

# ACADEMY of SOCIAL SCIENCES

**Minutes, 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 18 June 2025**  
**4.00pm-5.15pm on zoom**

**Attendees:**

Michaela Benson FAcSS	Lisa Jack FAcSS
Richard Black FAcSS	Helen Lambert FAcSS
Janet Boddy FAcSS	Megan Lawson
Jeffrey Braithwaite FAcSS	Hualou Long FAcSS
Woody Caan FAcSS	Clare Loughlin-Chow
Paul James Cardwell FAcSS	Chris Millward FAcSS
Paul Carmichael FAcSS	Jemina Napier FAcSS
Tao Cheng FAcSS	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala HonFAcSS
Cary Cooper HonFAcSS	Heather Rolfe FAcSS
Hartley Dean FAcSS	Phillipp Schofield FAcSS
Bobby Duffy FAcSS	Hyun Bang Shin FAcSS
Bethan Evans FAcSS	Rich Smith FAcSS
Rita Gardner FAcSS	Kathy Sylva FAcSS
Pervez Ghauri FAcSS	Caroline Tagg
Nigel Gilbert FAcSS	Shlomo Tarba FAcSS
Gitanjali N Gill FAcSS	Lynda Taylor FAcSS
Roger Goodman FAcSS	Einar Thorsen FAcSS
Eileen Green FAcSS	Allen Thurston FAcSS
Kathryn Haynes FAcSS	Jackie Wahba FAcSS
Katherine Hodgson	Antje Wiener FAcSS
Will Hutton FAcSS (Chair)	Nicola Yeates FAcSS

**In attendance:**

Annie Hogan – Membership and Database Manager, AcSS

Sarah Jones – Director of Operations, AcSS

## **1. Welcome by the President as chair of the AGM**

WH welcomed everyone to the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Academy.

## **2. Welcome to new Fellows**

WH reported that in 2024 the Academy welcomed 86 new Fellows to the Academy from across the breadth of the social sciences and from academic and professional practitioner backgrounds. At the AGM the Academy particularly welcomed those who had joined the meeting and were elected in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025.

## **3. Welcome to Honorary Fellows**

WH was also delighted to welcome the Academy's first group of Honorary Fellows. The newly established category of Honorary Fellowship has been introduced to recognise a small number of outstanding leading figures, nationally and internationally, who have a strong affinity with the social sciences and who, for the most part, are not eligible to be elected as Fellows.

The guidance states that Honorary Fellows will have contributed signally to the advancement of the Academy and/or to its purpose of the promotion of the social sciences in one or more of the following ways:

- As persons of academic or practitioner distinction in fields other than social science and whose work has a bearing on the social sciences or who publicly champion the social sciences;
- As leading figures or philanthropists who have done distinguished work in or with a bearing on the social sciences, or who have otherwise advanced the Academy's cause.
- As leading social scientists who have given sustained and outstanding service to the Academy, for example in roles such as Academy Chair or President

WH conferred Honorary Fellowship on the following, in alphabetical order:

- **Dr Gerald Chan** in recognition of his philanthropic and international contributions to advances in both STEM and Social Sciences.

Who was sadly unable to join.

- **Professor Sir Cary Cooper CBE FAcSS** in recognition of his outstanding service to the Academy and to the social sciences in a long and distinguished career.

Cary responded to express how delighted he was to receive the honour and reflected back fondly on his time as Chair of the Academy, sharing some wonderful anecdotes and noting the importance of the social sciences in the challenges facing the world today.

- **Dame Carolyn McCall DBE** in recognition of the substantial and publicly recognised contributions across private business, industry, government and learned societies.

Who was sadly unable to join.

- **Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** in recognition of her positive change in the world and empowerment of girls and young women to aim high and to reach their potential.

Ngozi expressed what a surprise and honour it was to receive such a special recognition. Sharing how she had loved social sciences all her life and what value those within the Academy have to share at such a difficult time in the world.

