transactions.
(30) Fully funded IPO Self- Storage Project Part 2.
(31) Use of remaining LCT funds supporting expert reports.
(32) Payment of Approved Body Costs.
(33) Mainly out of house enforcement using external contractors and SCOTSS.