

The Scottish Oral History Group

Trustees' Annual Report

1 January - 31 December 2025

Charity contact information

Scottish Oral History Group SC015909

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Charity Trustees

1. Lori Watson
2. Willow Mullins
3. Angela Bartie
4. Cathlin Macaulay
5. Erin Farley
6. Hannah Wood
7. Hugh Hagan
8. Howard Mitchell
9. Scott Gardiner

Objectives and activities

The aims and purposes of the Scottish Oral History Group are to further the methods and practice of oral history amongst the public at large in all appropriate fields, including educational ones, and to encourage the discussion of methodology, technical problems, and all relevant matters by the organisation of conferences and meetings and by any other appropriate means.

The Group will work in close association with the UK Oral History Society and societies with similar aims. Membership of the Group is open to individuals and institutions and the Group is empowered to make life membership awards. The Group brings practitioners together on its website and at conferences, workshops, talks, and similar events, to support the discipline and to promote debate.

Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document

The Scottish Oral History Group is governed by its Constitution.

Governance and Management: Committee Office-Holders

At the end of 2024, our Convenor, Howard Mitchell, and Secretary, Hugh Hagan, stepped down from their roles as office-holders. Both have remained as Trustees and Committee Members of the Group and continue to contribute to the work of the Group, for which we are very grateful.

We held our AGM in January 2025 during which Angela Bartie was elected to the role of Convenor, Erin Farley to the role of Deputy Convenor, Lori Watson to the role of Secretary, and Hannah Wood to the role of Treasurer. All were elected unopposed.

Trustee recruitment and appointment

During this AGM we also elected a new Committee member to the group, Scott Gardiner, a traditional singer, with a focus mainly on bothy ballads and songs of the north-east as well as Angus folk songs. We welcome his contribution to the work of the Group.

The following Committee members were also elected unopposed: Cathlin Macauley, Willow Mullins, Howard Mitchell, and Hugh Hagan.

Achievements and performance

We have been working together to establish processes that will institute clearer timelines for the administration of the Group and an annual schedule of Trustee and Committee meetings that have been set in advance. This will help with forward planning and progressing specific events and other activities.

We have created a Welcome Pack for new Trustees, and a practice of allocating an experienced Mentor for new starts. We also identified online Trustee training for both new and existing Trustees; all existing Trustees have now been asked to complete this and inform our Secretary once completed. We will update on this in our 2026 Report.

We have discussed our Constitution and drafted a revised Constitution for review by Trustees. A fully revised, updated and finalised version will be circulated to members in advance of our 2026 AGM.

Our Trustee Erin Farley represented the Group at the 2025 UK Oral History Society annual conference, held at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. This high-profile and successful event was presented in partnership with the SOHG and the Scottish Oral History Centre. Erin represented the SOHG on the organising committee and spoke on our behalf at the event, giving the Group an important visibility and presence in this key gathering of oral history practitioners from around the world, and both revitalising existing links and establishing new connections for us to build on going forwards.

Having trialled providing a workshop to the University of Edinburgh department of Celtic and Scottish Studies seminar programme to build knowledge and awareness of SOHG amongst academics and students in related fields, we have continued contributing to this series.

We proposed and had accepted a new SOHG Representative on the UK Oral History Society Executive Committee. Cathlin Macauley has now replaced Erin Farley in this role, attending her first OHS meeting in late 2025 and continuing our long-standing formal relationship with the OHS.

Financial review

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

N/A

Details of any deficit

N/A

Donated facilities and services

N/A

Future plans

Next year the Group aims to add further Trustees and to build its membership to more fully reflect the diversity and breadth of oral history activity taking place across contemporary Scotland. We also aim to establish connections with one or more high-profile advocates for oral history in Scotland, who can help to support the work of the Group in the role of 'Patron' (or similar). This would be in addition to our Honorary President role (held by one of our Group's original founding members, Margaret Mackay).

The Group plans to develop a programme of engagement for members and others which aims to provide an effective space for communication, connection and networking between those currently active in the field of oral history across Scotland. We will begin by rejuvenating communication channels with our existing members and arranging an event to take place in the second half of 2026, linked to the 75th anniversary of the School of Scottish Studies Archives (SSSA). We hope to bring existing members, potential new members, and organisations with an interest in, or who are actively working in the field of, oral history together for a panel discussion and a small exhibition of materials related to the history of the Group and our connection with the SSSA. We are hoping to make this a hybrid event to allow for the widest reach/accessibility.

Trustees were in full agreement that the reach of the Group must be extended further to encompass and promote projects across Scotland, from community group projects to university students and independent individual practitioners. We plan to survey our existing members to invite their views on what oral history in Scotland needs next, and what they would like to see from the Group in this regard.

We continue our planning for the 50th anniversary of the Group being founded, due to take place in 2028, as well as making contributions to the series of events marking the 75th anniversary of the School of Scottish Studies Archives, to take place during 2026.

Declaration

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:

Angela Bartie & Lori Watson

Designation: Convenor and Secretary

Date: 3 June 2026