

**SALTIRE SOCIETY**

**REPORT OF THE SALTIRE COMMISSION**

**JANUARY 2011**

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## FOREWORD

I have pleasure in submitting to Council the Report of the Saltire Commission in response to our remit to carry out a strategic review of the Saltire Society. The Report contains 24 recommendations for this purpose.

I would like to express my warmest thanks to the other members of the Commission for readily responding to the invitation to take part in its work, and for contributing so positively to its discussions and the Report.

We would not have made the recommendations in our report if we had not been convinced that there is an important and distinctive role for the Society. However, we have come to the unanimous conclusion that to achieve this demands fundamental, decisive and sustained change in key aspects of the Society's activity and organisation.

Cullen of Whitekirk  
Chairman

January 2011

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(to be read with the paragraphs listed)**

### **CHAPTER 3 A NATIONAL ROLE FOR THE SOCIETY**

R1: The future role of the Saltire Society should be as an independent and authoritative promoter of Scottish culture (paras 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7)

R2: It should continue to communicate a greater understanding of Scotland's cultural heritage and celebrate fresh achievements (para. 3.7)

R3: It should seek to engage with and bring together other organisations which have complementary interests (para. 3.8)

R4: It should adopt a cultural policy which states what it stands for (para. 3.7)

R5: Its members should be seen as a means of releasing its potential; and its branches as a national support network (para. 3.9)

R6: It should take active steps to encourage the public, not only to take an interest in what it stands for, but also to participate in its activities (para. 3.10)

R7: It should also seek active engagement with the staff and students of universities, colleges and schools to convey the value and relevance of a sound knowledge of Scotland's heritage, and encourage their lasting association with the Society (para. 3.11)

### **CHAPTER 4 THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY**

R8: The Society should regularly review its awards, and consider whether there should be awards in additional areas (para. 4.3)

R9: The Society should arrange high-quality public debates, and consider holding an annual Saltire Society lecture, in different parts of Scotland (para. 4.4)

R10: The Society should continue to conduct or support campaigns, especially as the key organisation (para. 4.5)

R11: The Society should consider activities of interest to students and young people (para. 4.6)

R12: For the publication of books, the Society should seek to ally itself to a university press or a publishing house (para. 4.8)

## **CHAPTER 5 DIRECTION, GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

R13: The Society should engage a full-time Executive Director to give strategic direction; develop and sustain an active programme; and make recommendations as to activities and priorities. He/she should have responsibility for membership and promotion; liaison with the Society's branches; establishment of key contacts; development of co-operation with other organisations and communications with the media (para. 5.2)

R14: There should be an Executive Board for management, leadership and guidance, with power to co-opt (paras 5.5-5.6)

R15: The Executive Board should also have delegated authority to conduct the business of the Society (paras 5.7 and 5.15)

R16: Council should have the function of ratifying and approving matters of policy and the mission of the Society; identifying objectives and monitoring achievement (para. 5.9)

R17: The membership of Council should be regularly refreshed (para. 5.10)

R18: Younger people should be encouraged to stand for election to Council and serve on committees (para. 5.11)

R19: Council should be strengthened by additional skills (para. 5.12)

R20: There should be an aim to build on the existence of the branches and invigorate them; and to consider ways of working more closely with members; and in due course aim to establish new branches in parts of the country where the Society currently has no presence (para. 5.13)

R21: There should be a Treasurer and an experienced Finance Committee, with whom the Fundraising Committee should work in close liaison (paras 5.15-5.16)

## **CHAPTER 6 IMPLEMENTATION**

R22: Council should seek the assistance of an advisory group for the identification of the role that the Society can most profitably seek to fill (para. 6.3)

R23: The advisory group should include representation from outwith the Society (paras 6.3-6.4)

R24: The advisory group should oversee implementation of the review's recommendations and should assist Council in the process of setting priorities (para. 6.4)

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is our report to Council in response to its invitation in March 2010 to carry out a strategic review of the Saltire Society, with the Rt Hon. Lord Cullen of Whitekirk KT FRSE, the Society's President, as our Chairman. The questions which we were invited to address are set out in paragraph 2.21.

1.2 Council took the view that the objective of a strategic review would be best achieved by establishing a commission of experts from outside the Society. The Chairman invited for this purpose the following to be members of the Commission: Professor Tom Devine OBE HonMRIA FRSE FBA, Malcolm Fraser, architect, Magnus D Linklater FRSE, Dr Ann Matheson OBE, Dr James Robertson FRSE, and Dr Donald Smith (see also Appendix 1). In selecting them he took into account various names which had been suggested to him. He sought persons who had a broad knowledge and understanding of the cultural scene in Scotland, including, so far as practicable, areas in which the Society is or could be active. No one whom he approached declined the invitation to become a member of the Commission.

1.3 We have had a total of six meetings. We invited the following persons to meet us: Paul H Scott, a former Chairman and President; Ian Scott, a former part-time Director and Chairman; Michael Hance, a former part-time Director; Lorimer Mackenzie, the Chairman of Council; and Keith Turner, the Society's Finance Officer. We arranged for a questionnaire to be circulated to the members of the Society, and for the Saltire office to provide us with an analysis of the responses, for which we are most grateful. As we explain in paragraph 2.24, we did not consider it appropriate to canvass opinion beyond the membership. We also received a number of separate written submissions. The contributors of these submissions are listed in Appendix 2.

