

**Soroptimist
International
Edinburgh
news
notes
anecdotes**

SIEnna 210 September 2022

SIE President's Message

What a difference a few months makes! It has been a period of good (holidays and good weather) bad (inflation, rising fuel prices and cost of living challenges) and sad. In preparation for our recent Business Meeting, I was re-reading the minutes of the June meeting when I was reminded of the country's celebrations of The Queens Platinum Jubilee. And here we are just over 3 months later coming to terms with the loss of Queen Elizabeth II.

The Queen died in a place she loved and was at peace, with her family around her and safe in the knowledge she had fulfilled her promise to the Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and herself, that she would serve until the end of her days.

So many wise lessons learned from our amazing Queen that are so pertinent to our lives today – enjoy the good, stay resilient and determined through the bad, and deal positively with the sad – 'grief is the price we pay for love'. May her example always continue to inspire us in our lives and in our service.

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A Soroptimist from Slovenia!

Edinburgh Soroptimists welcomed a visit from a Slovenian Soroptimist, Nada Sabec from SI Maribor - the second largest town in the country.

Nada is a professor at the university and contacted us through Sigbi so it was a great pleasure for several of us to meet up over coffee and chat about our different clubs – we learned that the Maribor club is thirty years old and was chartered by SI Graz in Austria – there are only two clubs in Slovenia.

Nada has been to our city before so knew her way about and managed to book a tour to Loch Ness but was delighted when Myint Su and Clive drove her down to Abbotsford for a visit round Sir Walter Scott's home in the Borders.

Slovenia is a country that looks like Austria in many ways with snow-capped mountains and lakes to the north – Nada sent some very attractive photos to us on her return home but said it was very hot and what she loved about visiting Scotland was the cooler weather – we have had a bit of that recently but also some of the alarming heat!

Nada would be delighted to welcome any Edinburgh Soroptimists who may be visiting Slovenia in the future.

President's Message (continued)

As we return after our summer break, there is much work to do and our first meeting was full of discussion, debate and action. It was great to see so many members 'in person' at the Central Hostel and we hope these numbers will increase as the roadworks decrease and before the bad weather hits! There was a real buzz and energy – it was great.

It is amazing how much club activity took place over the summer, with us entertaining visiting Soroptimists, hosting the Scotland South Regional meeting, keeping in contact with a number of organisations we help/wish to help and building a great speaker programme for the rest of the year - momentum was certainly maintained!!! Look out for updates later in SIEnna! Welcome back, and here's to a successful and fruitful second half of our year.

SIE members Orange The World at Edinburgh Book Festival. The Orange



The World focus from UKPAC for August was Forced Marriages.

SI Edinburgh lead the Scotland South Regional Speaker event.

After the initial feeling of fear and trepidation having been asked to host the next Scotland South Regional Speaker event on 3rd September, a call out to the whole Club and an extremely positive response, we pooled all our skills, strengths, contacts and resources ... and I believe we pulled it off!

'Peace' was selected as the theme,

- not least to acknowledge we were in the month in which we traditionally celebrate World Peace Day (21st September).

- Peace is one of the 5 P's that drive the Programme Action focus for SI.

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 16 calls for us to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

- Women's inherent skill in creating that sort of society is massive but sadly our official participation in CREATING, MAINTAINING and RE-ESTABLISHING peace is massively under-represented plus many of the current challenges facing us that disrupt our peaceful world have a disproportionate impact on women and girls.

So, we asked the question 'what is happening to respond to this?' and we tapped into our SI Edinburgh connections and partnerships to get some insights and hopefully answers!

We have a strong working relationship with UN House Scotland and we had the pleasure of one of their interns joining us to talk about her experience and observations from attendance at the UN in Vienna for the First Meeting of States Parties following the ratification of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Mhairi spoke on the subject of 'The impact of Nuclear Weapons and

women's representation in Nuclear Diplomacy' and was able to share that progress was being made in respect of female representation (increasing to 31% attendance at the event) but that the participation of women in the actual decision-making forums seemed very low. She also educated us on the disproportionate impact on women and girls, specifically biological and social, through all stages of testing, use, aftermath and even conflict simply caused by the threat

Pat Black updated us on the outcomes that the W7 were hoping for from the recent G7 meeting (specifically in support of women and girls). The event was understandably occupied with the conflict in Ukraine but there was some time for other activity and discussion. Pat was able to share some of the positive intentions being shown by the member states but also shared her disappointment from lack of tangible action and living up to promises made. Pat had also invited Alys Mumford from Engender to share thoughts, hopes and actions with us in respect of what is actually happening, and needs to happen, on the international and the national stage in respect of Women Peace & Security.

