



Spring 2015

The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a 'voice' for older people.

The first 2015 newsletter from the SOPA Committee covers January and February events and flags up programmes in March.

Message from Chair Tom Berney



In the run up to the Westminster General Election, it is not surprising that the parties are looking for ways to differentiate themselves from their rivals. However, it is depressing that they have chosen to use

pensioners as a political football and invented a phony war between old and young people. This is a distraction from the real issue - the widening gap between rich and poor and the rising poverty levels among young and old.

Fuel Poverty: Parents and grandparents are only too well aware of the falling standards for their families. Zero hour contracts, part time working, minimum wage jobs and later retirement are a dreadful indictment of our society, but the notion that these are due to benefits for pensioners is absurd. Our state pension is one of the lowest in Europe relative to earnings. Fuel poverty has trebled since 2003 and affects 3 million people.

Hypothermia cases have doubled and 26% of those admitted to hospital, mostly pensioners, die within 30 days. And this at a time when Ofgem reported the average profit in winter of the energy companies was £100 a month per customer in the UK. That would mean £100 million profit from Scotland's one million pensioners alone. Similarly, Citizens Advice Scotland reported that funeral costs have risen

by 7% per year since 2003. The average burial cost is now £5,055 and a cremation is £4,425.

24 Regional Meetings: The above are some of the issues debated in the SOPA consultative meetings in towns around Scotland. It has been gratifying to have the participation of a cross section of older people, provosts, MSPs and councillors. Discussions have been lively and there is clearly a desire for older people's voices to be heard. We shall continue to ensure that the issues raised are taken up with UK and Scottish Ministers. There has also been a clear call for SOPA to have formalised links with local organisations. We will be addressing this in discussion with other groups. If you cannot make it to a meeting we are still open to your ideas. [Email](#) or write to SOPA.



A lively meeting at Kilmarnock on 25 Feb.

Visit the **SOPA** website for up-to-date information about events and activities www.scotopa.org.uk

The SOPA Campaign Trail 2015



First Meeting in Dalkeith in January: Eric Johnstone of Midlothian Voluntary Action, SOPA Coordinator Glenda Watt and Midlothian Provost Joe Wallace.

The process of visiting local groups around Scotland continues in 2015. For more pictures and reports from the campaign trail visit <https://www.facebook.com/scotopa>

In the first two months of the year over 200 people have attended meetings in Dalkeith, Livingston, Irvine, Orkney and Kilmarnock. Local Provosts provided an introductory welcome, followed by Tom's presentation. Participants were then given SOPA's action plan and invited to discuss the statements in groups and prioritise them. They were asked to consider "How can SOPA work with you?" and "How can you work with SOPA?" Contributions were always lively and constructive from older people, professionals and politicians in attendance.

Falkirk: 6 March, 10.30 - 13.30, The Studio, Town Hall. [Click for poster.](#)

Glasgow: 10 March, 11.00, Meeting with the Scottish Pensioners Forum and its members.

Paisley: 13 March, 10.30 - 1.30, Alexander Wilson Suite, Town Hall. [Click for poster.](#)

Edinburgh: 19 March, 10.30 - 15.30, City Chambers. (Poster on website shortly.)

Carnoustie: 24 March, 12.30 - 15.00, Carnoustie Golf Club. [Click for poster.](#)

Turriff: 7 April, 2 - 4, St Ninian's Church.



These events are funded through the Big Lottery's 'Awards for All'. Regular updates on venues and more details on the SOPA website at www.scotopa.org.uk/events.asp

SOPA Action Points for discussion on the campaign trail

The topics below emerged from the SOPA events in summer 2014 and the Assembly in the Parliament on 31st October. This demonstrates clearly the democratic way SOPA gathers opinion at grassroots level from older people's actual experience in diverse towns and communities.

Communication and Information

Community Empowerment

Community Safety and Housing

Health and Social Care

Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters

Transport, Travel and Environment

For more details see pages 6 and 7 of the 2014 SOPA Report available on the [Reports page](#) of the website.

Holyrood Conference: 2 February 2015

Tom Berney was a speaker at the recent conference run by *Holyrood Magazine*. The aim was to draw attention to the positive contribution older people make to Scotland's prosperity. He was impressed by the large number of specialists and professionals at the event interested in engaging with older people. In his address he emphasised the range of voluntary roles older people play in the community, the specific work of SOPA and the concept of empowering older people.

