Seasons Greetings

The SOPA Committee takes this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and best wishes for 2015.

Message from Chair Tom Berney

Our Assembly this year in the Scottish Parliament was a great success despite space and accommodation restrictions. The positive feedback from delegates, the press, TV and radio has raised our profile and convinced us to plan the 2015 Assembly there.

Devoting a day in the Parliament to older people, combined with the Scottish Government’s appointment of a Cabinet Secretary with Pensioners’ Rights, shows that the voice of older people is being taken seriously by government. SOPA will do what we can to ensure this continues. 200+ delegates from across Scotland, representing 40 older people’s organisations, attended. People were able to put questions directly to the Cabinet Secretary and the Convener of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and everyone took part in lively discussions in the six workshops.

One disappointment was not being able to finish with the cross-party panel of MSPs. Despite several pleas, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats were unable to produce a representative MSP, so this ruled out a panel finish. However, we appreciated the attendance of SNP and Labour members at our event.

It is important to emphasise that, although the Assembly is the culmination of a year of SOPA’s dealings with government and other officials, SOPA has involved hundreds of older people and their representatives in its consultation seminars around the country (see p10 of the 2014 Report).

It is important to state that the SOPA Committee is made up of people appointed from 24 leading organisations (see Report p.18). Attendance at the annual Assembly and at the regional seminars is open to all. We promote these events on our website, and groups also use their own local networks. Challenges lie ahead, but for now, best wishes for the festive season.

Tom Berney

Visit the SOPA website to read or download the 2014 annual report at www.scotopa.org.uk
SCOTTISH OLDER PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY

The SOPA Campaign Trail 2015

The process of visiting local groups around Scotland continues in 2015 with a number of dates in the pipeline. If your group would like to host a SOPA visit contact Glenda Watt (See P4).

Aberdeenshire, Turrif - 10 February
Angus: date tbc
Dalkeith: 28 January, 10.30 for 11.00
East Ayrshire, Kilmarnock: 25 February
Falkirk: 6 March
Glasgow: date tbc
North Ayrshire, Irvine: 5 February
Orkney, Kirkwall: 18 February
Renfrewshire: date tbc
West Lothian, Livingstone: 3 February

Regular updates and more details on the SOPA website at www.scotopa.org.uk/news.asp

SOPA Action Points for 2015

The topics below have emerged from the voices of people who attended SOPA events in the summer and the 200+ at the Assembly on 31st October. This demonstrates clearly the way SOPA operates by gathering opinion at grassroots level from actual experience in different towns and communities.

Communication and Information
Community Empowerment
Community Safety and Housing
Health and Social Care
Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters
Transport, Travel and Environment

For more details see pages 6 and 7 of the 2014 Report available at www.scotopa.org.uk/2014assembly.asp

Holyrood Conference: 2 February 2015

Holyrood Magazine’s 2015 Older People’s conference recognises the positive contribution older people make to Scotland. It will focus on how older people can be empowered and provided with the choice and opportunity to engage with Scotland’s communities in their own terms.

Speakers include -
• Dr Anne Hendry, National Clinical Lead for Integrated Care, Joint Improvement Team
• Tom Berney, Chair, Scottish Older People’s Assembly
• Penny Bond, Implementation and Improvement Support Team Leader, Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Register online at http://olderpeople.holyrood.com

Financial Crime in Scotland

STV is working on a series on the above topic. One area under investigation is financial crime against older people. We know from feedback at local SOPA meetings that some people are worried about becoming victims of financial crime - from family theft to malpractice in trades and professions.

If you have been cheated or misled or know someone who has, look out for this programme which hopes to offer sound advice based on experience.
SOPA Committee

The Committee met on 11 December to discuss the feedback from the Assembly and how it can best deal with the issues that have been raised. A strategy meeting is scheduled for 22 January to agree a way forward to deliver the action plan - see actions on pages 15-17 in the Report.

Recent changes to SOPA Committee
Vice Chair Replacement:

Because of Liz O’Neill’s early departure through ill health, SOPA requested a replacement from within the existing Committee. Alan Sidaway, representing the National Pensioners Convention Scotland, sought nomination. This appointment was approved by the Committee on 16 October.

Bill Johnston, acting chair of the Scottish Seniors Alliance, has been nominated to attend the Committee on its behalf.

Similarly, Tommy Brennan has been chosen by the Scottish Trades Union Council to be on the Committee.

What people think of SOPA

It is important to have an independent view of the effectiveness of SOPA’s efforts to engage with the older population. To this end the Employment Research Institute of Edinburgh Napier University has analysed the feedback forms which people were asked to complete at the local events and at the Assembly. The full results are at the end of the 2014 Report. Some of the key findings were:

- overwhelmingly people found the local meetings useful from the point of view of having an opportunity to discuss issues with others and receive information
- similarly people attending the Assembly liked meeting others from around Scotland and having their voices heard by MSPs and concerns raised in the Scottish Parliament itself
- people also wanted to be clearer about how matters would be progressed throughout the year and better information about SOPA’s current procedures and arrangements.

Older People’s Acute Care (OPAC)

The Improving Care for Older People in Acute Care team have created a number of short videos which highlight relevant issues for older people in Scotland’s hospitals. Click here to go to their video gallery.
International Connections

AGE Platform Europe is a European network of more than 150 organisations of and for people aged 50+, representing over 40 million older people in Europe. It seeks to give a voice to older and retired people in the EU policy debates, through the active participation of their representative organisations at EU, national, regional and local levels, and provides a European platform for the exchange of experience and best practices.

A new website for an age-friendly world has been launched by WHO. Learn about how an age-friendly world will look and how to unlock the longevity dividend. Website at www.agefriendlyworld.com

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Home Cooked Food made by neighbours for neighbours.

A new neighbourhood project is now up and running in Dundee. It identifies volunteers who love cooking and want to use their skill to benefit their communities. The recipients of the home-cooked food are older single or married people who would greatly appreciate a tasty dish delivered by someone locally. Often the cooks and diners get on so well they share the meal together.

Although it is early days, the hope is to expand the scheme to other places in Scotland. You can register as a potential volunteer cook at the Mealmakers website or contact project co-ordinator Emma Black. Also, if you know people who would appreciate a homemade meal, or someone who would be happy to cook an extra portion, get in touch. Even if you personally are not a keen cook, spread the word to your neighbours, friends and family and help this great idea to flourish and expand into your area. Have a look at the frequently asked questions (FAQs) to get a feel for exactly how the scheme works.

The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a collaborative way to promote concerns to the Scottish and Westminster Governments. The Assembly supports or challenges legislation and policies and their implementation which have a bearing on the quality of later life in Scotland.