#### 4. Formal business of the AGM

##### **Approval of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2024**

The minutes of the AGM 2024 were accepted by those Fellows in attendance.

## **Report from the President, Will Hutton FAcSS**

- WH began by saying what a pleasure, as President, it was to open the report on the Academy's activities in 2024 to promote the social sciences in the UK for the public benefit.
- 2024 was a year marked by much contextual change with elections taking place in more than 60 countries around the world and new government administrations taking office, both in the UK and overseas.
- 2024 also marked the first year of activity in the Academy's new 2024-2029 strategy and the mid-point of WH's presidency.
- With so much change taking place this past year and an increasing number of complex challenges for society to face, the value of the social sciences cannot be overstated. Notably, in their understanding and insight into socio-economic, geopolitical, education and environmental issues; their innovation in identifying and developing solutions to real-world problems and to working alongside STEM disciplines to help realise the benefits of advances in science and technology to society; and the positive contributions they make to policy focused on providing better outcomes for citizens.
- The Academy's work in 2024 served to highlight this value of social science understandings and research, and to encourage a greater recognition of it – to those working in policy and the civil service more generally, to the wider public, and to others beyond the social science sector.
- Five well-received reports were published throughout the year, underpinning our advocacy work, enhancing our visibility, engaging the media, strengthening relationships and drawing on our Fellows' research.
- The Academy's public-facing 'We Society' podcasts, which WH has the pleasure of hosting, continued to go from strength to strength, inviting a range of expert guests to discuss the latest research and evidence on topical issues, further demonstrating how the social sciences contribute positively to all of our lives. It reached the number 1 spot on Apple pod charts for science and social science once again.
- 2024 also saw the start of a new Academy project aimed at enhancing peoples' lives through the use of evidence in policy. The project concerns the evidence

infrastructure and processes in Whitehall, and 2024 saw the completion of the research and information gathering phase of the project.

- The groundwork was laid for a new careers project which aims to showcase the many varied and rewarding careers that studying social science can lead to.
- Reflecting back on the past three years as President, WH said he was heartened by the progress that the Academy has made in such a short space of time. Whether embarking on new projects and initiatives to further promote the social sciences, raising our profile with existing and new audiences, and strengthening our networks and influence in order to be a strong collective voice on behalf of the social science community, we have worked collaboratively with our communities.
- WH ended by warmly thanking everyone involved for their support of the Academy in so many ways. It could not function without the support of its members, partner organisations, those who serve on our Council and committees, those who donate to and sponsor our work, and our hard-working staff team.

### **Report from the Chief Executive, Dr Rita Gardner FAcSS**

- RG opened her report by saying 2024 marked the Academy of Social Sciences' 25th anniversary year. How fitting it therefore was to introduce a new category of Fellowship through the Honorary Fellows. The foundations of the Academy exist in its member learned societies, Fellows and purpose. 25 years on they are stronger and more vibrant than ever and continue to underpin our work and much of our strength as an organisation.
- Today, 48 member societies provide a vital disciplinary complement to the Academy's social science sector remit and, alongside the Academy's Fellows, a large and powerful network of social science expertise. They are a vital part of the HE ecosystem.
- In 2024 the Academy and member societies worked together effectively in targeted advocacy, in furthering EDI in the sector (in partnership with ESRC (UKRI)), and in sharing knowledge and building capacity across the learned societies.
- The Fellows are the lifeblood of the Academy in a different and complementary way. All are nominated and assessed for Fellowship – RG extended her thanks

to the Nominations Committee, and the two search committees - and all are leading experts in their fields and ambassadors for social science and the Academy. The Academy drew widely upon this amazing knowledge resource across all aspects of our work in 2024, including the new policy briefings published by the Academy's International Advisory Group.