1.4 We would like to record our thanks to all who have contributed in any way to our discussion of the current state and future role of the Society.

1.5 Our recommendations are highlighted in the text of this report and are listed at the head of the report.

## CHAPTER 2            SETTING THE SCENE

### **The Establishment of the Society**

2.1 The Society was founded in 1936, a time when there was a general pessimism about the condition of Scottish culture and way of life. Its founding members had strong views about the condition of Scottish culture and its apparently poor appreciation. They were shocked at how ignorant were the Scots of their own heritage and how indifferent they were about its preservation. The founding of the Society was supported by a favourable climate of opinion and attracted many distinguished Scots of the day. The Society was set up to promote and celebrate the uniqueness of Scottish culture and Scotland's heritage, and to reclaim Scotland's place as a distinct contributor to European and international culture.

2.2 The main objects of the Society, as stated in its Constitution, are to

- increase public awareness of Scotland's distinct natural and cultural heritage in all its richness and diversity, and foster the cherishing and enrichment of all aspects of that heritage, including the Scots and Gaelic languages;
- enhance the quality of Scotland's contribution to all the arts and sciences by encouraging creativity, inventiveness, and the achievement of the highest standards of excellence in these fields;
- build on the achievements of the past to advance Scotland's standing as a vibrant, creative force in European civilisation; and
- improve all aspects of Scottish life and letters at home and abroad and strengthen Scotland's cultural links with other countries and peoples.

2.3 The Constitution also states that the Society may co-operate with other organisations on matters which are in accord with its objectives and give appropriate public expression to its views, as formulated by a general meeting or by Council, within the constraint that the Society has no party-political or sectarian affiliation.

2.4 From the outset there were two notable features of the Society's activities. The first was the wide spread of its interests, although initially these were directed primarily towards literature and architecture, focusing on the literary inheritance and housing, as well as on education. The second was the fact that it did not concern itself with the past for its own sake. The first Annual Report stated that the Society 'looks back to the past only to look forward.'

2.5 Over the years the Society's objectives have been translated into a range of activities which can be grouped under the following headings:

- campaigning, debating, discussing, and making representations;
- informing and celebrating (e.g. through schools, publications, commemorations, and performances); and
- promoting achievement (typically through awards).

2.6 The Society has done much over the years to keep alive an understanding of Scotland's cultural heritage, and to celebrate achievement by its inheritors. 'It has been an uplifting presence influencing the quality of life in Scotland and furth of Scotland'<sup>1</sup>

2.7 The Society is a voluntary organisation which depends on its members for its regular means of support, in terms of both effort and finances. The highest level of membership, which was reached in the early 1950s, was about 2,000. The present membership is about 900, comprising ordinary, family, life, school and corporate categories. Over the years the Society has had branches in different parts of Scotland, the numbers of which have waxed and waned. Currently there are seven branches - Aberdeen & North East; Dumfries and District; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Helensburgh; Highland; and Kirriemuir. Each branch arranges its own activities, which may comprise talks, outings, and social gatherings, and can independently raise funds to support them.

2.8 The members of Council are trustees for the Society. Council has the duty of managing the affairs of the Society and ensuring that they are administered in accordance with the Society's Constitution and its charitable status. It comprises a Chairman, three Vice-Conveners, nine elected members, and a representative member for each branch, and has power to co-opt three additional members. It meets about five or six times a year. It receives regular reports from the Society's Finance Officer. Committees, such as the Chairman's Committee and the Audit Committee, assist in matters of management and administration. Other committees, such as the Planning and Environment Committee, the Publications Committee, the International Committee, the Visual Arts Committee and the Fundraising Committee are concerned with directly promoting the Society's aims.

2.9 The Society employed a series of part-time Directors in the period between 1996

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<sup>1</sup> George Bruce, *To Foster and Enrich*, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 3: written for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society.

and 2006, but has not done so since then. It employs two persons for administrative and clerical duties.

2.10 It is very important to recognise the part played by volunteers in the work of the Society. It relies not only on its members working in numerous capacities, but also on specialists who are not members serving on the panels adjudicating on the various awards which are made in its name. The contribution of those who give their time and expertise cannot be over-estimated. The Society is to be strongly commended for the way in which, ever since its inception, it has managed to enlist the services of so many people who have given their time and resources to its cause.

