

TACKLING THE CHALLENGES OF KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH OUR MEMBERS

Statement from the Branch Officers

Hello everyone. Last year closed with a successful and happy branch Christmas lunch, held in the new venue of the Pipers' Tryst Restaurant.

It was, however, a very difficult year for the branch, and it is anticipated that this year will be constitutionally transitional in order to meet the present challenges of a shrinking membership.

It appears that fewer members than ever are willing, or able, to take on the committee or officer positions that are required to keep

Scotland Branch functioning.

With these circumstances in mind, it is hoped that members attending the branch AGM next month will fully support the branch officers' proposed necessary decisions.

- **Wilson Macdonald, vice chair**
- **Michael Kirby, membership secretary**
- **Cherry Dolan, treasurer**
- **Supported by Christine McGiveron, administrator, and Muriel Haig, minute secretary**



2023 Scotland Branch AGM

This important event is being held on Thursday 9 March in the Pipers' Tryst (National Piping Centre - pictured), 30-34 McPhater Street, Glasgow G4 OHW.

The AGM will commence at 12 noon with a buffet lunch and will close at approximately 4pm.

The branch officers have invited Nicola Crichton, CSPA policy, projects and campaign manager, to be our guest speaker. She has been most helpful regarding the construction and launch of the new branch website.

For members who cannot attend in person, a virtual option will be offered. Please contact Michael Kirby for internet link details.



Keeping your details up to date

Membership secretary Michael Kirby (details at the bottom of this page) is the man to contact if you need to make changes to your personal data held on the Scotland



Branch section of the CSPA database – change of address, email or phone number, or any other membership matter you require assistance with.



Our new meetings venue

To provide better value for money for members who attend meetings, branch officers started looking for a change of venue in November.

We wanted to keep the meeting place in the centre of Glasgow and close to the old venue, which had café where we could have a bite to eat and a catch-up before meetings. But the venue closed in the pandemic and there were no plans for it to re-open.

The Griffin public house, which has recently been refurbished and just a short walk from the old venue, seemed ideal. The room for the meetings can be accessed by a door in Elmbank Street or through the bar in Bath Street.

The branch officers have negotiated a favourable room rate for meetings, and those wishing to use the facilities of the Griffin pub

We have negotiated a good room rate at the recently refurbished Griffin pub

are free to do so either before or after the meeting.

Meetings will be held on the first Thursday of February, May, September and November. The start time remains 1.30pm and any branch member is welcome.

Any members who wish to attend a meeting virtually, please contact Michael Kirby.

Branch chair applications

The closing date to apply for this very important position was 30 January and it is hoped

that members attending the AGM can agree a nomination for a new branch chair.

Group updates



Edinburgh Group has now been closed for a year, but should anyone wish to consider reopening this, please contact Christine McGiveron, branch administrator, by emailing Christine.McGiveron@cspa.co.uk or telephoning 01292 618329.

Glasgow & District Group, the only remaining group in Scotland, will have held its 2023 AGM on 2 February. Members will have been advised that the move to open meetings to all Scotland Branch members, regardless of where you live, requires alterations to be

made to the group's constitution. These were proposed by the branch officers for agreement by members. The alterations will be taken to the branch AGM on 9 March for ratification.

• Please note: There will be no branch meeting on 2 March.



Holiday time: new travel insurance policy

With the winter months almost over, members may be thinking of their next holiday, and with that comes travel insurance.

The new travel insurance policy offered to CSPA members is being underwritten by the Civil Service Insurance Society (CSIS), as advertised on page 35 of the winter 2022 edition of *The Pensioner* magazine. But we thought this newsletter would be a good opportunity to remind everyone about it.

Cover can be arranged for a wide range of medical conditions, but there may be some instances where a quote cannot be provided. In these circumstances, you will be given details of a

service that may be able to help find a specialist insurer to provide cover.

Purchasing the CSIS travel insurance can be done in one of two ways:

- Call **01622 766960**, select section 5 and a quotation will be offered
- Visit **<https://csis.co.uk/cspa>** online

Policies online are available up to age 85. Please phone if anyone to be covered under the policy is aged 86-91.