And finally, bringing things a lot more local, our speaker from the Scottish Governments Justice Directorate gave us an update on the ground breaking work being done on our very doorstep, to tackle a misogynistic climate that leaves women and girls feeling threatened and unsafe in their own communities and workplaces. A potentially unique opportunity to help make history by supporting the follow up of the review in Scotland, led by Baroness Kennedy QC. We posed the question 'How can we as a 'Scottish collective' help drive through such a significant change?' Our speaker

definitely provided an abundance of information, food for thought and also inspiration for action.

(All Speakers slides have been shared with members for reference and can be digested without the Speakers notes.)

Overall, a successful day - we were flooded with facts and figures, insights and intentions, hopes and frustrations..... but all leading to many pan Region opportunities for action

Chris:
My impressions of the Region meeting on 3rd September:-
Mhairi of UN House Scotland remarked that women have limited access to humanitarian aid as they go without to feed their children.
She also spoke of the lack of representation of women in top places and a lack of role models in diplomatic services and in discussions regarding conflicts.

Alys Mumford from Engender commented that Sweden is the first state to have a feminist foreign policy.

Another deterrent for women in public life is misogyny.

I felt enthused by the first Region meeting which I had attended for several years.

SIE Business Meeting held on 14 September 2022 (at ECHS and on Zoom)

Present: President Nikki(in the Chair) + Anna, Myint Su, Lindsey, Marjory, Christine, Edith and Eva M (SI Dunfermline) (at ECHS). Zoom: Pat, Liz, Winifred, Clephane, Alison & Dorothy.

Soroptimist Vision & Mission – read by President Nikki.

Apologies for absence were received from 4 members: Gari, Morag, Irene and Hilary-Kay.

A short period of silence was observed, in remembrance of HM Queen Elizabeth, Hilary Paige (former SI and SIE President) and Daphne Godson (ex-member of SIE).

News of members Irene is in good health . Hilary-Kay and Sally both thanked the club for their long-service certificates and sent good wishes.

Minutes of last Meeting 8 June 2022 – Accepted (proposed by Myint Su and seconded by Liz). There were no matters arising.

Actions: President Nikki represented SIE at the Public Policy Exchange seminar on Ukrainian refugees (replacing Winifred with Winifred's agreement),

A report on the visit of President Nikki and Lindsey to Castlevew Primary School to view the trees planted there was published in the Evening News – thanks to Lindsey for organising this.

Correspondence: Christine Everything has already been circulated to members by email.

Christine noted that Edinburgh Women's Aid is 50 years old this year and asked if SIE might do something to recognise this. It was agreed to make a donation of £50. Christine will check out how this can be done. (ACTION: Christine to check re Women's Aid payment)

Treasurer's Report: Myint Su advised that Anna had made a donation of £150 that she had received from visitors - £50 each to Shelter, 3S Fund and Empty Kitchens Full Hearts – and thanked Anna.

President Nikki thanked Myint Su for her efforts in negotiating with ECHS, and others who had investigated other possible venues.

Programme Action: Liz and Nikki are **SIEnna 210 Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd Company**
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meeting on 15 September with Phoebe and Christine from Scottish Refugee Council, to discuss what is happening in Edinburgh and how SIE might be able to help.

Liz reported that Kate from Scottish detainees' visitors' scheme was willing to talk to SIE about her organisations' activities. Members indicated an interest in including this in the club programme at some point.

The advocacy sub-group aims to circulate a draft letter for members to use in contacting their MPs on the question of safe passage for women refugees, asking that they press the UK government to ratify the whole of the Istanbul Convention.

Liz noted that there had been a presentation at the Scotland South meeting on 3 September on whether there is a need for a misogyny bill in Scotland. Scotland South is planning a debate on this issue on 10 December.