### **Changing Circumstances**

2.11 It is plain that at the time when it was founded the Society was a primarily defensive organisation. This was at a low point in the life of Scottish culture. In the 1930s the Society stood alone as an organisation, but since then there have been many positive developments. The issue facing the Society now is essentially about defining the role it should play in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Scotland. There has been, in effect, an explosion of cultural activity of one kind or another. The cultural and political landscape has dramatically changed. For example, there are now a national orchestra, national opera and ballet companies and, since 2006, a national theatre. Since 1967 there has existed a public body for the support and funding of the arts, the Scottish Arts Council, and since 1997 a similar body for supporting the film industry, Scottish Screen, and in 2010 these two bodies were amalgamated to form Creative Scotland. Since 1999 Scotland has had its own Parliament. The bias that formerly existed in educational institutions and elsewhere against the recognition of a distinct Scottish cultural identity has significantly reduced. A number of writers who have achieved international acclaim live and work in Scotland, and the works of writers from earlier ages, which were once out of print and largely forgotten, have been reissued and made widely available. Scottish artists, actors, musicians enjoy universal recognition as Scots. The Scots and Gaelic languages are taught in some schools, and the Gaelic Language Act of 2005 has given formal recognition and official status to that language for the first time. In contrast to the position in 1936 there has been an increasing sense of national self-confidence. This provokes the question – has the need for the Society been eroded?

### **The Current State of the Society**

2.12 The Society currently has a lower public profile than was the case for much of its earlier existence. There is at present a general lack of recognition on the part of the public of what the Society is, what it does and what it stands for, although, so far as it is

known at all, it is generally regarded benevolently. Its awards attract some attention in the press, but the coverage is patchy.

2.13 The Society occasionally mounts or supports a campaign, and makes representations or submits observations on a variety of topics such as education, cultural institutions and planning and the environment. However, apart from its Constitution it has no statement of policy, even of a general kind, as to its stance on matters of, or affecting, Scottish culture, such as its safeguarding and development. The Society has representatives on the boards of other organisations, but receives relatively few reports from them. It has not followed up these links by working with such organisations in the way that the Constitution envisages.

2.14 The Society's activities have reduced with the passing of the years. For example, it no longer takes part in either the official Edinburgh Festival or the Fringe, and rarely holds conferences and discussions. Its commendable publication of works by Scottish authors which were out of print has been overtaken by other publishers. It has ceased to commemorate distinguished Scots of the past, and has thereby lost opportunities to attract public attention. Some of its awards face increasing competition from other newer awards which offer larger monetary prizes.

2.15 From the point of view of attracting potential members the Society is seen by some, however inaccurately, as exclusive and elitist; and, on the other hand, as a respected defender and promoter of 'serious' Scottish cultural heritage. Its public image appears poorly-defined.

2.16 There appears to be a lack of adequate connection between the headquarters of the Society and its branches, and between the branches. The Society is seen as having an Edinburgh bias. The branches are almost autonomous. They vary considerably in delivery of their programmes. They are kept going by the enthusiasm and efforts of a minority of members. Many members are ready to support the Society by their membership fees, but are reluctant to take on the responsibility of serving on branch committees. Overall, the total number of members is falling, and there is a serious dearth of younger members.

2.17 Whereas Council has responsibility for the general oversight of the Society's affairs, it seems to exercise relatively few specific functions. We understand that Council members do not take strategic, policy or management decisions. There appears to be no consideration of the Society's future vision or, indeed, mission. There is no strategic direction of the Society, its activities, its staff or its resources. Council is too unwieldy to permit thorough discussion of items on the agenda for its meetings. The

award panels are largely autonomous and receive virtually no guidance. As we have already noted, the Society does not currently have a Director.

2.18 The Society's Finance Officer submits regular reports to Council, but there is no systematic discussion of finance at Council meetings. There is an Audit Committee, but no Finance Committee. There is no overall monitoring of budgeting. There is no system for budgeting for awards, for which the Society covers deficits if they occur. The funding of awards from revenue, as in the past, is not sustainable. A similar situation exists with regard to the Society's book publication programme. Likewise, branch activities which result in a surplus of income benefit the branches concerned, whereas branch activities which lose money are underwritten by the Society's headquarters. The Society would run at a loss if it were solely reliant on membership fees, and hence it depends on the unpredictable windfall of legacies. There is no systematic effort to seek revenue from external sources.

2.19 We would add that it is not the first time that the future direction of the Society has been raised. In his preface to the Annual Report for 1990, the President, Professor Sir Robert Grieve, wrote:

'Council must dispel once and for all any notion that the Society is "moribund, elderly, hostile to new ideas, staid, inactive and irrelevant" – to quote Mr Robert McNeil of *The Observer in Scotland* of 28<sup>th</sup> January 1990. It is the Council's duty to pay attention to such criticism, and to proceed to prove it wrong by performance and any necessary rejuvenation.'

2.20 In setting up this strategic review Council took up a proposal to this effect which had been made at a meeting of members of the Society on 14 March 2009.

## **Our Remit**

2.21 The questions which we were invited to address were:

1. Is the Society relevant in today's environment?
2. If the Society has a relevant place in Scotland's cultural environment what could its role be?
3. Are the Society's present activities the optimum way of improving its profile and impact? If not, what activities would best help the Society to play a more

prominent role? Is it appropriate to resuscitate previous activities no longer carried out?

4. [Are] the structure of the Society and its organisation appropriate? Are there structural or managerial changes required to maximise its potential?
5. Should the Society prioritise its actions and focus on fewer areas? If so, what areas could be considered as priorities?
6. In a multi-media world of political debate what kind of actions would permit the Society to impact on relevant issues while maintaining its traditional apolitical stance?

