# Minutes 16 May 2024

**Present:**

Philip Bremner (PB), Marie Burton (MB), Beverley Clough (BC), Simon Flacks (SF), Marie Fox (MF), Elisabeth Griffiths (EG), John Harrington (JH), Marie Hutton (MHu), Emma Jones (EJ), Arwen Joyce (AJ), Smita Kheria (SK), Kay Lalor (KL), Andra le Roux-Kemp (ARK), Lara MacLachlan (LM), Kirsten McConnachie (KM), Emma Milne (EM), Rebecca Moosavian (RM), Colin Moore (CM), Alex Powell (AP), Raza Saeed (RS), Mini Saxena (MSa), Marie Selwood (MSe), Mitchell Travis (MT),

# 1. Apologies

Daniel Bedford (DB), Anna Bryson (AB), Richard Craven (RC), Alex Green (AG),

Matt Howard (MHo), Emily Walsh (EW), Helen Stalford (HS)

# 2. Approval of Minutes and outstanding Action Points

## 2.1. Meeting 18 January 2024

Board approved the minutes.

## 2.2. Action points from previous meetings

The Board noted the action points.

# 3. Committee/Role Vacancies (JH)

Committee roles were allocated:

ARK became the YouTube editor

**Action**: EM handover YouTube editor role to ARK.

KM to discuss the role of Stream Secretary with BV and consider whether has capacity to take up the role.

**Action**: BC and KM liaise about the role. JH to follow up with KM.

Secretary’s note: KM became Stream Secretary.

BC and AP join the grants committee.

KL to join EJ as co-blog editor.

**Action**: EJ and KL to liaise about blog editor.

**Action**: MSe to update website.

**Action**: EM to update SLSA internal documents.

# 4. International collaborations

## 4.1. PGR exchange at SLSA and VSR postgraduate conference (with guest from VSR)

Elke Olthuis joined the Board from the VSR. Elke outlined the benefits of the collaboration with VSR in PGR conferences.

SK advised would like to continue the collaboration, support from PGR reps and International collaboration committee. Continuing the exchange will not cost anything extra at the moment to the SLSA as spaces marked for VSR attendees were not taken up at the January 2024 SLSA PGR conference, thus there was no SLSA spending on the exchange this year. But the same amount, i.e. £275 would need to be budgeted for 2025 SLSA PGR conference for this exchange.

JH noted the importance of take up on opportunities on the VSR side.Elke advised there was a clash of events and VSR students not completely aware of the benefits of the collaboration. More will be done to encourage their engagement.

Board warmly approved continuation of the exchange between SLSA and VSR.

## 4.2. International Collaboration funding scheme (SK)

SK summarised the key proposed changes to the fund.

* Increase the total amount members could bid for from £1,500, without increasing overall pot.
* Increase clarity on the nature of socio-legal aspects of the bids.

SK proposed perhaps the max award should be £2,000. RM supported the increase to £2,000 as provides applicants with more scope.

MT noted that for the impact grant the applications have been stronger now the grant is in its third year and members are aware of the award, so will potentially see the same trend in this award.

PB proposed £2,500, noting the pot would stay the same.

Board agreed £2,500 and approved the rule change.

**Action**: SK and MSe to update the rule prior to publication

SK proposed we co-brand a pot with matching funding with an organisation. Could be a small nominal amount from the partner, the aim is to encourage people to collaborate across associations. SK asked Board if would be happy to approach the Asian Law Society for funds to co-brand a funding bid. Noting members of each society would be awarded the funds that their society put. Plan is to bring full proposal to the Board whenever/once ALS responds (noting that their timetable for decision-making is different from the SLSA’s).

SK noted that SLSA-USAID collaboration for the event for Ukranian scholars due to complete in May. KM, one of the contributors to the event, noted that – Routledge will give 12 electronic copies of “Routledge Handbook of Socio-legal Theory and Methods” to Ukrainian scholars.

Action: SK to approach ALS about co-branded funding and, if they agree, to bring proposal to the Board.

# 5. Core business

## 5.1. Website, Webmaster and CRM (MSe, CM, EM, AJ, LM)

Website working group presented stages of work and draft criteria for the website and CRM upgrade.

SK noted the following need to be added: Donate button when they pay fees or join. Gift aid form. Also noted that members’ ability to interact with other members’ details to find connections should be essential, noted: it’s been raised at AGM. Advised working group talk to other learned societies about their membership directory and how it works.

PB suggested essential criteria should be the availability of support.

KM asked for clarity that the address look up for newsletter is separate from the membership database. Working group confirmed.

