



**Soroptimist  
International  
Edinburgh  
news  
notes  
anecdotes**

**SIEnna 194 December 2020**

**A welcome message from our President Team: Reflection and Hope**

**As we approach the festive period we reflect on a challenging year due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our world as we know it has abruptly changed. This has impacted particularly hard on women. But we have adapted to the virtual world, while keeping in touch with those members not yet connected to the online world.**

**We think of people that are lonely or homeless at this time. We have some suggestions on what we can do to campaign for the homeless from the two recent speakers from Shelter and the Cyrenians.**

**We reflect on those that have lost family and friends this year due to the covid or to other reasons.**

**But 2021 brings us hope. Hope that we will all be vaccinated against the coronavirus. Hope that we will plant trees to combat climate change, to improve our welfare, and to celebrate Soroptimist International centenary.**

**We will celebrate the present and past Soroptimists of Scotland South Region in the production of a pack of playing cards. So with thoughts for reflection and hope, we send season's greetings and good wishes for the New Year.**

**An update from member Carolyn**

Whilst I am now home from hospital I am no longer living in Edinburgh. I have been with Helen and her family for the last six weeks and there will soon be a lovely suite here for me. Over the next few months I shall continue to be confined to the house but I am looking forward to next spring when I shall be able to get out into Helen's lovely large garden for a wander and some fresh air. Sadly I shall have to resign from the club come the New Year but that will not prevent me from following SI Edinburgh's endeavours. I shall be asking that I stay on the SIEnna mailing list as it is such a terrific publication full of news and information. I hear from Lindsey that the club is hoping to help a school in Niddrie plant an orchard. I shall be fascinated to read about the planting and maybe to see some pictures of you all.

I do miss your friendship and the way we all encourage each other in our projects. Keep up the good work. It is amazing how many posts there are on Facebook of Soroptimists 'oranging' the world this month - really inspiring.

For now, stay safe and enjoy your friends and family this Christmas.

## **SIE Business Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 on Zoom**

**Present:** Anna (in the Chair) + Gari, Pat, Patricia, Nikki, Clephane, Edith, Dorothy, Myint Su, Lindsey, Kathleen, Marjory, Alison and Winifred. Anna welcomed everyone and thanked Patricia for co-ordinating the Zoom technology for us.

**Soroptimist Vision & Mission** – read by Winifred.

**Apologies** for absence were received from 9 members: Christine, Liz, Trish, Irene, Carolyn, Isabel, Morag, Mary, Hilary.

**Minutes of the last Meeting** – Accepted. No matters arising that won't be covered in individual reports.

### **News of members:**

Isabel – a number of members are maintaining contact with Isabel. She is good but still having trouble getting an internet connection set up to enable her to join future meetings. Trish – is well. Irene – is doing ok. Still has a sore leg but is receiving on-going treatment. Card sent to Christine following her recent sad loss.

**Correspondence: Christine** – in Christine's absence Anna covered this section. SIGBI – we have been asked to vote for or against the appointment of new Auditors for SIGBI. Auditors selected are James Couper Kreston. Vote taken and agreed to support appointment: A massive thank you to Christine for all her efforts to keep us connected and also to create good PR for the club – Carolyn's work on the Baby bonnets has featured in People's Friend and will be in the Edinburgh Evening News. There has also been an article about Kids Love Clothes – one of the charities the club supports.

**Membership: Anna** - Anna has again been in contact with Lucia. Patricia and Anna are meeting her virtually on Zoom next week and Lucia has agreed to speak at our next meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November so we can all get to meet her.

**Treasurer's Report: Myint Su** – Minimal activity at present. Web Maintenance fee has been paid to SIGBI following receiving a 40%

discount due to the challenges encountered by clubs during the recent relaunch.

