

President's Review of the Year 2021/22

It is now almost exactly one year since I was elected President of the Society and I would like to begin my review by thanking the Council of the Society for their support, and for all the time that Council members give voluntarily to ensure the Society's continued success.

The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow has a long and illustrious history, and it is an honour and privilege for me to serve as its President. The Society is a charitable institution that exists for the public good, to communicate knowledge and understanding and promote discourse to all who are interested in the world around us. The essence of the Society is its membership, without which it would cease to exist. I would therefore like to thank members for making what we do possible.

The world around us is changing faster than ever. There is a thirst for knowledge about how this is taking place, what new ideas and creative endeavours are underway, what the various sciences are revealing, the challenges we face and how new thoughts, perspectives and opinions are developing. In our 220th annual lecture series, which will draw to a close in early April, we have covered a wide range of topics relating to major issues such as climate change, the ongoing pandemic, disease, eugenics, artificial intelligence, gender, diversity, memory, music and societies past and present. I hope you have enjoyed all of this.

The Society has of course faced a number of recent challenges. During the 21/22 session we have been able to provide hybrid lectures from our new venue at the University of Glasgow, and we thank the University for making this available to us. Getting the sound and visuals right for the home and virtual audience is not easy, despite the sophisticated technology, but we are edging towards getting this to work well. For this we are extremely grateful for the support provided by IT technician Nikolaos Lazidis. I would like to thank members for supporting us with this, and for continuing to provide the informed and robust questions for speakers that are an important feature of our lectures.

But, however good the technology, there is nothing to replace the feeling of fellowship and engagement that comes from being together in person. We are hopeful that our large, live audience will return. We already have an impressive list of speakers lined up for next year including names you will recognise such as William Dalrymple, Helena Kennedy and Alastair Campbell, plus experts on topics such as human geography, vision, new materials, and a look into the dark universe.

We are planning new ways to increase fellowship amongst our members. Beginning next week, we will again have the convivial glass of wine available after the live lecture. We are also planning a new newsletter. We recently had our first member outing to visit a sister Society in York organised by the Society's Secretary Tony Burton, which went extremely well. We plan to offer more member trips in the next session. We will have the traditional members' soiree in September hosted in the Scottish Opera rehearsal space; there will be the opportunity to see the various activities there plus a short musical recital. A short film about the Society and its history will be shown at the soiree for the first time, following which it will be used for promotional purposes. We plan to update the constitution of the Society and the Council structure to improve the functioning of the Society, and are also

considering having our lectures start at 7pm instead of 7.30pm. We are exploring new ways of promoting the Society and increasing its membership.

We welcome members thoughts on all of these matters. Please do help us continue the work of the Society and encourage others to join us.

Pat Monaghan, 23 March 2022