

September 2016

Message from Chair Tom Berney



The inequities of the State Pension has been a recurring theme in recent SOPA Assemblies. Some older women in particular are being hard hit because of the lack of notice and SOPA strongly supports the growing UK campaign called WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) with WASPI groups springing up across Scotland. (See feature below). Of course, pensions remain the responsibility of the Westminster government, but on Radio Scotland on 1st August (linked on our News Page and below) I drew attention to some of the British pension's inadequacies and the unfairness of the changes. See <http://youtu.be/PvIrMNjN4V4>.

With SOPA now a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and the committee trained in their new responsibilities as Trustees and members, we continue to meet with older people's groups, such as veterans in Ayrshire, groups in East Lothian, Orkney Voices, South Kintyre Seniors Forum in Campbeltown and Scottish Borders Seniors Networking Forum. These meetings have in general been supported by local MSPs from SNP, Labour, Lib Dem and Conservative parties.

A constructive meeting has also taken place with Jeane Freeman, MSP the Scottish Minister for Social Security (Top photo: 2nd right). She is responsible for a raft of issues to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament including Disability Benefits, Carers Allowances, Funeral and Winter Fuel Payments and Universal Credit, all of which will impact on many older people. The new powers should improve some of the present failings, but do forward your views.

We also spoke to the minister about the 'cataract backlog', highlighted as alarming by Highland Senior Citizens Network in their area. The NHS failure to respond to this treatable condition in a timely way is impinging on people's independence and has a knock-on effect on activities of all types from driving to simply managing the home. Although the Government plan to improve the situation it should not be allowed to go unchallenged. Let us know if you are experiencing backlogs in your area for cataracts and other NHS treatments.

Tom Berney



Top Photo: Also at the parliamentary meeting, were Committee members Diana Findley (Age Scotland) and John Parkhill (Learning in Later Life Students' Association, University of Strathclyde) and Glenda Watt SOPA Coordinator.

2016 SOPA Campaign Issues

The workshops at the Scottish Older People's Assembly on 5th October 2015 raised the following campaigning issues for SOPA to pursue.

- Funeral poverty reduction through funded developments and promotion of social enterprise funeral arrangements
- Awareness-raising of negative impacts of changes to the State Pension
- Promotion of the need for funded programmes to encourage active citizenship in later life, including participation in communication technology
- Older representatives on all Joint Integrated Boards and improved quality of life for people cared for in a home and at home through links to the community.
- Respect, excellent training and decent pay for care workers
- No discrimination concerning psychological and therapeutic services for people 65 plus.

SOPA 2016 Assembly in the Scottish Parliament Friday 25th November, 11 - 3.30



The Assembly will address its recent Campaign Actions (above), proposed Social Security arrangements in Scotland and new issues raised by older people. Contact Glenda Watt by email/ telephone to register your interest in a place. The draft programme will be posted on SOPA's website. See contact details at the end of this newsletter.

Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) on the move



16 September dozens of Scottish WASPI groups marched through Glasgow on the National Day of Action to raise awareness of the disadvantage certain women face with the new pension legislation. In Scotland almost a quarter of a million women are affected by age change equalisation. The campaign is not against the change but the acceleration of the timetable by two years for women born on or after April 6, 1951. WASPI is challenging the unfair way the changes are being implemented with little time to make alternative plans. At worst, women born after 5 April 1953 will experience a double whammy, since the increase in their state pension age means that, not only is their own entitlement to a pension delayed, but they lose any entitlement based on their

spouse or civil partner's NI history. [Read latest article in the Financial Adviser](#). From film footage of the voices of older people recorded by Age Scotland in 2013, the Scottish Older People's Assembly, made 4 short films including one called [Money Matters](#) in which the looming pension problems for women were highlighted.



Jeane Freeman OBE MSP - Scottish Minister for Social Security

Dumfries, Monday 17 October from 11.00 - 13.30. (Venue - tba)
Scottish Social Security Consultation

The Scottish Older People's Assembly warmly invites you to discuss the social security consultation. Also open to carers, and others interested in the Scottish Government's proposed Social Security arrangements and the consultation. Refreshments provided.

Scottish Government representatives will be in attendance. Contact Glenda Watt to book a place - details at foot of the newsletter.

An Incredible Outcome

Trevor Morrison's 'Lost Songs of St Kilda' hit the headlines this month. He featured in a film SOPA made about the work of the Edinburgh organisation ACEIT. It is dedicated to improving life in care homes, through volunteers introducing various technologies to residents.

Volunteer Stuart McKenzie recorded Trevor playing the lost songs with a simple microphone. These have been reworked and the resulting album of piano music and orchestrations has become the fastest-selling classical CD. Unique SOPA footage of Trevor playing shortly before he died has been included in the promotional film which relates the remarkable story of Trevor and St Kilda - Go to <https://youtu.be/ZyCC8Pobw80>



Discover the story of The Lost Songs of St Kilda...