**Action**: EM to liaise with EJ and KL about blog requirements

**Action**: Working group to ask other learned societies about their directories

**Action**: Board to contact MSe with suggestions or ideas

**Action**: Working group to bring costed proposal (with alternatives) for platforms and design, to September meeting

**Action**: Working group to liaise with JH and PB about costs before September meeting

## 5.2. Ulster Surplus (MSi)

Mark Simpson (MSi) joined the meeting for this item.

JH advised that the Board had given approval of the detailed plan to be brought to the Board and the purpose now is to consider the full plan.

MSi summarised the four areas that funding would used for if retention of surplus is approved by the Board. MSi confirmed payment would be spent in next two academic years.

MT raised concern that it did not have the clear socio-legal focus. Questioned how the proposal fits with SLSA charitable aims.

MSi outlined expenditure under pots 2 to 4 is socio-legal as all the academics/PhD students in the team are socio-legal scholars. Pot 1 – administrators support for academics who complete socio-legal academics, so facilitating socio-legal work in that way.

PB stated less concerned that pot 1 is connected to socio-legal as no administrative costs covered by the conference budgeted, and so not unreasonable to cover this considering the success of the conference.

MSi left the meeting.

JH reminded Board we had already agreed in principle, this is a question of the detail. Also noted we had agreed the total amount Ulster would retain.

SK advised the proposal should be supported and we should see this as a one-off due to the new policy (item 5.3.) and the exceptionally large size of the Ulster conference.

The Board discussed the connection between the SLSA charitable aims and pots 3 and 4.

RS advised that we need to ensure that the money is not subsumed into university funding.

MF suggested that perhaps the fund should be directed to ECRs to assist capacity building.

The Board approved the proposal, emphasising the retain funds builds socio-legal research and capacity.

**Action**: JH to liaise with MSi and report Board decision

**Action**: Ulster team to report once a year on progress and outcomes of the funds

## 5.3. Conference Host Requests Relating to Retention of Surpluses (MHo)

MHo was unable to attend and so this item is to be considered at the September Board meeting.

**Action**: EM to add item to September Board meeting

## 5.4. Annual conference

## 5.4.1. Portsmouth (DB/ EW)

Board received the report.

JH raised that the second plenary had lower attendance than the first and noted the presentation of award will be changed for next year when prize winners will be invited up to receive award.

The Board recorded its gratitude to the Portsmouth organizing team for a very successful conference. Informal feedback from delegates had praised the efficient running of the conference, the variety of papers and streams, and the welcoming and supportive atmosphere.

## 5.4.2. Liverpool (MF/HS)

MF advised the core issue is hybrid, noting that Portsmouth made a loss on the online provision. MF argued not sustainable to run the full conference as hybrid. Proposing offering hybrid under a smaller number of streams and the plenary.

EM agreed with the proposal to remove hybrid – members reported not seeing it as value for money. Could also be some dissatisfaction, if only some streams and not others have online provision.

SK noted financially, the numbers will make online not cost effective. Also, anecdotally there was a disjuncture between those in person and those online. Highlighted DB and EW’s point of us being able to run other events online, outside of the conference period.

CM raised EDI concerns relating to ending full hybrid provision – some people cannot get to the conference.

MF advised the hybrid provision would cost £70,000.

KM advised there is a need to balance financial implications and EDI. Can provide other events and also have key moment via YouTube, such as the plenary.

AP noted the SLS has not got rid of hybrid completely, people can apply and are allowed to present online in certain situations. Universities more likely to fund online due to travel cost, so we could increase the hybrid cost.

MB the EDI point is important, but the numbers of people signing up online does not indicate substantial demand.

RM advised we could have an online only stream, not hybrid, but zoom for that stream.

MHu proposed we should not have an “application” for people to be online, people should not need to justify their request.

AP noted there is a distinction between hybrid and online accessible. Should be some facility to allow people to present online, even if not advertised.

MB indicated that the Housing Studies Association (HSA)hold an online only event before the main event.

CM queried if that event would undermine ‘our business model’, on the basis that most of our yearly funds comes from the conference.

EJ questioned the figure provided by the Liverpool team, much greater for hybrid/much higher than other institutions.

MF noted the figure is on the basis of a high-quality hybrid experience.

JH summarised: agreement that we don’t want to continue hybrid, but that there are other options – a fully online conference or couple of sessions at the conference to allow for online presentations. Also encourage Liverpool to be flexible if people suddenly cannot present in person. The second is that the SLSA needs to move forward with more online events; proposed we go out to tender with this idea.

CM and BV made the point that the online provision needs to be clearly advertised so people are aware of it.

MT advised we need to be open about our decision to move away from full hybrid – we’ve been priced out of this.

**Action**: Liverpool team to review the cost and present a full costing for conference delivery

**Action**: September Board to consider our online offering, with input from EDI committee going forward on inclusive alternatives to full hybrid provision.