- Noting that its purpose continues to drive the Academy as seen in the new strategy published in 2024. Championing the social sciences first and foremost for public benefit. The Academy is inclusive in so doing; and sees itself as here for the whole community. A tall order for a very modestly sized organisation, but that is the ethos.
- There is much to champion. Around 47% of university students in the UK graduate with a social sciences degree, and four social science disciplines are among the ten most studied subjects at A Level in England and Wales. Most companies could not exist without the services of social sciences professions, including law and accountancy, and much more besides. The public sector employs many thousands of social scientists as specialists in analysis, policy, evidence, and evaluation, unsurprisingly as governments face challenges in economic productivity, health, social welfare, regeneration of places and regions, sustainability, roll out of new technologies and in the provision and use of data. In terms of business, social science expertise fuels much of the services sector, which generated 80% of the UK's economic output in 2024.
- Highlighting the two data reports published in 2024; on research funding and on inclusion (EDI) in the social sciences. As the first demonstrates, social science research receives just 10% of the total research funding pot in the UK, a remarkably consistent proportion over the past ten years. At the same time some 75% of the Government's self-identified research questions to inform policy and practice are wholly or partly in the realm of social science. There is a structural funding gap in the social sciences.
- Moreover, the social sciences, and in particular business management and economics Masters' programmes, contributed disproportionately to the financial wellbeing of many HE institutions, bridging the funding gap until the current academic year.
- Despite those successes, and in the face of the current financial pressures on higher education, the need for effective championing of the social sciences, to

promote their research insights, contributions to society, education and skills, and to public, business and third sectors, is as strong now as it was when the Academy was formed. Social scientists are everywhere, but nowhere as visible as STEM. It is a strategic priority for the Academy to address the issues around perception.

- The Academy's work to enhance the use of evidence in policy, including social science evidence, to benefit people, received a major boost in 2024. New funding allowed commencement of a major research project on the evidence infrastructure, processes and mindsets in Whitehall. Last year an international comparator study, and substantial objective research and evidence gathering, including more than 70 interviews was carried out, which was needed to underpin recommendations and further consultation in 2025. Thanks to Jonathan Breckon and Stephen Meek.
- The work to promote the health of social sciences focused on the set up for REF 2029, paving the way for the learned societies to be involved from the start. In 2025 we are ramping up this work and our associated advocacy given the challenges in the HE sector and the emerging impacts on the 'health' of the social sciences.
- Finally, the Academy embarked on three significant internal projects in 2024 to enhance our operations and future capabilities. That is, a new data management system; restructuring our financial reporting to enhance accountability and clarity; and a significant uplift in sustained communications work to engage wider and larger audiences with social science and to develop our core messaging.

RG ended by saying that 2024 was a very productive year and how incredibly proud of the hard work, innovation and dedication shown by the small, committed staff team in 2024 (7.25 FTE) - and appreciative of the huge support, collaboration and contributions from our Fellows, member social science societies, Campaign supporters, major donors, trustees and other committee members. It's a great team and RG warmly thanked everyone.

### **Report from the Chair of the Campaign, Prof Bobby Duffy**

BD opened by saying how pleased he was to report on the Campaign's work as chair of the Campaign Board.

Throughout 2024, the Academy has continued to champion the social sciences in the UK. The Campaign for Social Science has worked to showcase the contribution of social science research and practice to addressing key challenges and opportunities facing the UK and the wider world, so that 'what' the social sciences contribute to society is better understood, valued and used.