We were also invited to address any other questions that arose and appeared to be relevant.

2.22 It appears to us that the six questions which we have set out above can be grouped together under three heads, though each is related to one or more of the others. Accordingly, we will discuss the role and possible impact of the Society in Chapter 3; its activities and actions in Chapter 4; and its structure and organisation in Chapter 5.

2.23 We should point out that we have not been asked to deal with means of increasing the number of members or increasing revenue. We note that Council stated, when setting our remit, that

‘ad hoc solutions to membership numbers or increasing receipts would not in itself assist the Society to become more relevant to the present. Consequently [Council has] sought a thorough review of the Society’s objectives, its organisation and its place in today’s Scotland. [Council is] seeking to develop a focus for the Society’s future activities that would build on the founders’ original orientation but in a way that engages people who are surrounded by the hugely diverse means of delivery of cultural products, a dominant global distribution system and the influence of a consumer packaged “life-style” agenda that is monocultural.’

2.24 We should also point out that our responsibility is to report to Council. As we have said, our members have been selected as experts. In these circumstances we have not thought it appropriate or necessary to consult other organisations or persons, or the members of the Society, about our possible recommendations. As we say in Chapter 6, it is for Council to decide what needs to be done in regard to consultation.

## CHAPTER 3            A NATIONAL ROLE FOR THE SOCIETY

3.1 Our observations about the Society in paragraphs 2.12 – 2.16 show that it lacks a clear public profile; and that its activities and influence are declining. It has, in effect, been ‘left behind’. The time is ripe for a fundamental re-consideration of its future. Nothing less than radical change is required if the Society is to avoid continuing, and eventual terminal, decline. Is there a future role for the Society? We make no assumptions as to the answer to that question. But if there is such a role, what should be the mission of the Society in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Scotland?

3.2 We begin by looking away from the Society to the general cultural scene in Scotland today.

3.3 Much power over the existence and development of cultural activities in Scotland is concentrated today in the hands of government (national or local) or organisations which are dependent on government for their funding and general policy. It seems to us that there is a need for an independent organisation, not beholden to any public or private patron, donor or funder, to speak for Scottish culture, and in particular at times when it may be endangered, misunderstood or neglected. More generally, there is a need for a persuasive and informed advocate for Scottish culture, to stimulate the intellectual vigour of Scotland. At present, while there are many voices speaking on behalf of different art forms and different aspects of Scottish culture, nearly all of them speak at least partly from self-interest and for the purpose of self-promotion. This is natural and inevitable, but there appears to us to be an absent voice – that of a distinctive, independent, respected and non-partisan organisation, able to speak with confidence and expertise on a range of cultural issues. There is a need for an organisation that can speak without fear or favour, at a national level, in this way. In order to command the attention of the public, the media and decision-makers, such an organisation needs to be strong and authoritative, and its views should be sought, and respected, as a matter of course. We do not see such an organisation as always acting on its own in giving a lead, but also engaging with, and bringing together, other organisations which have distinct, but complementary, interests. There is a continuing need for an organisation which can communicate a greater understanding of Scotland’s cultural heritage, such as its traditions, its achievements and its international connections.

3.4 This is a national role, and one which, in our view, the Society could and should play, and may be uniquely equipped and positioned to do so. We consider its innate, and sometimes latent, strengths:

3.5 The Society is rightly regarded as independent. While it is not widely known, it is well respected. This is borne out, for example, by the support which it receives from the members of its award panels, and the regard in which the awards are held. It has campaigned and made representations on issues affecting Scottish culture. It has not limited itself to a narrow range of interests, but has taken an approach to Scottish culture which is holistic and outward looking, including to its European and wider international connections. In its loyal members it has the benefit of an existing network of support across Scotland, which could be built up and invigorated.

3.6 The national role which we have outlined above is consistent with the objectives of the Society, and with the activities into which these objectives have been translated. However, what we have in mind is a more dynamic, focused and open approach.

3.7 The Society should, in our view, be more than an advisory body on cultural matters, which it seems to have become. It should actively promote Scottish culture, and not act in a merely defensive role. It should construct and adopt a cultural philosophy which clearly states what it stands for. By that we mean a general policy rather than one which is narrow and prescriptive. It should continue to communicate a greater understanding of Scotland's cultural heritage and celebrate fresh achievements. We have already discussed (at para. 2.11) the new, largely positive attitudes to Scottish culture that exist within Scotland, but we are conscious that for many Scots an appreciation or understanding of their own culture is still often piecemeal and haphazard. Many do not really understand their own literature, architecture, art etc in their historical and wider European contexts. However much the general environment may have improved, we subscribe to the view that as long as we are ignorant of large parts of our own culture we do not do justice to ourselves.