MF reported the Liverpool team want to bring the timeline for the conference earlier, including deadlines for abstracts and registration. Reason because Portsmouth and Derry team advised that earlier deadlines would be very helpful.

EM supported moving deadlines forward due to the panic of people registering after paper accepted. Requested close of online registration is earlier to allow checking of members.

MSe and BV raised the other aspects of the call – stream convenors and call for topics. This would need to be sent out very soon

MF acknowledged the internal Liverpool team were not entirely certain of process

SK noted that if we move earlier then need to be consistent for future years

CM noted some of the admin tasks in the Liverpool plan not needed due to Oxford abstracts

JH advised we split the difference. Bring earlier but not as early as the Liverpool team requested.

**Action**: MSe to include comms about moving the abstract submission date forward in the Summer newsletter

**Action**: MF to confirm revised dates via email – liaise with MSe and KM to incorporate stream convenor and stream topics

## 5.5. Fundraising Group (SK)

Discussed under 6.2.

## 5.6. AcSS CEOs and Chief Officers of Learned Societies Group Meeting (BC)

Report received. Nothing to add to report.

# 6. Officer Reports

## 6.1. Chair (JH)

JH confirmed he had submitted the report to the Charity Commission on 15 May. Noted that there are a number of policies we are required to have and don’t. John will bring group together to review our current policies.

**Action**: JH to bring group together to review policies.

**Action**: Board vote for AcSS Fellows.

JH noted a squeeze on university budgets and attendance at conferences not being seen as essential and thus not funded. Proposed SLSA responds: joint statement with SLS and ALT outlining that it is essential. Also noted the importance and availability of bursaries.

Board discussed ideas on how the SLSA should respond.

KM advised we provide clear messages to outline what attendance at SLSA will do to benefit institutions.

MT suggested working with the ALT and SLS to complete a mapping exercise to find out which universities are cutting funding. Could also see how many are covering membership. Survey HoDs and/or members.

SK proposed we need to address the notion of sending ECRs and not the mid- or senior-career academics, noting both shape the discipline, so important they can attend.

AJ advised that from the precarity survey results indicate members are paying their own fees.

**Action**: EJ to take ideas to ALT committee

**Action**: EM to add as item to September Board

**Action**: JH to take forward the letter

JH proposed a professional archivist is employed to help us archive our online and physical content. Full proposal and costings to come to September Board. Also noted we need an archive officer

RS volunteered to become Archive Officer.

**Action**: JH, MSe and EM to liaise with RS

**Action**: MSe to update the website with Archive Officer and EM to update internal SLSA documents

## 6.1.1. AcSS Council Nomination

Board voted to support Rosie Harding’s nomination to the AcSS Council.

**Action**: JH to submit nomination by the deadline

## 6.2. Vice-Chair (SK)

SK noted that there are a number of pending fundraising issues that will be progressed and reported to the Board in September.

## 6.3. Treasurer (PB)

PB reminded that Board that elected trustees need to send their change of signature documents to him.

**Action**: Elected trustees to send change of signature documents to PB

PB noted that we need to clarify the amount for the impact fund: Confirmed pot for impact is £7,500 (including £250 for the prize). If there is budgetary leeway, then we can make more awards.

## 6.4. Membership and Data Protection Officer (CM)

In future Board will consider if we should reduce the number of possible membership start dates (possibly to start of the month).

## 6.4.1. Updated privacy policy (EM)

For information – privacy policy updated via email in February.

## 6.5. Recruitment (RM)

Nothing to add to the report.

## 6.6. EDI Committee (BC/AJ)

AJ proposed it is worth adding a question to the survey about the value of online conference attendance.

JH also suggested including other EDI related questions: hybrid, access to funds.

**Action**: AW, BC and CM to consider the wording of EDI relevant questions to add to the survey

BC noted SLSA should find out by end of June if awarded AcSS EDI funding. Work will follow the outcome. Once have an outcome will need Board support to determine moving initiatives forwards, notably running mentoring separately to the precarity work coved in the bid.

JH congratulated and thanked EDI Committee members for their work on the bid.

## 6.7. Precarity Representative (AJ)

AJ reported has been looking at funding application forms and the voluntary disclosure of precarity status to support funding. Suggested we add precarity ring-fencing to that form.

Board agreed.

JH queried if we should we ask everyone about their employment status.

MB advised requiring declaration of employment may make people uncomfortable.

**Action**: MSe to publicise the precarity ring-fencing and the increased sums for grants in newsletter.

## 6.8. Newsletter and Web Editor (MSe)

MSe reported carbon footprint offsetting: Woodland Trust – quatre of an acre – roughly £250.

