



Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

Annual General Meeting, June 2012

Director's Report

When SCoJeC was established during the run-up to Devolution, it was intended to have the same relationship to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Executive (as it then was), Scottish churches and other faiths, the Scottish media, Scottish Trades Unions, and other organs of Scottish civic society, as the Board of Deputies does at the UK level. That alone indicates the scale of the task we set ourselves: the relative sizes of the communities make no difference to the range of issues that we have to address, from education to *shechitah*, community safety to marriage registration. The Board has an annual turn-over of well over a million pounds and a staff of more than a dozen; we have only recently been able to afford even one full-time and one very part-time member of staff. Yet we have been phenomenally successful year after year, achieving significant legislative change, influencing public opinion, speaking out for the Community, reaching people with no prior connection with the Community, and holding exciting and innovative events in parts of Scotland that no other Jewish organisation has ever reached.

There have been a number of highlights of the year, which Hilary has already mentioned in her report; the day-to-day work may not be as glamorous, but it is just as important, whether it is answering the amazing range of enquiries from Jewish visitors to Scotland, public bodies looking for information, or members of the community seeking help or advice, or just been seen to be fully engaged with Scottish civic and political processes. We are sometimes asked why we don't share this around more; the answer would be obvious to anyone who sees a Government minister rush across a room to embrace Leah. It's not just being there, but being seen to be there, and that level of recognition, and therefore access, depends on the same people being seen at meetings, conferences, and even just sitting in the Garden Lobby.

That is only one of the reasons why Leah will be so sorely missed when she goes on *aliyah* in the autumn. For almost nine years she has been on our front line, almost literally 24/6! It is Leah who answers these enquiries, monitors the Scottish and UK media and parliamentary activity, drafts our responses to Government consultations, edits *Four Corners*, arranges meetings, updates our increasingly popular website, and much much more. It is a huge relief to us that she will be able carry on working for us as our Research and Publications officer, in particular continue to produce our hugely successful publications: the weekly MEMO for those interested in minority communities, the daily Political Affairs Bulletin for Jewish communal organisations, and our own quarterly *Four Corners*. We wish her every success and personal fulfilment in all her future endeavours.

For the other aspects of Leah's work, we are very hopeful of making a really first class appointment to the part-time post of Public Affairs Officer, although that exercise has served to reinforce how much we have relied on Leah's commitment – and voluntary overtime! We are also exceptionally fortunate that the *Being Jewish in Scotland* project brought Fiona Frank into our stable. One of the findings of the project is the need for her skill in devising and delivering innovative events in locations that may never have seen a Jewish activity before, in order to provide connections and support for isolated and vulnerable Jewish people. We are grateful also to Rabbi Garry Wayland and the Student Chaplaincy Board for their collaborative working to build stronger links between Jewish students and their local communities. I do hope that funders will be generous in helping us meet the increasing need for all this work, both internal and external.

Ephraim Borowski, Director