This involves providing people with the choice and opportunity to engage with Scotland's communities in their own terms. Other speakers include Dr Anne Hendry, National Clinical Lead for Integrated Care, Joint Improvement Team and Penny Bond, Implementation and Improvement Support Team Leader, Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

SOPA Committee

Strategy meeting: 22 January, 2015



Committee member Donald MacLeod - an organisational and personal development consultant with a particular interest in health and well-being improvement for older people - facilitated the meeting. He stated: "In the time I've been involved with SOPA, I've felt the energy grow. Individual organisations represented on the Committee should be here to help this growth." He emphasised that the Scottish Government wants SOPA to be at the heart of the conversation. The aim of this development event was to find the best way for SOPA to engage with local groups and develop ways of evaluating how effectively the issues identified as important were being addressed.



There was also valuable input from Trevor Owen, Human Rights Policy Manager, Scottish Government. He said this is a period of change with a new First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and a new Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Equalities, Communities and Pensioners' Rights, Alex Neil. The First Minister has placed particular emphasis on fair work, tackling inequality and empowering communities to participate in local decisions. She wants to hear what makes the most difference to people's lives, including what matters in later life. The Government wants to engage people at the start of a conversation, not at the end, and SOPA is important in providing this opportunity, although of course, the Government is open to dialogue with all relevant organisations.



Consultation on a Proposed Bill Relating to Burial and Cremation and Other Related Matters

Have your say!

"Death touches us all and there are few times more difficult than when a loved one dies. At such moments, the procedures required to ensure a respectful funeral should be straightforward and clear." Maureen Watt, MSP Minister for Public Health.

The legislation relating to burial and cremation in Scotland is inadequate for the needs of this century. Recommendations made by various expert groups in recent years have further hastened the need for the legislative framework to be overhauled and updated.

[Click here](#) for documentation and questionnaire.

Please forward this information on the consultation to your group. The closing date for individual responses is Friday 24 April. Alternatively, a group response can be forwarded to Glenda Watt by 17th April.

Scottish Government's Older People's Development Group:

11th February meeting

A collaborative computer-based advocacy and companion service called RITA (Responsive InTeraactive Advocate) is at early stages of development. It claims to represent a friendly face, encouraging communication and empathetic interaction, and to be capable of understanding and responding to the psychological needs and emotional welfare of the user. [Click here](#) for explanatory videos made by the RITA developers, including the Glasgow partner.

A Partnership Event**Older People Shaping the Future**

Thursday 19th March: 10 am – 3.15 pm,
City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh.

The event celebrates the value and experience of older people in shaping policies and services at national and local level. More on [Events website](#) page soon.

Programme

- Chaired by A City For All Ages Advisory Group
- Input to SOPA's 2015 Action Plan.
- Learn about the integration of Edinburgh's health and social care services.
- Participate in Age Scotland's Have Your Say campaign and vote for your priorities.
- Learn about the Local Opportunities for Older People initiative (LOOPs).
- Hear stories from communities, including the Pilmeny Development Project.
- Discover the impact of Age Scotland's telephone service *Silver Line Scotland*

Book through SOPA by contacting:

Rosa Ardia: t: 0131 469 3827

email: Rosa.Ardia@edinburgh.gov.uk

Refreshments (from 10am), lunch and assistance with transport costs. Please advise of any dietary, access, transport or communication needs when booking.



**Generations
Working
Together**

Annual Conference 4th March, 10 am - 4 pm, The Lighthouse, Glasgow.

GWT recognises the contribution both younger and older people make and plans to celebrate the remarkable intergenerational work being enacted across Scotland. [Click here](#) for more details and to book your place.



Attendees from the Western Isles at the SOPA meeting at Irvine on 5th February.

New 'Action Notes' webpage on SOPA site

A [new webpage](#) has been created which contains updates on the activities of organisations linked to SOPA and on progress being made tackling issues of importance. This will grow as local organisations take the initiative.

SOPA Coordinator - Glenda Watt
The City of Edinburgh Council,
Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street,
Edinburgh EH8 8BG

t: 0131 469 3806

e: glenda.watt@edinburgh.gov.uk

w: www.scotopa.org.uk



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**A voice for older
people in Scotland**



The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a collaborative way to promote concerns to the Scottish and Westminster Governments. The Assembly supports or challenges legislation and policies and their implementation which have a bearing on the quality of later life in Scotland.