**Programme Action: Lindsey** – (report pre circulated)

Cranston Street – email to all members sent dated 9/11/20. Starting collection for Christmas gifts. Gloves, hats, scarves, brollies, cosy socks always go down well with the ladies – please wrap in Christmas paper and add a card 'from an Edinburgh Soroptimist'. Small individual toiletries (for hygiene purposes seal should not be broken) and small hand sanitizer is always welcome. If you have warm clothing in good condition to donate, please wash and pack individually in polythene or shopping bag and seal with sellotape – this allows safe transfer between donators, collectors and on to Cranston Street during COVID. Please also label the package with what the item is and the size. Collection points will be Myint Su's house or call her for collection: Lindsey - call to agree pick-up location. **All items to be received by collectors by Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December.**

Kids Love Clothes - they have received a generous donation of £8500 from ScotMid Co-operative Community Connect to help with donations of children's clothing. Facebook showed a film crew out at the Ratho storeroom.

16 Days of Activism – Say No to Violence Against Women: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 for 16 days. Lindsey followed up with Scottish Office regarding our request for lighting Scottish buildings in Orange (the campaign colour) - was asked to resend communication by email so hope to get some response now! A series of 16 posters have been designed and circulated by SIGBI and Scotland South Region for us to use on our personal and club social media outlets (attached to email sent by Anna). Pat and Patricia will co-ordinate SIE campaign (via Facebook) and will post on their personal social media. You can share the slide deck (posters) with family and friends for wider circulation. We will recognize the start of the campaign on 25<sup>th</sup> November by **asking members to wear something orange for the meeting.**

### SI Centenary Celebrations

Region Playing Card Project: Anna - progressing nicely and pack should be available in March 2021. Many thanks to the 8 members of our club who have worked hard to

collate information, biographies and obtain consent.

SIE Bench Princes Street Gardens: authorities have indicated that there is no-one working on maintaining the benches at the moment. We will continue to follow-up and hopefully do something for next year.

Tree Planting: Lindsey – a primary school in the Niddrie area has been suggested as a school we could work with to plant additional trees. The school is very keen – the children will be able to help plant the trees and understand the value of trees to the environment. Decision: Agreed for Lindsey to progress with this suggestion and seek costings and timings etc.

Linking Redwoods in California with Redwoods in Scotland -100 years on: Myint Su – email sent to all members 11/11/20 refers. Myint Su introduced the idea of possibly planting a sequoia tree in eg one of the Botanic Gardens in Scotland to make the connection between the first campaign our Soroptimist sisters were involved in 100 years ago and today to celebrate SI Centenary. Having contacted Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh there appears to be two main options – purchase and plant a tree (£3000) or make a donation that would sponsor the reclamation of some of the existing sequoia trees. It would provide a great angle for publicity. Myint Su indicated that the club does have funds in the Legacy Fund. After a discussion it was agreed that it was a good idea but more thought would need to be given re the finances and we didn't want it to impact on other commitments we want to make for the Centenary. ACTION: Lindsey is to raise the idea with Scotland South Region and Scotland North Region to see if it is a project they would like to collectively support.

**Programme: Trish/Alison/Nikki** – Speakers confirmed for November and December (details in last SIEnna) Now looking at speakers for February (on the Environment) and March.

**Regional Representative: Myint Su** – Region minutes circulated by email. There is to be a reduction for **2021/2022** (only) in the fee we contribute to Scotland South Region due to the reduction in expenses this year as a result of more meetings being held virtually. (full member £13 to £8 and younger member

£6 to £3 plus the conference subsidy of £1 will be waived) This is to be voted on in February. Decision – all club members in attendance agreed to support the reduction.

**SIGBI Website: Pat** – Pat and Patricia are to attend the website training on offer from Region and SIGBI. It is time consuming to edit the pages but it is all being worked on gradually. The pages for the Centenary activity will be set up before Christmas.

**Friendship Groups – please try and keep connected to those in your friendship group**

**AOCB**

**Anna** – has sent a card to our Friendship Link Club SI Sioux Falls to congratulate them on their 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A newsletter has been received back with plenty of references to their visits to Edinburgh

**Lindsey** – reminder re 16 days of Activism starting on 25<sup>th</sup> November and request for club members to wear orange for the next meeting. Pat added a request for anyone taking any action in this context to take a selfie and send it to her so she can publicise it on our website/social media.

**Anna** - asked Pat to thank Grace (UN Intern sponsored to attend SIBGI virtual conference 2020/2021) for her excellent report on the conference which has now been in SIEnna, published on our website, published on UN House Scotland website and circulated to Scotland South Region.