- BD began by saying that 2024 had been a very busy and dynamic year for the Campaign, a year that has also featured increased cross-working with the Academy's policy and communications functions, including significant work on projects such as developing key messages.
- The snap election in the summer of 2024 offered a valuable opportunity to showcase the Campaign Hub 'Election 24: ideas for change based on social science evidence'. Launched in September 2023, the Campaign's Election 24 programme concluded when the UK General Election was called in May 2024. Between January and May 34 new comment pieces were published and 6 events took place under the project's banner. Each comment piece offered constructive evidence-based policy recommendations and positive ideas for change across all the main election issues. Topics ranged from widely across many of the areas that featured in the UK government's five missions.
- As well as generating plenty of new content through the Election 24 project, the Campaign published two policy and research reports : *Reimagining the Recipe for Research & Innovation: the secret sauce of social science* and *Beyond The Ballot*. The latter drew on the Election 24 project and the former explored the symbiosis between STEM and social science research. They generated considerable interest and press coverage.
- In 2024 The Campaign had a full events programme across the UK and online, working with Campaign sponsors and Fellows. They ranged from webinars on welfare, AI, climate change, and housing to in-person events on equality in the northeast (with Newcastle University) and policy priorities in Wales (with University of Swansea) as part of the election 24 project. Additional standalone events included a webinar on transport, an event with the University of Exeter, which focused on resilience in rural communities, a webinar on policing, and the Campaign also co-badged an event with University of Stirling as part of the

ESRC Festival of Social Science. The topic for this was an exploration of UK politics post-election.

To end the year the Campaign collaborated with University of Essex on an event exploring how social science is helping society to navigate its way through the digital age; and with the UK Evaluation Society and the Social Research Association on a webinar exploring the evaluation of AI usage.

- The Campaign also collaborated once again with its lead sponsor, Sage and The Conversation on 3 more events in the *Social Science Perspectives* series.
- The Campaigns Annual Sage Lecture was delivered in November by Dr Hannah White, Director and CEO of the Institute for Government, who explored what the future might hold for the UK against a backdrop of a changing geopolitical landscape following a year of elections.
- Support for the Campaign, primarily from research strong universities, remained high with a net increase in university supporters bringing the total to 36. All pre-existing supporters also continued their sponsorship. I warmly thank them all.

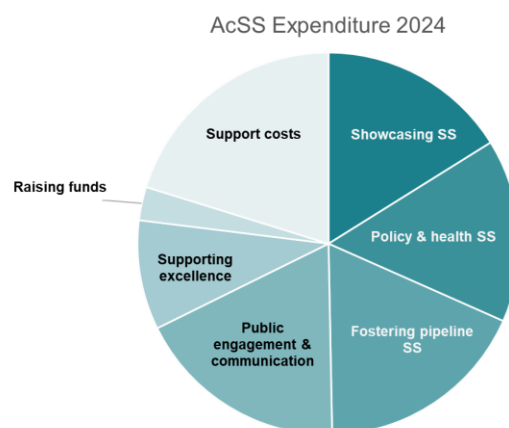
BD warmly thanked:

- The Campaign staff team for their hard work and commitment in developing and delivering the Campaign's work.
- SAGE Publishing, our lead commercial sponsor, for their generous support and warm encouragement; in particular Katie Metzler who manages the sponsorship for SAGE.
- The colleagues on the Campaign Board, for their expertise, energy and practical advice throughout the year.
- And the very many people who have contributed to Campaign activities and events.

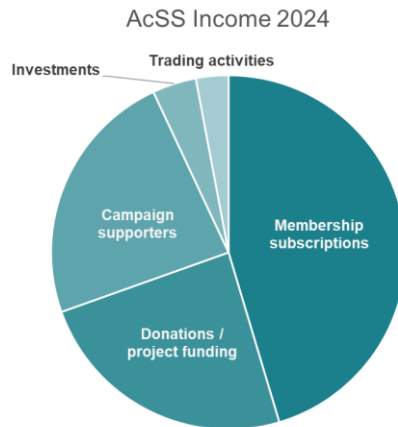
### **Report from the Honorary Treasurer, Prof Judith Philips FAcSS**

- JP opened by saying it was her pleasure to present the financial overview for 2024 as Honorary Treasurer
- The top line for 2024 was that the Academy, once again, ended the year in sound financial shape, with a modest operating surplus on the year, thanks to the contributions of all those who support our work and to sound cost management.

