



## *New Chair for the Society's Trustees*

In November 2023 Mrs Bridget Mustard was elected the new Chair of the Society's General Committee of Trustees (our "Board"). Bridget has been one of the Society's Trustees since 2020 and has chaired the subcommittee which looks at how the Society accepts beneficiaries and gives out grants. She replaces Ms Catriona Reynolds whose term as Chair came to an end in 2023.



*Mrs Bridget Mustard (in the pink coat) and Ms Catriona Reynolds (in the grey coat) outside the RSSWS offices.*

Bridget was appointed following an open recruitment process facilitated by professional recruitment consultants. She lives near Forres and worked for almost 30 years in Moray Council as a senior strategy manager, and where she was elected as a local Councillor in 2022. She has two Masters Degrees, most recently in Gender Studies from Stirling University, and volunteers with another Charity which focuses on disability access. She is originally from the USA, but moved to Scotland in 1989 to marry her husband who is a professional musician. Bridget has four adult children including her youngest who has complex additional support needs.

Bridget said "I am both delighted and honoured to have been elected as the Chair of such an important and well-regarded organisation as the Society and I look forward to playing my small part in its history for the next several years. I also want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Catriona Reynolds. Her contribution to the Society over the past 7 years has been immense including guiding the Society to its new role following the change to our Royal Charter. I am very conscious that Catriona's are very big shoes for me to try to fill!"

Catriona first joined the Society as a Trustee in 2011 (and her mother was involved before her). She was the first woman to be elected as Chair in the Society's 176-year history and she will continue to remain as a Trustee for a period to support Bridget as she takes up the reins.

## *We have moved...*

**(but not very far, not for very long and we aren't changing our contact details)!**

The planned refurbishment of the Society's offices (see below) has meant that we have had to find new, but temporary, offices. However, the best option proved to be still in Rutland Square, just across the road from our old office at Number 11!



Andrew, the Chief Executive, explained that “our phone numbers and email addresses have NOT changed, NOR will our correspondence address change (because the move will only be for a few months). In fact, while we have arranged for all mail to be redirected, we are so close to our old offices that we can see if the Postie goes to the wrong door and the builders will bring any mis-delivered post over to us! This means you CAN continue to use any pre-paid reply envelopes you may have for the Society if you are posting information to us.”

However, Andrew pointed out “please do NOT try to come and visit the Society's office UNLESS you have made an appointment beforehand to do so. We all work from home at times, so even when we are back in Number 14, there would be a real risk there wouldn't be anyone in the office if you don't phone first”.

## *Refurbishment of 14 Rutland Square*

The Society is very fortunate to own a Georgian townhouse in the West End of Edinburgh. It is a beautiful Grade A listed building which was built in 1830s and is part of the World Heritage site. The Society purchased the building in 1909 and has had its offices there ever since. However, it now needs a new roof and general improvements throughout to bring the offices up to modern standards.

For the past year, the Society has been working with architects and surveyors to explore how we might best improve the building and to get the consents to do so. We put the project out to tender and at the end of March, the Trustees confirmed that we will go ahead with the works as we hope the improvements should generate an additional £90,000 of income which will, in turn, allow us to support more beneficiaries.

## *Refurbishment of 14 Rutland Square (Cont.)*

The works will also involve the installation of a brand-new heat pump heating system. Despite all the recent headlines, heat pumps have been around for many years and have been proved to be both “green” and efficient so this change will allow the Society to reduce our costs, greatly reduce our carbon footprint and to make our offices more attractive to prospective tenants.

When the building works are completed (which should be towards the end of the year), the plans are for the Society to move back into the basement garden floor which we hope to share with other womens’ charities as a way that we can support their work.

While the Society is not moving very far, Andrew pointed out that “we have still had to go through the process of sorting through all our old records and deciding what we should keep, what we should store and what we no-longer need. The Society has been in the same offices for well over 100 years so you can imagine this has been a big job! My thanks in particular go to Sharon for doing so much of the admin and to Dermot for his help sorting through the archive”.



*Boxes, boxes everywhere!*

## *Starring role for Fiona, Nancy and Joyce on the Society’s new website*

In preparation for the new online application form, the Society has also updated our website. Included in this are short videos from three beneficiaries - Fiona, Nancy and Joyce – who very kindly agreed to share a little of their stories in the hope that this might encourage other women to apply for support.



## *Retirement of Linda, the Society's Caretaker*

Linda started working for the Society back in June 1999, but her connection with the Society and the property in Rutland Square goes back well before then as her parents had this job before her. Andrew said “Linda has been the unseen force ensuring that the offices ran smoothly and that, amongst many, many other things, Number 14 always had the best polished brasses in Rutland Square! We all owe her a huge debt of thanks and wish her all the very best for a long and very happy retirement!” Linda reached pension age and moved into her own flat last year, but she has continued to support us by cleaning the office until the refurbishments started.



## *Smooth Introduction of New Beacon CRM*

As we mentioned in last year's newsletter, the Society has been working towards using a new “Client Record Management” system (CRM) to safely and securely store all our records relating to applicants, beneficiaries and all the various grants payments that we make.

The new CRM system went “live” in September 2023 without any of the glitches that can sometimes affect new systems.

Andrew said “a huge amount of work went into the configuration and migration of data into this new system – much of it by Mr Graeme Whyte who is both a Trustee and provides our technical support – and without his help the change to the new system would not have been nearly as successful. My thanks also go to the whole Staff Team for their patience while learning how to use the new system, but hopefully all that is just a distant memory now!”