**President Elect update: Nikki** - quick reminder re theme, homework and some collecting! Focus/theme for the year: collective focus we can all rally behind. **'Be the change we want to see'** Reminder for everyone to think of 2 changes they would wish to see so that we can work on them together to make it happen. Big, small, local, global, for the community, for the club, for ourselves. Nikki will collect all ideas in in February.

In support of 'dipping into our cupboards' rather than our pockets please look out for the following things we can collect and handover for the 'greater good' – mobile phones and tablets that you no longer use ( please restore to factory settings!) to help with remote education for disadvantaged children: spectacles for clinics in the developing

nations: biros to be recycled through Rymans! All will be collected at our meetings in the new presidential year. Thank you in advance

**Date of next Business Meeting:** 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Zoom meeting at 7.30. Attendees to join at 7.20pm.

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### **November Speaker Meeting: Georgia from Shelter on Homelessness in Scotland**

Georgia started her presentation by asking did we know that last year 14,075 children were homeless? And did we know 53,000 households in Scotland were overcrowded? We were all startled by these high figures.

Shelter identifies key factors leading to Homelessness including domestic disputes, being asked to leave a property, coming out of hospital or prison. In fact every 18 minutes a household in Scotland is assessed homeless.

With that background as context, Georgia noted that Shelter works to rescue, protect, support and empower those who are homeless.

Following the meeting, Georgia sent an email with further information about Shelter. She says -

*'I found the discussion and questions really interesting and I'm so glad that Shelter Scotland's work links into the Sustainable Development goals that your group are working towards.*

*We touched on domestic violence quite a few times, and I wanted to follow this up with Lucy's story. This is a new case study, only released today (please find the video attached, or you can listen to the interview here*

*<<https://yellownews.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=657d24d4-d21c-4982-9216-17ebd82874e4>>*

*(from BBC Scotland and Debbie King, our National Policy Manager).*

*The campaign to build more social homes can be found here*

*<<https://act.scotland.shelter.org.uk/build-scotlands-future>> – **it would be fantastic to share this around to get as many signatures as possible. Cut & Paste the link and follow the instructions!***

*I believe once you've signed, you'll receive a follow up email that will allow you to contact your local MSPs, which would be such a huge help. For anyone who wants to get involved further with campaigning, do let me know.*

*To answer some of the questions that were asked...*

*1. Our list of shops across Scotland can be found here*

*<[https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/shops/shop\\_finder](https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/shops/shop_finder)> and to find the shops that are currently closed, do take a look here <<https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/shops/reopening>>.*

*2. As for duvets, pillowcases and linen, I haven't heard back from the retail team yet, but once I do, I will let you know!*

*That's so kind that you'd like to make a donation – it's so appreciated and you've heard first hand how the donation will make a huge difference.*

*3. The best way to donate is via BACS. Our bank details are as follows. Please use the reference 12070554 so I can track your donation.*

*Sort code: 30-00-02*

*Account number: 01167206*

*Account name: Shelter The National Campaign for Homeless People Ltd*

*PS. Since so many of our shops are closed at the moment, we have an online shop selling Christmas cards, crackers and chocolate! <https://cardshop.shelter.org.uk/>*

Georgia Ramplin  
Regional Community Fundraiser – Edinburgh,  
the Lothians and Fife

(Editor Note: there are also Shelter Christmas  
Cards available from local shops and in St  
John’s Church, Princes Street).

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### **Addressing Homelessness: Nationwide**

(an insight from member Pat Black)

Following the talk we had from Georgia and Lucia at our meeting I thought the club might be interested to know that I was appointed this year to the Nationwide Community Grants Board. Like many of the banks and building societies Nationwide has a charitable Foundation and the Board oversees the grants each year.

As a building society, Nationwide have a social purpose and aim to make communities better places to live. Nationwide has committed at least 1% of pre-tax profits for good causes to help achieve this and this funds the grants programme.

The focus is on: • preventing people from losing their home • helping people into a home • supporting people to thrive within the home environment.

The Community Grants programme is awarding £22 million over 5 years to housing related charities and projects. The programme directs member's money back into their own communities.