- In 2024 the issue of inflation remaining higher than hoped and the increasingly difficult financial circumstances in many UK universities presented the main financial risks to the Academy.
- Overall income (£774,945) exceeded expenditure (£728,208). Some of that surplus represents restricted project income that is to be spent down in 2025
- The unrestricted, core operating funds returned a surplus of £15,011. Core income rose from £374k in 2023 to £392k in 2024, which reflects a modest increase in Fellowship subscriptions (below CPI rates) and increased income from investments.
- Incoming restricted funds were £382k (up from £328k in 2023), which is represented by Campaign supporter sponsorships, grant funding from the ESRC for the EDI partnership project and grant funding to support the Embedding Social Science project.
- The statutory accounts are reported against our charitable objectives, which we hope you will agree increases our transparency and accountability to those who fund us including our Fellows.
- The expenditure split by objective shows a broad proportional balance across the five key objectives, from showcasing social science to supporting excellence in social science.



- The Academy's total income sources are currently c. 45% from subscriptions of Fellows and Learned Societies; roughly 25% from Campaign supporters and 30% from project funding, investments and trading activities.



- At the end of 2024, the balance sheet stood at £709,568 (2023: £654,134). Of which, restricted funds comprised £408,288 (2023: £367,865). Most of the restricted funds relate to the Campaign for Social Science (£243,703) reserves; the remainder to income received on grants and donations for specific projects that is budgeted to be spent in subsequent years.
- The unrestricted general fund reserves stood at £286,269 (2023: £258k). This is the totality of the unrestricted money the Academy can fall back on should an unforeseen emergency arise. This level of reserves meets the requirements of our reserves policy and facilitates some modest investment to pump prime new initiatives in our strategy 2024-2029.
- In summary, with prudent management and a strong and growing supporter base the Academy's finances in 2024 were resilient. This is a healthy and prudent position to end the year on, especially given the financial challenges facing universities that have become increasingly apparent in 2025 and the fact that the majority of the Academy's funding is linked to university sources and academic Fellows.

JP commented, as her term ended as a trustee and Honorary Treasurer, that she had greatly enjoyed her time on Council and the senior team provide exemplary leadership. A great time to be part of a new strategy and to work with a great team of people.

### **Report from the Honorary Secretary, Prof Richard Black FAcSS**

RB noted his congratulations to the HonFACSS and gave his first report as Honorary Secretary.

### Matters of governance:

- In 2024, the Academy very sadly lost a valuable and well-respected member of the Council, when Prof Tony Crook passed away. Although Tony had just completed his term on Council, he had contributed in so many ways to the Academy in a period of significant change. He will be missed by many in the community.
- The Academy welcomed **five new elected trustees:**
  - **Professor Linda Bauld FAcSS** (Bruce and John Usher Chair of Public Health in The Usher Institute at the University of Edinburgh and Chief Social Policy Advisor to the Scottish government)
  - **Professor Simin Davoudi FAcSS** (Professor of Environmental Policy and Planning at Newcastle University)
  - **Tricia Dodd MBE** (an independent statistical and research consultant with a background in social and official statistics)
  - **Professor Christopher Millward FAcSS** (Professor of Practice in Education Policy within the School of Education, University of Birmingham)
  - **Dr Utsa Mukherjee** (a Senior Lecturer in Education at Brunel University London)
- That left six positions falling vacant on the Academy's Council, three under the Fellows constitution and two under the Learned Societies constitution, and 11 people have put themselves forward for election; plus one appointed position. The results of the election were announced under item 5.
- There were no changes made to the Academy's governing documents.
- RG confirmed that all our governance meetings during the year were quorate and that all the statutory required documentation for the Charity Commission, for Companies' House and for HMRC, was completed and submitted on time.

### Matters of Fellowship

- At the close of 2024 the Academy membership comprised 1662 Fellows and 48 member social science societies. The Academy welcomed 86 new Fellows during 2024 from across academia and the public and private sectors, conferred for their eminence, impact and wider contributions to social science.