Board debated whether it was in the charitable aims – conclusion it was as we pay for the cost of our work.

**Action**: MSe to action payment to Woodland Trust and report back to the Board

MSe also queried the cost of the Hart insert on postage and if this is something we should continue as the funds from Hart have not changed despite increase in postage.

**Action**: MSe to work out the cost of the insert and see if Hart will increase the fee, report back to the Board

## 6.8.1. SLSA Sponsors and Supporters

Nothing to add to written report.

## 6.9. PGR Representative (LM/MSa)

MSa enquired if we should have an institutional Zoom. Board advised this was discussed last year and ruled out. The Board advised Google Meets or MS Teams.

JH expressed thanks of the Board to LM for all her work over the two years of service as she is now stepping down.

JH reported he would lead recruitment committee for PGR Representative.

## 6.10. Social Media (EG)

EM queried if SLSA should be on LinkedIn.

BV supported, particularly reaching out to professionals.

**Action**: EG and MSa to investigate if setting up a LinkedIn account is feasible

**Action**: EG to investigate X/Twitter premium

## 6.11. Blog Editor (EJ)

Nothing to add to written report.

## 6.12. YouTube Channel (TBC)

Nothing to add to written report.

## 6.13. Publishers’ Liaison (RS)

RS noted publishers need secure wifi access to allow payments at the conference.

**Action**: Liverpool team to ensure publishers have access to wifi

## 6.13.1. Book Prize nomination

Discussed under item 8.1.

## 6.14. Open Access (SF)

SF highlighted the open access requirement for books and consultation. SLSA wants to respond to the consultation. Requested assistance from the Board with response.

**Action**: Board to contact SF with information about how the changes will impact members.

## 6.15. Stream Secretary (BC)

Nothing to add to written report.

## 6.15.1. Stream Convenor Impact funding

Board agreed to incorporate the Stream Convenor Impact funding into the general impact fund.

## 6.16. Administrator (EM)

Nothing to add to written report.

# 7. Conferences

## 7.1. Postgraduate Conference (MM/LM)

SK leading the call for future PGR conference hosts. The panel will report to the Board in September once selection completed.

**Action**: SK to report to the Board once selection complete

## 7.2. One Day Conferences (JH)

Nothing for the Board on this item.

# 8. Prizes and Competitions

## 8.1. Book prizes (SK)

## 8.1.1. Review of rules for SLSA Prizes for Books and Articles

SK outlined proposed changes:

* First already approved – mandatory attendance to those short listed no longer required. Nominator and nominees will need to be members. Adding to this, all nominated authors need to be members, not just one of them.
* Second – amend the definition of ECR – current definition outdated and out of line with the sector. Proposed to adopt AHRC.
* Third – clarify PhD students are eligible to submit articles and books, but not the ECR book prize.
* Fourth – book prize currently has no requirement to justify why it is socio-legal (as with the article). Add this requirement.

Board approved all changes.

Board discussed publishers direct submission of book prize nominations, agreeing submissions will be restricted to publishers who have engaged with the SLSA over the past year. Board discussed how to implement the change. Agreed change would be implemented from 2025 and would be shared with publishers this year.

EM noted we cannot move to online submissions this year, but plan is for it to be a feature of the website upgrade.

**Action**: EM, SK and MSe update guidance prior to publication

**Action**: RS to produce guidance for publishers on engagement with the SLSA, reporting back to the Board. Once Board approved to share guidance with publishers

## 8.2. Article prizes (JH)

Nothing for the Board on this item.

## 8.3. Grants (RM)

## 8.3.1. Change award amounts

RM queried if the whole pot would increase if we are increasing the max amount of the grant.

PB suggest leaving the overall pots as they are and can be flexible depending on the applications received.

Board agreed to raise the max award for fieldwork (to £1,500) and research grants (to £3,000).

CM asked if max awards should be even higher, Board decided against. Will monitor the applications this year and review.

## 8.4. Seminars (SF)

Board to increase maximum amount awarded to £3,000.

Board agreed the closing date to change to closing date for grants.

**Action**: MSe to update guidance and website accordingly

## 8.5. Impact Fund Awards (MT)

Board agreed to raise impact maximum award to £3,000 – but not for the 2024 round.

Secretary note: from 2025 the Impact Fund Award dates will fall in line with the dates of other SLSA grants.

**Action**: MSe to update guidance and website accordingly

## 8.6. Contributions to the socio-legal community (JH)

Nothing for the Board on this item.

# 9. Future Board Meetings and their Format (EM)

Meetings will be arranged during the year, using Doodle Poll to ascertain dates.

**Action**: EM to organise next meeting and email the Board details

# 10. Any Other Business

None