So far, £10 million has been awarded to 251 projects which have directly supported over 9000 beneficiaries! This year we had £4 million in grants available to be shared by 11 regions across the UK. Scotland is a single region.

As a Community Grant Board member for Scotland, I along with the other members had to read through, assess and comment on a number of projects. Then we had a virtual meeting to discuss our findings. We then voted for the projects we wished to support following criteria provided by Nationwide based on their main focus described above. Shelter Scotland acted as advisers to the Board. I have become very familiar with the statistics and information which Georgia from Shelter presented at our meeting.

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### **Behind the scenes of ..... Programme Action**

When new members ask what programme action is in Soroptimists, it's worth explaining,

I'm afraid our work is done on a confidential basis so I can't share more detail with you but there were 9 charities from across Scotland awarded over £370,000 between them. The projects ranged in size from supporting large groups of people to overcome challenges to helping convert a single flat. Keep an eye out for publicity which will come later when the projects are under way. I feel it is very satisfying to be able to contribute even in such a small way to reducing homelessness.

I have been a member of Nationwide for nearly 50 years and started saving with them when I was looking for my first mortgage. At the time they were the only building society offering single women a foot on the ladder. I have never had cause to regret that early decision. I am delighted to be able to pay back with service to others who want to make a home for themselves.

Can I quote David Roberts, Nationwide Chairman.

“At Nationwide, we believe everyone should have a place fit to call home. After all, the reason we were founded back in 1884 was to help people out of terrible living conditions and into homes of their own. And that's still what we're doing today. Helping people into homes and supporting people to thrive within them continues to be at the heart of what Nationwide is here to do. As Community Board members, you're helping us continue this tradition and support the most vulnerable in our communities to gain the most basic yet most transformational thing, a place fit to call home. Thank you for making a difference!”

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gently, that it has nothing to do with speakers, events, parties, outings etc but everything to do with, well, what Soroptimists do! SIGBI describes it as 'our projects' which we now try

to connect with the sustainable development goals of the UN – the 5 Ps, People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships. Our aim is to help Women and Girls, here at home and around the world with projects that we, as club members choose to support locally or we can work with an international project like the Meru Garden, Toilet Twinning and in 2021, tree planting to celebrate Soroptimist International's Centenary.

In SI Edinburgh, we have supported and worked with garden projects for the disabled, protecting Holyrood Park from non-native plants, collecting and sorting children's clothing for Kids Love Clothes, beach cleans, helping at Ovarian Cancer projects, supported a Women's Hostel in the city, rattled cans for Marie Curie's Daffodil Appeal and many more. But equally important is advocacy and taking any opportunity to draw attention and query what we think may need some attention at home and in the wider world with reference to women and girls. Attending conferences on Mental Health, Breast Cancer, the Environment, and Climate Change, are some of the more recent events where we have shown interest and made our presence known.

As to my job as your PA Officer, I try to make all the members aware of any developments within UKPAC, and SIGBI and encourage them to take part, if fit and able to do so, or to send off requests to MPs and MSPs for clarification on problems that may

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**And more Trees!**

We now have a costing for our proposed project to mark the centenary of Soroptimist International in 2021.

15 Fruit Trees @£35 each total	£525
20 Native Whips-Saplings total	£ 24
Stakes, tubes and ties total	£140
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	£689

Richard Darke of Edinburgh's **Tree-Time** charity has sent this to us with the added information that the school is very keen to have an orchard! The native whips being our suggestion of silver birch trees, which you can learn a good bit more about from the Woodland Trust website. I believe birch trees are also good carbon capturers! Twenty native whips seems quite a high number of saplings but I imagine some 'loss' is built into this amount.

affect women and girls. All this work is followed-up by SIGBI through the uploading of a Programme Focus Report to the main website – these can be read by all of our members and more importantly, help us to retain our position as an NGO at the United Nations.

It is worth drawing attention to the Programme Director's blog on the SIGBI web-site for October this year – how she believes wealth distribution equals health status – well a Pandemic has certainly drawn some interesting variations on that!