Liz mentioned "oranging" on 25th of every month and asked if members were willing to try to meet on each occasion, wearing something orange. She has 20 A4-sized flyers plus some postcards from PAC and asked members to think about where these could be displayed or sent. She urged members to think about other things that could be done to generate, and suggested trying to persuade a charity shop to do an orange window display. She mentioned the blackboards that have been set out along Princes Street Gardens recently and wondered if we could ask for permission to use these for posters. Christine will try to find out. (ACTION: Christine to enquire re blackboards)

Lindsey reported that items collected for Smalls for All had been delivered. A provisional date of 18 October has been set for the next sorting session at Kids Love Clothes. Lindsey will send out a request for volunteers in late September. (ACTION: Lindsey to send KLC reminder

for members)

It was agreed that sorting and wrapping Christmas gifts for Cranston Street would again be carried out at a club meeting in November.

Clephane reported that she had not been able to progress her enquiries about women in custody in Edinburgh

(ACTION: Clephane to follow up re women in custody)

Membership : Anna reported that a Scotland North/South Region membership group has been suggested, for the sharing of ideas etc, but not many clubs have joined up as yet. Anna has joined and indicated that other members would be welcome to join, if they wish.

President Nikki advised that she had attended a webinar about setting up an e-club. She is keen to progress this, possibly for the interns at UN House, and plans to take this up with Scotland South. Action – Nikki to follow up with Scotland South Region and UN House

Key updates Visiting Soroptimists Myint Su reported that it had been agreed over the summer that costs for entertaining visiting Soroptimists should be met by SIE from club funds. There have been several such visits during the summer and brief reports on each for SIEnna.

SIGBI ballots The three positions which had each received one nomination, viz Programme Director, and Assistant Programme Directors Peace and Planet were all accepted. For Assistant Programme Director People there were two nominees. A vote was taken and accordingly SIE will vote for Zarreen Babu. It was agreed to accept the ballot involving agreement of minutes etc,

Patches of Peace President Nikki reported that SI San Fernando has a 60th anniversary project which aims to put together a patchwork representing peace. SIE has been asked to participate by submitting a square 1 foot by 1 foot. Pat offered to dig out the winning designs

from a schools competition that SIE had organised some years ago, in the hope that something from there might be suitable for the square. President Nikki and Myint Su will liaise as to completing the square. Closing date 31/10/22. Action – Myint Su and Nikki to co-ordinate production of a Patch for Peace

Saughton Gardens plaque President Nikki advised that the plaque has now been erected. Thanks were expressed to Marjory for organising this.

Communication: SIEnna - Items for inclusion to Gari by 23 September 2022, please.

Programme: Alison A draft programme will be included in SIEnna.

Scotland South President Nikki thanked all those who had helped/participated in the Scotland South meeting on 3 September. She will circulate what she can of speakers' slides etc. President Nikki was thanked for all her efforts over the summer.

AOCB: Anna will take minutes at the meeting on 12 October as Christine is not now available that evening.

Date of next meeting : 28 September 2022 at 7:30pm face-to-face at ECHS & on Zoom.

Date of next Business Meeting: 12 October 2022 face-to-face ECHS /zoom

Programme Action Summer Focus

The Summer months have passed quickly and relatively quietly in relation to programme action. However, we were heavily involved in what, judging by the feedback, turned out to be a very successful region meeting on the 3rd September.

Also, a five of us went along to what we hope will be the first of a monthly meet up, to wear orange and publicise the Unite campaign "Orange the World" prevention of violence against women and girls. We met in the Edinburgh Book Festival café, a comfortable venue where many people were gathering before and after a festival event.

Moving on into the Autumn we have been making new contacts and starting to think ahead about action over the coming months. The following is a summary of current action and ideas.