3.8 A priority for the Society should be to work both with organisations which are current leaders in their sectors but also, and importantly, with those which are now emerging and are likely to play a significant role in Scottish life in the future. The Society should seek engagement with such organisations where there are matters of common interest, identifying its role, working with them, while avoiding duplication of effort. That co-operation may be put to good use on occasions when it is seen that an aspect of Scottish cultural life needs to be safeguarded by campaigning or by making representations. We should add that there is no reason to think that this would conflict with the need for the Society, in accordance with its Constitution, to avoid party-political affiliation.

3.9 The Society's members need to be enthused with the idea of modernising and invigorating the Society. They provide a 'live' element for its activities, and can play an important part in releasing the Society's potential. They can pass on the message about the Society's aims, and offer a reliable feedback on the public's perception of the Society. The branches can be used as an active national network of support. This calls for the co-ordination of activity between headquarters and the branches, and between the branches. The Society should actively endeavour to avoid a bias towards what happens in Edinburgh.

3.10 We are in no doubt that, if the Society is to aspire to the national role which we have described, it should take active steps to encourage the public, not only to take an interest in what it stands for, but also to participate in its activities. This could also assist in achieving a sorely-needed increase in membership. One way of encouraging such participation would be through the holding of high-quality debates and lectures (see para. 4.4). The Society's website represents a valuable medium for attracting the interest of the public, by deploying all suitable social media tools. There may also be a case for the Society inviting members of the public to become Friends of the Society, without prejudice to its membership.

3.11 Another aspect of the role of the Society should be seeking engagement with the staff and students of universities, colleges and schools, not merely to convey the value and relevance of a sound knowledge of Scotland's heritage, but also to lay the foundation for a lasting association with the Society. Education, which historically has long had distinctive characteristics in Scotland, has always been a key interest of the Society, and a continuing engagement with the condition and direction of Scottish education should also form an integral part of the Society's philosophy. We also believe that the Society should seek to work more closely with Scotland's universities. Schools can be expected to do only so much to ensure continuity of appreciation of Scottish history, architecture, literature, art etc between the generations: higher education institutions, because of their unique combination of research and teaching, are crucial to this. Furthermore, there is now a body of national and international academics who are examining Scotland's past anew and have the skills for engaging with the general public. It should not be necessary for each generation to have to discover for itself, as if for the first time, the range and value of our culture. This represents a failure at various levels to pass the culture on. Today's academics can contribute positively to creating a greater continuity of understanding of who Scots are and alleviate what has been described as their state of 'eternally recurrent renaissance'.<sup>2</sup> In Nordic societies, for

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<sup>2</sup> Professor Murdo Macdonald, 'Scottish Literature and Visual Art: A Caledonian Synergy', The Andrew Tannahill Lecture, 2009.

example, this continuity of self knowledge is considered an essential foundation on which all else is built.

3.12 We therefore recommend that:

**R1: The future role of the Saltire Society should be as an independent and authoritative promoter of Scottish culture**

**R2: It should continue to communicate a greater understanding of Scotland's cultural heritage and celebrate fresh achievements;**

**R3: It should seek to engage with and bring together other organisations which have complementary interests**

**R4: It should adopt a cultural policy which states what it stands for**

**R5: Its members should be seen as a means of releasing its potential; and its branches as a national support network**

**R6: It should take active steps to encourage the public, not only to take an interest in what it stands for, but also to participate in its activities**

**R7: It should also seek active engagement with the staff and students of universities, colleges and schools to convey the value and relevance of a sound knowledge of Scotland's heritage, and encourage their lasting association with the Society**

3.13 We must point out that the fulfilling of what we have described as the future role of the Society depends on a number of factors. These include whether this role is fully embraced by the Society, sending out a positive message about it, and the need for it, in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Scotland. It will require enthusiasm, vigour, openness to new ideas, direction and the investment of time and money. We return to this subject in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.14 We also have to say that, in the absence of fundamental change, the Society is likely to continue to decline with unavoidable and inevitable consequences.

## **CHAPTER 4            THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY**

4.1 We do not propose to say a great deal about the activities of the Society, partly because it should be the task of those who are in charge of the direction of the activities (see Chapter 5) to review the existing activities and seek to develop fresh ones. However, we offer the following comments.

### **The Scope of Activities**

4.2 Consistent with its concern with the whole of Scottish culture, the Society should be alive to the possibility of new areas which contribute to the life of Scotland.

### **Awards**

4.3 As we have said, the awards are well regarded and supported. However, they should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to pursue clear and up-to-date objectives and have significant impact. Consideration should be given to whether the Society should seek to have awards in additional areas, such as medicine, science and technology and industrial design.

### **Debates and Lectures**

4.4 There is a strong desire in Scotland for debating important current issues. The Society should arrange high quality public debates on important topics in Scottish culture, which would stimulate interest and discussion, assist in raising the profile of the Society, and discourage any impression that its activities are for members only. Such debates should be held across the country and not merely in Edinburgh. For the same reasons there is a good case for an annual Saltire Society lecture, and for it to be treated as a prestigious event, and to be held in different parts of Scotland. This lecture would be in addition to lectures presently given at the Edinburgh International Book Festival by the previous year's recipient of the Saltire Book of the Year award. The Society should also engage in stimulating discussions, perhaps along the lines of those established for Scottish writers at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, and it should also seek to take a public position on cultural matters when these become a matter of government policy.