Fellowship retention was 93%. Learned Society membership retention was 100%

RB thanked everyone for the outstanding contributions and being part of the organisation.

## 5. Q&A

Further information was requested about the Whitehall project (Embedding Social Science Infrastructure) and RG & BD explained that the project seeks to explore infrastructure within Whitehall related to evidence and influence of processes. There are 3 main elements to the project:

- 1) Consultation phase, which included interviews with current and former civil servants and a desk-based mapping exercise carried out by Stephen Meek and Jonathan Breckon which has led to a series of recommendations (currently at draft stage and being shared with critical friends).
- 2) To be able to guide the academic community around how best to get your voice heard
- 3) An international comparison study

The aim of the project is to go beyond the 'how to get policy translation to work' and provide a useful set of recommendations for the ecosystem as a whole.

Following that, there was also a discussion regarding overseas scholars at risk and how the social sciences community may be best place to be effective. Noting that there are some excellent organisations already well established, such as the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA), the Academy with limited staff and financial capacity, and individual Fellows and academics would be best placed and supporting and amplifying their work.

## 6. Adoption of Directors' Report and Accounts 2024

The 2024 Directors' Report Accounts were adopted.

## 7. Trustee changes 2025

The AGM marked the last official business for the following trustees: Stephen Aldridge, Tim Allen, Eileen Green, Judith Phillips, Sally Power and Tony McEnery, with their terms ending at this AGM.

All have made significant contributions to the Academy and have helped to drive a period of development and growth during the term. Warm thanks went to all.

- Stephen Aldridge has brought much sage advice to the Council from his background as a senior civil servant, as well as to the Academy's Nominations Committee.
- Tim Allen has always been a strong voice for the discipline of Anthropology when his many overseas commitments allowed him to attend meetings.
- Eileen Green has been a dependable and strong advocate of the Academy, serving on Council and on the Audit and Risk Committee for six years.
- Tony McEnery who has given tremendous service as trustee and as Chair of the Audit & Risk committee for six years, Chair of the EDI Grants Review Panel, a member of the Nominations Committee, partner to the Academy's Social Science in a Time of Change project and overall supporter.
- Judith Phillips has given the Academy staunch support as a trusted advisor, trustee and most recently as Honorary Treasurer.
- Sally Power, who joined the Council through the learned societies constituency helped to give the Academy increased presence in Wales.

It is set out in the Academy's governing documents that senior (named) trustee roles are appointed from within the Council, and in practice the Executive Committee make recommendations of such appointments to the Council. With the position of Honorary Treasurer coming vacant at this meeting, the Council approved in May that the position be appointed once the outcome of the current elections were known.

With that, WH was delighted to announce the outcome of the recent elections to Council.

Under the learned societies constituency, 5 people stood for election to two vacant positions and WH was pleased to announce the following have been elected:

- Dr Megan Lawson - UK Research and Innovation's Science and Technology Facilities Council (UK Evaluation Society)
- Prof Jackline Wahba FAcSS – University of Southampton (Royal Economic Society)

Under the Fellows constituency, 6 Fellows stood for election to three vacant positions and WH was pleased to announce that the following have been elected:

- Professor Janet Boddy FAcSS - Professor of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Sussex
- Dr Heather Rolfe FAcSS - Director of Research, British Future
- Professor Nick Vaughan-Williams FAcSS - Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham

All bring a high level of expertise in their respective disciplines and engagement with the wider social sciences community, and we very much look forward to working with them. WH thanked all the Fellows who stood for election and were very pleased to see the high levels of interest and engagement. The Academy was delighted that Janet, Megan and Jackline were able to join the AGM.

## **8. AOB**

There was no other business.

WH closed the meeting commenting that the Academy is in a good position to drive forward the second year of its five-year strategy. As an organisation it remains vital and well run; with the ongoing support of its Fellows and member learned societies.