The focus for our advocacy and action is women's safety. Safety to walk the streets, safety at home, safe passage as a refugee and safe access to education. We aim to:

- Continue to raise awareness and support any regional campaign to introduce a Misogyny and Criminal Justice Act in Scotland
- Work with intern(s) at UNHouse to prepare a one page briefing on the Bill
- Support the plan for a regional debate "Do we need a Misogyny Bill" proposed for December 10th
- Petition MSPs and MPs to fully endorse the Istanbul Convention and not to leave two clauses unsigned which potentially leave refugee women more vulnerable again
- Endorse the UKPAC petition to prevent sexual harassment
- Provide a club response to the Police Scotland Survey
<https://consult.scotland.police.uk/strategy-insight-and-innovation/your-police-2022-2023/>
- Further publicise the "Orange the World" campaign through poster distribution – if possible along the Princes Street Gardens fence as well as putting up smaller posters in local cafes/shops/libraries and to consider whether charity shops may be willing to "orange" their windows for the 10 days of action

We continue to make links with members of the Scottish Refugee Council and Nikki and I recently met with Christine and

Phoebe, two of their community coordinators who have suggested areas where me may wish to be involved. One idea that is emerging again is the idea of "conversation cafes".

Edinburgh City Mission have now also been in touch and I am hoping to meet with them soon. They have been supporting Afghan women in particular. I am also in touch with Kate Alexander from the Scottish Detainee Visitor scheme and she and I also plan to meet soon. She has also been invited to speak at one of our meetings.

Kids love Clothes – a date for helping there has been coordinated by Lindsey for 18th October.

We will again support Cranston Street with small gifts at Christmas.

Lindsey is investigating Blythwood Shoe Box scheme

Clephane continues to try and discover more about what happens when women are detained in Edinburgh – where are they sent?

Much to do and plan for.

Liz

A Swedish Soroptimist visits Edinburgh

Karin Sallstrom a member of the Soroptimist club in Vaxjo in the southern part of Sweden and her husband visited Edinburgh last June. (Her husband was attending the annual meeting of the Grand Lodge of Scania, part of the Swedish Order of Freemasons.)

Edith did sterling work as liaison person for meeting up with Karin, but in the end had to cry off because she tested positive for Covid. So there were 6 of us meeting at Waterston's café - Lindsey, Clephane, myself and Clive (I co-opted him because I thought Karin's husband would appreciate meeting another 'soroptimist-er'!)

Clephane presented her with the Region playing cards and our SIE history book. It really was a very good meeting - to quote Karin in her follow-up email - 'It was so nice to talk to you and when I left you I felt that we have known each other forever. Thank you for your gifts. I will have lots -to tell my sisters on our meeting in September. Hope to organize a Zoom meeting later on.'



After returning to Sweden, Karin sent a photo of herself on holiday in her summerhouse with an open invitation for us all to visit Sweden.

Through the SI Edinburgh website we were asked to host Jeannie from SI Weybridge in Surrey and her Husband Eric for an Edinburgh Festival Fringe production.

Jeannie was part of a 200 strong show choir, 40 of whom came to perform a specially written musical " Last night a musical saved my life"

Those SI Edinburgh members that managed to attend the performance all agreed that it was uplifting and the cast were very inclusive.

Jeannie and Eric enjoyed life to the maximum and were a delight to have to stay for a week. They thank Edinburgh members for their support.

Anna

SI Edinburgh's Eriobotrya Japonica (Loquat) Bush in Saughton Gardens

The bush was planted in Saughton Gardens in September 2019 to commemorate the 90th anniversary (2017) of SI Edinburgh, but because of Covid restrictions installation of an explanatory plaque was delayed until this summer. In the meantime the bush has grown tremendously and clearly loves its location in a sheltered spot in the gardens. Marjory Summer visitors.

Programme 2022-23

14 September Business Meeting
28 September Emma Whitelock, CEO, Lead Programme

12 October Business Meeting
26 October Richard Darke of the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust

9 November Business Meeting
23 November May East UN House Scotland "Climate, Cities & Gender" via Zoom

11 January 2023 Business Meeting
25 January 2023 "A safer Scotland for women and girls? The Misogyny Review".
Speaker/Debate to be arranged nearer the time.

8 February 2023 Business meeting
22 February Sharon Cameron, NHS Lothian on the Scottish Government Plan for Women's Health

8 March 2023 Business Meeting
22 March Speaker Meeting – Details of Speaker to be arranged

12 April 2023 Business Meeting
26 April 2023 AGM

10 May 2023 Business Meeting
24 May Professor Yvonne McEwen "The 'green' electric car: the tragic human and environmental costs"

14 June 2023 Business Meeting