## **Campaigning**

4.5 We are not in favour of the Society ceasing to conduct or support campaigns, but believe it is best for it to do so in co-operation with others as the key organisation for this purpose. It should aim to create and reinforce its reputation as an organisation whose views are sought and respected.

## **Students and Young People**

4.6 We consider that the Society should consider identifying activities which are likely to be of interest to students and young people, and involving them in creating their own future participation.

## **Publications**

4.7 This is a difficult area for the Society. Its original and admirable achievement of reprinting books on Scottish themes which were out of print and difficult to obtain has been followed by publishers who are now largely meeting the need. Publishing entirely new books takes a great deal of volunteer effort. The cost to the Society of the warehousing of its unsold books is significant.

4.8 We suggest that the Society should not itself publish new books, but should ally itself to a reputable university press or some other reputable Scottish publishing house. It has an important brand. It should concentrate on making a good job in a relatively few areas. It should also take a hard-headed approach to the disposal of unsold books. It should also explore the possible advantages of publishing on demand, and of publishing electronically via its own website, where appropriate.

4.9 We recommend that:

**R8: The Society should regularly review its awards, and consider whether there should be awards in additional areas**

**R9: The Society should arrange high-quality public debates, and consider holding an annual Saltire Society lecture, in different parts of Scotland**

**R10: The Society should continue to conduct or support campaigns, especially as the key organisation**

**R11: The Society should consider activities of interest to students and young people**

**R12: For the publication of books, the Society should seek to ally itself to a university press or a publishing house**

## CHAPTER 5      DIRECTION, GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

5.1 In the light of what we have said in paragraphs 2.17-2.18 it appears to us that, whereas Council has responsibility for the general oversight of the Society's affairs, it does little to carry out that responsibility. It does not take strategic policy or management decisions. There is no strategic direction of the Society, its activities, its staff or its resources. The Society does not have a Director. There is no systematic discussion of finance at Council meetings, and no overall monitoring of budgeting. Council does not seem to be carrying out its responsibility for general oversight of the financial affairs of the Society.

### **Direction**

5.2 Earlier in this report (para 2.10) we acknowledged the major contribution of volunteers to the work of the Society over the years. However, in the modern world there is a limit to what can be achieved on the basis of voluntary effort alone. For the Society to make the necessary steps, such as we have recommended, it is essential to be able to recruit full-time professional expertise in pursuit of the Society's goals and future development and in providing leadership, direction and management.

5.3 In our view the Society urgently needs the central figure of a full-time Executive Director who can give strategic direction to the organisation, and develop and sustain an active programme of work for the Society. This should be given the highest priority by the Society. It is a matter of key importance. The Director should be dynamic, well-informed on all aspects of Scottish culture and should possess good personal and communication skills. The Director should be recruited on the basis of a full and clear job description of what the Society expects from this appointment. It should include strategic development; responsibility for membership and promotion; liaising with the Society's network of branches; establishing key contacts; developing co-operation with other organisations; communications with the media; and developing a robust and active programme of activities for the Society. Equally, the job description should also make clear that this post offers a challenging and rewarding role for the person appointed.

5.4 Council should enable the Director to take the lead in forming strategy for the Society; proposing new activities for it; recommending activities which should be given a lower priority or abolished; and proposing the reallocation of priorities, including the use of finances. With a full-time Director new ideas should flow and the Society can

move forward with an active programme of work. Permanent 'hands-on' supervision is essential for the management of change, and we do not consider that a part-time appointment of Director is at all realistic for the Society's needs.

5.5 We appreciate that the engagement of a full-time Director will represent a considerable financial investment for the Society. However, we believe that it is such a critical matter for its future development that the Society should regard it as a 'watershed investment'; and that Council should even be prepared to consider the option of drawing on capital for a defined period in order to 'pump-prime' the development. This is an option that has been pursued in other comparable organisations for limited periods and has led to successful outcomes.

5.6 It seems to us that, even as matters stand, Council is not effective as a means of taking decisions and exercising financial control. It is a kind of central administrator. If the Society is to have the role, and the full-time Director, which we recommend, it is plain that there needs to be a smaller body than Council which can exercise effective management functions in close collaboration with the Director. Such a body would have to be dynamic and forward-looking, as well as lean and nimble. Without this executive arm to lead and guide, the proposition of having a Director would not work satisfactorily.

5.7 The leadership of the Society is of critical importance. We are aware that to some extent such functions are performed at present by the Chairman's Committee (comprising the Chairman and the three Vice-Conveners). However, we recommend instead an Executive Board consisting of no more than five persons drawn from Council members, which should include the roles of treasurer and secretary, and should also have power to co-opt from, or beyond, the membership of the Society. The exercise of this power is, in our view, most important if the Society is to obtain fresh blood and gain the benefit of the experience of other organisations, as it should. The Executive Board should be capable of rapid decision-making when required and should in general act as a 'sounding board' and provide guidance to the Director on a day-to-day basis. The Director will undertake his/her responsibilities on the authority of the Council, and will report directly to the Chairman of Council. On a day-to-day basis, the Director will deal directly with the Executive Board, which should have a regular pattern of meetings with decisions between meetings being taken by the Chairman and the Executive Board. The Executive Board should be answerable to Council and will function on its authority. To enable the Executive Board to operate as it should, there must be adequate delegation by Council.

