



SCIO CONSULTATION - DETAILED REPORT

This document is a detailed report of the responses, comments and questions raised by members who completed the SCIO Consultation questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to give us this feedback. As far as possible we have provided responses and further information below, as well as taking some of the more complex questions away to conduct further research.

MAIN POINTS RAISED

- **Clarity around increased funding opportunities as a SCIO.** This is difficult to give without going through every funding body on a case by case basis. We recently looked into getting funding from the British Council, who prioritise funding SCIO Registered Charities. The conclusions we have drawn are that being a SCIO can make the funding process simpler, which encourages some funders to prioritise SCIOs, particularly in the public sector. Although funding is likely to be hard to access in the current climate, we believe that SCIO status will give the SSA an additional edge with funding bodies as a legal entity in its own right.

- **Concern that the Council plans to take on an SSA building.** This was proposed in 2023, however having further investigated these proposals the consensus of the current Council is that taking on a building would not be beneficial to the SSA at this time.

- **Concern that the Annual exhibition at the RSA building may not be prioritised.** The current Council recognises how much our members value this opportunity and has every intention of continuing to hold the Annual at the RSA in future. We plan to secure the RSA for the SSA Annual Exhibition for at least the next two years.

- **Concerns regarding the continuity of the SSA archives should we pursue the name change from Society of Scottish Artists to Scottish Society of Artists.** While our consultation with members to date indicates that a large majority of members are in favour of this change, we recognise that it is not a step to be taken lightly and have reached out to the SSA archivist, Kirstie Meehan at the National Galleries, for advice on the impact it may have on our archives. Her response was as follows:

“I don’t think it detracts from future cultural activity [...], though as I’m sure you’re aware you’ll have to make it clear on your website/social media that they are one and the same organisation, and do some effective messaging to this end. At our end, I’ll likely change the title of the collection to encompass both names, i.e. ‘Scottish Society of Artists (formerly Society of Scottish Artists)’ so that all the bases are covered and it’s discoverable to researchers. We’ll also include a note within the catalogue record noting the change and when it happened (if it does!). There’s precedent within the archive - for example, the 57 Gallery later morphed into the New 57 Gallery, and the archive collection simply incorporates both names in the catalogue.”

There is also further research in progress on how the name change may affect other functions such as bequests etc.

- **Concern that a financial analysis/scoping study has not been done.** The Council have taken legal advice, and are satisfied that the quotes, advice and assurances we have in place are sufficient and comprehensive. We do not believe the cost of hiring an external company to do a full financial analysis is justified in these circumstances.

- **Questions on whether the structure of membership and process for joining Council will change as a result of the SCIO.** We would like to reassure our members that these will not change as a result of transitioning to a SCIO.

- **Concerns that a longer tenure would deter members from joining Council.** The 2 year extension to Council tenure would be entirely optional and taken up at individual discretion. We believe that an optional longer term would be of value in allowing Council members to undertake more ambitious projects and see these through to completion. A process for approving the 2-year extension will be included in the Constitution.

- **Concerns around the validity of votes that are participated in by a minority of membership.** This point will require further discussion by Council, with consideration of the various suggestions put forward by members (see below), and will be given full consideration.

COMPLEX QUESTIONS REQUIRING FURTHER RESEARCH:

The following questions were raised that we wish to discuss further as a Council and with the SSA’s legal advisor, in order to give as full and detailed an answer as possible. We will keep you updated with further information on these points in due course:

1. What extra admin is involved in running a SCIO over an unincorporated charity?
2. What types of organisations will the SSA accept funding from? (concerns were raised regarding funding from hedge funds, arms trades etc, as well as concerns regarding restrictions to creative freedom of expression when receiving funding from government bodies or other organisations with specific restrictions or agendas).
3. Name change: what would happen if bequests were made to the old name?
4. Concern raised that the current constitution aims/objectives may not be in line with those stated on OSCR, to be investigated.

SUGGESTIONS PUT FORWARD BY MEMBERS:

We have also had some suggestions, mainly regarding the new Constitution, which we will be discussing in detail as a Council as we finalise our proposed new structure.

- That the quorum for meetings should be increased in line with the increased membership (10% of members proposed).
- That there should be constitutional clarity on how Council and office bearers are both installed and removed.
- That office bearers should be voted in by membership, with a CV and Bio to be submitted to members by nominees prior to the vote.
- That membership should vote to approve Council members wishing to extend their tenure for a further 2 years, after their initial 3-year term.
- That a code of conduct and safeguarding procedures are put in place.
- That an independent committee made up of members should investigate any future disputes within Council.
- That no president should be able to change the constitution within their first year of office.
- That constitution language (including the word “obnoxious”) should be updated.
- That financial transparency should go beyond our annual accountant report to include staff and freelancer payments, ringfenced trusts & awards and running costs for exhibitions and projects.
- That those artists who have been selected for an Annual 2-3 years in a row should have a 1-year hiatus.
- That the SSA should become a less Edinburgh-focussed organisation.

If you have any further questions or comments about this report, please email admin@s-s-a.org