Finally with the mention of the Covid 19 problems, members this year have found usually open doors, closed to them for safety reasons. This has made the past year challenging for us all. But work has continued for some still in employment, knitting has been done, masks sewn, visits made, Christmas presents wrapped, jumpers washed and wrapped, virtual conferences and meeting attended and a brave effort by all to keep connected with each other. I and all our members, look forward to better times ahead when our work can continue anew – I have my tree planting spade at the ready!!

Lindsey

Thank you, Lindsey for all you do behind the scenes – not only for Programme Action but for our SI Edinburgh President Team and also generally!

Watching **Countryfile** on Sunday evening it was good to hear of their project for **Plant Britain** - planting trees around the UK aided by children, during the next two years. The words regularly used, were 'leaving a legacy' and this, I believe is what SI Edinburgh will be doing next year!

**ACTION: Your comments are requested so that we can move ahead with this project.** Lindsey



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**What’s happened to the ‘Empowering Girls in Nepal’ Project? A lay-woman’s understanding.**

A bit of background: Every 4 years members in conference vote for a project that can be the focus for the whole federation, with the project activity generating much interest, funds and awareness. The project concepts are submitted by Soroptimists and will involve creating a partnership with other NGOs or charitable organisations. The application process is rigorous, involving much scrutiny, debate and challenge ending with the finalists presenting their project proposal at Conference. In the past, many hundreds of thousands of pounds have been raised in the name of the SIGBI Project and we can proudly boast of much success in a number of fields and countries. At SIGBI Conference in Liverpool in 2018, Empowering Girls in Nepal Project was voted in as the SIGBI project for 2019-2022 and we started work with two NGOs – ChoraChori UK and ChoraChori Nepal.

So what has happened? Last September SIGBI Board were advised that ChoraChori UK were no longer working with ChoraChori Nepal and the housing project and the training programmes we had collectively supported in Nepal had been closed down. The Federation Board have been in detailed discussions with ChoraChori UK and with the Charity Commission to ensure all due process has been followed. There is no indication of any criminal or fraudulent activity or mis-management involving the NGOs or anyone associated with the organisations. ChoraChori UK have changed their focus from purely working on empowering women and girls and as a result there was no appropriate substitute programme which could be pursued under the legal contract that SIGBI had had in place.

What happens next? SIGBI Board are considering options for a replacement SIGBI project but no decision has been made as yet. No further monies related to this project are to be sent to SIGBI HQ. If a club or Region is in possession of funds they can re-use the funds at their discretion but SIGBI advise that donors should be contacted to understand their preferences. Monies held by ChoraChori UK are expected to be returned to SIGBI who will then return funds to the donors: donations held in a SIGBI Suspense account will be discussed with the individual Clubs/Regions.

Disclaimer – this is my lay persons interpretation of the situation having read documentation received from SIGBI. If you require the full legal position we can forward to you, the detailed Q&As. Nikki

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SIE painting the screen ORANGE and saying No to Violence Against Women  
Acknowledging the start of ‘16 Days of Activism’ on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020

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And finally... we know Christmas and New Year are likely to be 'different' this year but we hope that whatever that means for you, you are able to embrace and enjoy the 'difference' for this year and look forward to a positive, healthy and prosperous 2021. Happy Christmas from the Editors!



#### **Programme of SIE Club meetings 2020-2021**

All meetings commence at 7.30 and are currently being held on Zoom.

A Zoom meeting invitation will be sent circa 2 days before the meeting to enable you to join from 7.20pm.

**9 December** Speaker: Silver Sentiments: Louise Grey (how Louise established her jewellery business and how her travels have influenced the designs of her handmade jewellery)

**13 January** Business Meeting

**27 January** Friendship Groups meeting locally or remotely (dependent on restrictions):to be organised by Friendship Group leaders. **Breaking News: Dorothy has taken on the challenge to create some 'fun' that all Friendship Groups can participate in 'remotely' – watch this space!**

**10 February** Business Meeting

**24 February** Speaker – Increasing our understanding of Climate Change with the help of speakers from UN House Scotland

**10 March** Business Meeting

**24 March** Speaker - tbc

**14 April** Business Meeting

**28 April** SI Edinburgh AGM