5.8 It should be noted, however, that the appointment of a full-time Director is not a substitute for voluntary effort, and so the Society will also continue to rely on the involvement, time and energy of its branches and its membership and all those who are committed to its cause.

## **Governance**

5.9 While the large number of the members of Council does not seem disproportionate as a means of representing a national body of the importance of the Society, it seems to us that, as matters stand, Council is not effective as a decision-making body, and that the pattern of its meetings is such that it is not - and cannot be - sufficiently responsive to events and circumstances in a fast-moving world.

5.10 In our view Council should be the highest level of governance in the Society and should be the body to which well-prepared policy recommendations come for final approval and ratification. The task of preparing these policy recommendations should be the role of the Director, supported by the Executive Board to which we have referred. The task of Council should be to approve and ratify the new vision for the Society for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; to approve the Society's mission; to set the strategic direction for the Society for the coming years; to identify and confirm the objectives through which it will achieve its mission; and to monitor on a regular basis the success with which these objectives are being met.

5.11 We also consider that it is essential to ensure regular 'refreshing' of the governance of the Society, and by this means ensure that as many energetic and highly motivated people as possible have an opportunity to serve as members of Council. This 'energising' of organisations is a priority for most similar bodies in the Scotland of today and elsewhere. Council should review its current terms of office. For example, it seems to us that it may not be appropriate for a person to be able to remain a member of Council for a long period of time by serving in one position after another.

5.12 We believe that it is vital for the future health of the Society that Council should strive to ensure that all generations become connected with the Society and its work. It is particularly important that Scotland's younger generations should become interested and involved in order to carry on the Society's work into the future. Council should regard it as a priority to take steps to ensure that younger people are encouraged to stand for election to Council and serve on committees, and that Council should as far as possible seek to mirror the balance of current society in its membership. Steps should be taken informally by Council members to try to encourage younger members to become involved with the Society and help to shape its future. Statements of positive

encouragement should also appear on the Society's literature and website and via other communication means.

5.13 We believe that it is very important for the governance of modern organisations that their governing bodies should be properly equipped with the expertise and skills required for them to function well in today's world. This means that Council should take steps to ensure that it has available to it a wide range of expertise and skills. Council is well provided for in terms of cultural knowledge, but we posit that it would benefit from being strengthened by additional skills and expertise, for example managerial skills, human resources management and financial expertise. Council should prepare a 'skills matrix' to identify the additional skills it requires, and once it is clear where the Council needs to be strengthened, these skills should then be sought in new Council members.

5.14 Council should continue to be a channel by which the views of members may be represented. It should encourage the maintenance of a strong link between the Society's headquarters and the branches, which provide the Society with such a vital and important network across Scotland. It should seek to utilise the expertise of the Director in liaising closely with the branches and their memberships and working co-operatively with them in developing their local programmes in different parts of Scotland. The membership of the Society is its greatest asset, and thought should be given to ways of working more closely with the members and by this means releasing the Society's potential (cf para. 3.9). The aim should be to build upon the existence of the branches and to invigorate them. The existing branch network is spread unevenly across the country, and every effort should be made, in tandem with recruiting new membership, to establish or re-establish branches in places which, on account of their size or geographical location, *should* have a Saltire Society presence. In order to inject new ideas it will be important to involve other organisations (cf para. 3.8).

5.15 Council should continue to have the overall responsibility for the Society, including its financial affairs. At the same time, we regard the delegation of authority to the Executive Board in regard to the day-to-day oversight of such matters as being critical to the success of the Society. Council should continue to have the final responsibility for framing the general policy of the Society on Scottish cultural matters. Above all, Council and the Society should take an optimistic view and should seek to involve contemporary Scotland and the vigour of the nation in determining its future role.

5.16 It is abundantly clear to us that there is also a need for a Treasurer and an active and experienced Finance Committee, responsible in the first instance for overall

financial management, the preparation of budgets and the close oversight of expenditure. The Society requires to have put in place very much more robust financial mechanisms to encourage the growth of income and to apportion expenditure appropriately to its various activities. The Treasurer should also make regular financial reports, including income and expenditure reports, to each meeting of Council and be present at its meetings in order to recommend policies and discuss financial matters with Council. We should add that, in expressing this view, we do not intend any criticism of the way in which the Society's Finance Officer has performed his work under the existing system. The Finance Committee's remit should cover all matters that relate to the Society's income and expenditure and the maintenance of its assets.

5.17 It will be very important for the Society to be able to raise revenue from as many external sources as possible. To that end the Fundraising Committee should be further strengthened with expertise in development and fundraising and should work in close liaison with the Finance Committee. It is recommended that fundraising should not be a central responsibility of the role of the Director although he/she will be a member of the Fundraising Committee.