# *Smooth Introduction of New Beacon CRM (cont.)*

## **New online application form**

One of the benefits of the new system is that it allows us to offer an online application process. Andrew said “we hope that this will make it easier for women who need our support to apply. We will still need to visit them and make sure we understand their circumstances, but the first step is often the hardest and hopefully this streamlined, online process will help.” There is a link to the Society’s new online application form on our website ([www.rssws.org](http://www.rssws.org)), but the Society continues to offer a paper application form as we know not everyone is comfortable with online processes. The paper application form can be downloaded from our website, or people can phone us as we are very happy to post a copy.

## *New Trustees*

At the same time Bridget was appointed as the Society’s new Chair, we were also joined by two new Trustees:

### **Clair Bryan**

Clair has over twenty-five years leadership experience in the third sector having worked for Sight Scotland Veterans, the MS Society and, most recently, as Head of Volunteering for Marie Curie. Clair is currently a consultant supporting other charities and lives in Edinburgh.



### **James Calvert**

James works with Tesco Bank where he leads the team that support vulnerable customers and supports the Bank in developing its policies and practice. He comes from Paisley where he is treasurer of his local rugby club.

# Updating the Privacy Policy

The various changes to aspects of the way the Society works have prompted us to update our Privacy Policy. A copy of the updated policy is enclosed with this newsletter, but it is always kept under review and the most up to date version can be found on our website.



Andrew explained “Privacy Policies are very important, but I know they can be rather dry reading as they include a lot of legal details. Probably the most important thing is for you to know that we take great care in keeping your personal information private and that we will never share it with anyone unless you ask us to do so or unless we are required to do so by law (for example, in exceptional circumstances if we were to become significantly concerned about someone’s welfare).”

The Society only keeps records for as long as we need them, so we have also updated our Data Retention Policy and you can find a copy of this on our website. The only exception to this relates to the Society’s historic archive which includes information about women who were supported back in the 19th and early 20th century (who have all long since passed away) and which provides a rare glimpse into womens’ lives back then.

## New arrivals for the staff team!

### New Baby for Dermot!

Congratulations to Dermot and his wife Marie on the birth of their third child, Elis, pictured here with his “pleased as punch” big sister, Saoirse. Elis was born just before Christmas and his arrival meant that the Society had to write a Paternity Leave Policy for the first time in our 176 year history!



### Sharon becomes a Granny (again)

Congratulations also to Sharon (and her son Marc) on the birth of her third Grandson last month. Layton was born in March but unfortunately for Sharon, we don’t have Grandparent’s leave 😊 !



## Spotlight on Useful Services

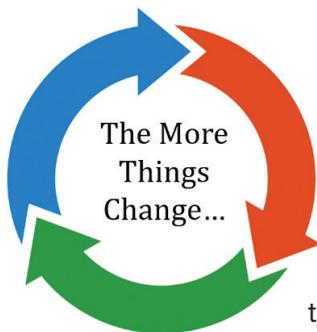
### Age Scotland Helpline 0800 12 44 222



The helpline provides a free, confidential phone service for older people, carers and families in Scotland, to help them cope with the new challenges and opportunities that come from getting older. Their skilled advisers provide information and advice on a range of topics from money matters and benefits entitlements, to social care, housing, energy and legal issues. They also provide friendship for when you just need a chat. It's free to call and available Monday-Friday, 9-5pm.

### Take the Take Five quiz to see if you are scam savvy

We all need to be aware of scams these days – indeed the Society's Staff have been going through training to reduce risks of "phishing" and other scams. Try the quiz at <https://quiz.takefive-stopfroud.org.uk> to see how you do but remember STOP - take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information – CHALLENGE - could it be fake, only criminals will try to rush or panic you – PROTECT - contact your bank immediately if you think you've been scammed and report it to Action Fraud on 0330 123 2040.



### ...the more they stay the same

Reading this edition of the Newsletter, you might get the impression that a lot is changing in the way the Society works. Andrew noted "it is the case that the Society is changing our offices, using new tools and exploring new partnerships BUT the core of what we are doing – giving direct financial support to women who need it – is not changing. The vast majority of the women we support have applied directly to us and we continue to make regular, reliable payments to them every month". As the French philosopher Alphonse Karr said in 1849 (two years after the Society was founded) "the more things change, the more they stay the same".

## Partnership Grants

The Society has started a pilot project working with several other women's charities to explore new ways for us to pay grants to women who need support. Andrew explained that "the Society has been working with the Women's Fund for Scotland, Women's Enterprise Scotland, local Women's Aid organisations and others to distribute our grants. These "partner organisations" will already be working with clients who meet the Society's criteria and who might benefit from our financial support. Often they will know these women very well and will be supporting them to overcome a whole range of challenges and a grant from the Society might make all the difference. In this pilot we will let these "partner organisations" nominate such a woman to be paid a grant by the Society".

The women will still need to meet all the Society's criteria for support, but it will be the partner organisation who confirms this, allowing the Society's caseworkers to focus on visiting and supporting the beneficiaries who apply directly to the Society. Andrew went on "our hope is that this pilot will allow a wider range of women to benefit from our grants. We should also be able to pay the grants more quickly and the fact that the Society's money will come alongside the support from the partner organisation may even increase the impact of both".

The pilot project is expected to run for approximately 3 years and will be evaluated as it progresses to see if this is a useful additional way of distributing grants to women in need.



## Contact Us...

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