SOPA's Management Committee comprises Trustees and Members.

Meet ten in this September edition - **the block of 9 are trustees on the SOPA Committee.**



From the top: Tom Berney (U3A), Diana Findlay (Age Scotland), Bill McDonald (Renfrewshire Seniors Forum), Donald Macleod (HSCN), Betty Milton (City for All Ages Advisory Group Edinburgh), Alan Sideaway (National Pensioners Convention Scotland), Rob Snodgrass (Grey Matters Argyll & Bute), Eileen Wallace (Older People's Ref. Group Stirling), John White (Dumfries & Galloway Over 50s Group).
Below: Mike Lynch (Orkney Voices) SOPA Committee.



What they have said:

Tom Berney, University of the Third Age (U3A) "I have always been committed to a fairer and more equal society and, as a member of SOPA, I have collaborated with older people's representatives covering many issues. Our meetings and assemblies allow people at the grassroots to instruct us on their concerns. I am privileged to be able to promote their interests to ministers, officials and the media."

Diana Findley, Age Scotland, representative over the years on older people's organisations in the Scottish Borders and nationally. "It is most important to meet others from across Scotland to share views, information and raise our voices through SOPA. In this way the Scottish and Westminster governments cannot ignore what we are saying about our experience at the receiving end of policies and services."

Bill McDonald, Renfrewshire Seniors Forum, previous volunteer with Age Scotland: "I first learned about SOPA at a meeting in Paisley. I have been inspired to adopt SOPA's model, to get out and meet as many people as possible handing them leaflets and newsletters, so we can communicate the message about giving older people a voice."

Donald Macleod, Highland Senior Citizens Network, HSCN Trustee and engaged with unpaid carers groups. "SOPA is a force for good, allowing opinion to be aired nationally and dialogue with politicians and decision makers. My top priority is to be vigilant during austerity about the well-being impact of changes. I'm optimistic that, in continuing partnership with others, improvements will lead to more flourishing lives."

Betty Milton, City for All Ages Advisory Group Edinburgh, committee member. "I joined SOPA in 2014 and find it a great platform for older people to share their ideas and opinions. In doing this it amplifies the voice of common sense, which to my mind often seems a scarce commodity these days. Personally I am proud to be a member of SOPA."

Alan Sideaway, National Pensioners Convention Scotland, NPCS Treasurer, has been involved with SOPA since its inception and brings experience from contact with many other organisations. "Because of my contacts I am able to share the expertise that I gain with SOPA with many groups. I encourage people to support SOPA and aim to make more older people aware that their voices can be heard."

Rob Snodgrass, Grey Matters Argyll & Bute, represents people in rural areas in the west where younger populations are declining. "Our members are keen to know what is going on elsewhere and to influence the political agenda. They know that we need regeneration in our communities and thriving economies, with the older generation involved in the process. SOPA is an excellent umbrella organisation for this."

Eileen Wallace, Older People's Reference Group Stirling, Chair. "As a retired allied NHS and mental health professional, I believe I can contribute to SOPA achieving its objectives. Also being a SOPA Committee trustee has helped me formulate a clear strategic plan for my own group. My goal is to ensure that older people are able to retain the best health possible and can follow their chosen path."

John White, Dumfries and Galloway Over 50s Group, Honorary Life President. "Having worked in the NHS for 50 years I recognise older people have faced many challenges in their lives. This is rarely understood by many who make decisions on their behalf. Working with SOPA has made me more aware of the importance of people being informed of NHS policies that affect them, so they are able to speak out. "

Mike Lynch, Orkney Voices, OV Chair and SOPA Committee. Mike believes that older people can make a huge contribution to their island homeland. "By becoming a SOPA member it increases opportunities to express concerns and conversely, I can access the expertise and knowledge of SOPA members. My main goal is to increase participation by getting feedback about problem areas, and increasing SOPA and OV's profiles."

SOPA meets Ayrshire Veterans



In the recently restored Saltcoats Town Hall SOPA hosted an evening meeting for the North Ayrshire Veterans on 5 August. It was unusual for a SOPA meeting that all the attendees were men. A big issue for some is their financial situation. Veterans who had expectations of receiving a pension after many years of service found to their cost that this is not the case for everyone. Also, there is lack of preferential treatment in dealing with illness and disability related to injuries. In many other countries special status exists for people from the armed forces with long-term conditions. Veterans are keen that SOPA uses its influence to bring their concerns to the attention of ministers in Westminster and Holyrood. Attending this meeting was MSP Kenneth Gibson (top left) who took questions at the end.



SOPA's Facebook page has a regular stream of short items on interesting events and developments in Scotland, plus links to articles in the areas of health, wellbeing and political issues in later life from an international perspective. The most viewed article over the last quarter was [The Trouble With Grandparents.](#)

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