Prior to your travel date, please check any new Covid requirements for your country of destination, and possibly your return to the UK.

Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA)

At the branch officers meeting held on 10 November 2022, discussion took place on whether the CSPA Scotland Branch should apply for membership/affiliation to an organisation whose main focus was on older people in Scotland.

It was agreed that SOPA seemed the most relevant and our application for membership has been made and will be considered at the February 2023 meeting of the SOPA board.

SOPA is a voice for older people across Scotland.

Veterans partnership

Transport and support for former Services personnel with medical appointments

A Scottish government-backed initiative supporting veterans on hospital visits is expanding to cope with rising demand. Veterans can be accompanied to hospital and receive help with transport under a collaboration between the Defence Medical Welfare Service, which provides welfare officers, and Fares4Free, which offers transport.

The organisations were awarded £40,000 by the Scottish Veterans Fund last July as part of a £50,000 fund that last year benefited 25 projects across the country. The service is so popular that Fares4Free is appealing for volunteers to meet demand in rural areas.

Leon Fisher, Fares4Free operations manager, said: "We continue to grow our volunteer network, but are seeking additional drivers to help us deliver this unique collaboration.

"It's tailored to users to establish exactly what's needed so we can arrange a suitable solution, and powered by dedicated staff, frequent meetings and efficient administration to ensure service quality."

Since the Scottish Veterans Fund was formed in 2008, almost 300 projects have been supported, receiving more than £2.3 million.

One RAF veteran has been helped with medical appointments and taken to visit his wife in a hard-to-reach care home. The Fares4Free support driver also offered him a day out of his choice - they went for a drive around areas of the veteran's youth, followed by a lunch of fish and chips.

• Fares4Free is seeking volunteer drivers across Scotland. To find out more about volunteering, please call 0141 266 6000.

**The service is so popular
Fares4Free is appealing for
volunteers to meet demand**



Highland peatbog: seeking worldwide recognition

As the world is affected more severely by climate change, it is hoped this article on a remote area of Scotland will be of interest.

A vast area of peatbog in Scotland's Flow Country could become one of Unesco's newest World Heritage Sites.

In the 1970s, the peatbogs in and around Sutherland were drained and the land was prepared for large blocks of commercial forestry by planting millions of non-native trees. It was only later that the importance of the environment that had been damaged became clear.

In the 2000s, work started on taking down all the forestry and blocking ditches, and the repair work continues to this day.

The expanse of peatlands, bogs, pools, lochs, hills and mountains

covers large parts of Caithness and Sutherland in the north Highlands. The Flow Country contains the most intact and extensive blanket bog system in the world. It is 50 miles across and covers almost a million acres of land.

The peatlands, which have been growing for 10,000 years, are formed by layers of waterlogged mosses and other vegetation as they die off. The plant life does not fully decay due to acidic conditions, so the material retains some of the carbon it absorbed when at the surface of the bog. It is helping

The peatbog helps combat climate change, storing 400 million tonnes of carbon

combat climate change by storing an estimated 400 million tonnes of carbon. Damaging the peat risks releasing harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

The Flows also provide habitat for birds, otters and water voles. Its plant life includes sundews, which feed insects that get trapped in their sticky tentacles.

A bid for Unesco World Heritage status is to be submitted this year, with a decision from Unesco expected in 2024. Seven areas, amounting to 469,500 acres of the Flow Country, would form the site.

It would shine a light on peatlands globally, promoting efforts to conserve, restore and research these landscapes all over the world.

WWF Scotland and RSPB Scotland are watching the bid closely.

SP Energy Networks Priority Services Register

In the event of a power cut, our teams work around the clock to restore your electricity as quickly as possible.

To enquire about being placed on this register – phone 0330 1010 167

Any feedback regarding this newsletter would be very much appreciated.



Remember: do not leave *The Pensioner* magazine in doctors' or dentists' surgeries or any public places as it contains names and addresses of Alliance officers.

The CSPA is committed to ensuring that your information and privacy are protected.