5.18 It is also desirable for Council to introduce the role of Secretary of Council, responsible for oversight of all constitutional matters and for the conduct of the Society's elections and related matters.

## **Administration**

5.19 The Director will require the support of an Assistant. The role of this post will be to assist the Director to provide an efficient service to Council, the Executive Board, Finance Committee and other Committees and to the Society's membership.

5.20 The Director should be responsible for making a case for additional staffing or, alternatively, for the outsourcing of specific activities, as and when required, to fulfil the Society's objectives. Such proposals will be made with the support of the Executive Board and the Finance Committee.

5.21 We understand that the Society employs staff on an agency basis from time to time. We recommend that this course of action should not be followed since it is a very expensive form of employment and does not represent good value for money for the Society.

5.22 The Society should maintain an up-to-date website which should provide information about the Society and its activities and should act as a means of raising its

profile and communicating with the Society's members and with others with an interest in the culture of Scotland (see para. 3.10). New social media tools should be fully utilised where they will assist the Society to communicate its aims and what it stands for both at home and abroad.

5.23 We recommend that:

**R13: The Society should engage a full-time Executive Director to give strategic direction; develop and sustain an active programme; and make recommendations as to activities and priorities. He/she should have responsibility for membership and promotion; liaison with the Society's branches; establishment of key contacts; development of co-operation with other organisations and communications with the media**

**R14: There should be an Executive Board for leadership and guidance, with power to co-opt**

**R15: The Executive Board should also have delegated authority to conduct the business of the Society**

**R16: Council should have the function of ratifying and approving matters of policy and the mission of the Society; identifying objectives and monitoring achievement**

**R17: The membership of Council should be regularly refreshed**

**R18: Younger people should be encouraged to stand for election to Council and serve on committees**

**R19: Council should be strengthened by additional skills**

**R20: There should be an aim to build on the existence of the branches and invigorate them; and to consider ways of working more closely with members; and in due course aim to establish new branches in parts of the country where the Society currently has no presence**

**R21: There should be a Treasurer and an experienced Finance Committee, with whom the Fundraising Committee should work in close liaison**

## CHAPTER 6           IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 While the implementation of our recommendations is a matter for Council, we think that we should offer a number of comments which we hope will be of assistance.

6.2 It should be plain from what we have said above that there is no point in Council embarking on the journey towards an enhanced role for the Society if there is not the will to succeed and the vision of what requires to be done. It will be vital for Council actively to show that it is open to change and to encourage an appetite in the Society for a new direction. Without this, success will not follow.

6.3 While we regard the appointment of a full-time Director as a key recommendation, it is sensible that this can come only after Council has determined what are to be the aspirations of the Society. But before Council does so, it may well wish to consult with the members of the Society, and to confer with other organisations with which it has the prospect of a developing relationship. To carry matters forward Council should, in our view, seek the assistance of an advisory group, including representation from outwith the Society, with a remit to examine the role of the Society and that of other organisations (with their co-operation) working in the field of culture in Scotland, in order to assist in identifying the role that the Society can most profitably seek to fill. For this purpose Council must ensure that external advice, as described above, is obtained. This would be in accordance with the course normally followed by organisations which are contemplating change. We question whether the Society is sufficiently equipped to proceed without such advice. This will assist in making it clear what should be the role and job description for the Director.

6.4 We also consider that the advisory group should oversee implementation of the review's recommendations. We strongly advise that the group should include one or more persons, whether or not members of the Society, who have experience of managing change in membership organisations. The group should also assist and guide Council in setting priorities in regard to implementing the recommendations.

6.5 We recommend that:

**R22: Council should seek the assistance of an advisory group for the identification of the role that the Society can most profitably seek to fill**

**R23: The advisory group should include representation from outwith the Society**

**R24: The advisory group should oversee implementation of the review's recommendations and should assist Council in the process of setting priorities**

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Commission Members

The Rt Hon. Lord Cullen of Whitekirk KT FRSE (Chairman)

Professor Tom Devine, Sir William Fraser Professor of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh

Malcolm Fraser: Edinburgh architect

Magnus Linklater, Scotland Editor and columnist for *The Times* of London, former Chairman of the Scottish Arts Council

Dr Ann Matheson, formerly Keeper, National Library of Scotland

Dr James Robertson FRSE, writer

Dr Donald Smith, Director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, and a frontline activist in many areas of Scottish arts and culture

### Appendix 2

#### **Persons from whom written submissions were received and, where applicable, their office in the Society**

Ian Arnott, former Chairman

Hector Campbell, Dumfries branch Convener

Iain W. D. Forde and Susan F G Forde

Kenneth Fraser

Jack Hugh, Edinburgh branch representative

David Linning

Harry McAlister

Professor Murdo Macdonald, University of Dundee

Lorimer Mackenzie, Chairman of Council

Alison M Mann, former member of Council

Dr Robyn Marsack, Scottish Poetry Library  
Kathleen Munro, former Administrator  
Dr Tessa Ransford  
Ian Scott, former Chairman  
Paul H Scott, Vice-Convener  
Moirra Stratton, Vice-Convener  
David Ward, Glasgow branch representative