



Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

Report of the Chair **AGM, June 2013**

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) was established at the time of Devolution fourteen years ago, when the leaders of the various Jewish communities in Scotland agreed on the need for a single representative body that could speak to the Scottish Government and other Scotland-wide public bodies with a single, authoritative voice, since making separate representations left them to choose who to listen to.

The Council is made up of representatives of the main communities (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Tayside and Fife) plus the informal Jewish Network of the Highlands and Islands, Jewish Students and Chaplaincy, and 6 members co-opted for their experience in various walks of life. The community representatives are appointed by each of the communities itself, and the Glasgow representatives are appointed by the Representative Council.

Much of SCoJeC's work takes place behind the scenes, and is undertaken in a voluntary capacity by our Director, Ephraim Borowski, who meets regularly with Government ministers, officials, MSPs and others, and attends a variety of meetings and briefings, ensuring that the interests of Jewish people in Scotland are always taken into account. However, these duties are becoming increasingly onerous, and a review of staffing, and therefore of how to finance it, is increasingly urgent.

Much of our work continues to be funded by the Scottish Government's Equality Fund, which supports the production of MEMO, a weekly digest of matters of interest to Scotland's minority communities, and our own Outreach activities. MEMO is circulated by BEMIS to almost 1000 people and read on our website by around 3500 people each week. We have employed Fiona Frank as our Outreach Worker, and she has arranged events from Dumfriesshire to the Shetlands, including a very successful 6-venue musical tour by the group *Klezmatize*. We have also taken the point made to us by the Rep Council that there is a need for outreach in the cities too, so have included events in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as seconding Fiona to assist with the Glasgow Community Futures project.

We were also awarded funds from "Adopt an Intern", which enabled us to employ Shani Zour and Conrad Cohen to assist with some of this work. Both have been extremely successful, and thanks to Shani we are now setting up a network and arranging events for Israelis in Scotland, and are starting to post relevant material on our website in Ivrit.

Last August SCoJeC was awarded £10,000 from the Voluntary Action Fund to implement some of the findings of the *Being Jewish in Scotland* project, which highlighted a need for support for isolated Jewish individuals and many older Jewish people around Scotland who live far from their children and grandchildren. Our project, called "Inter-Links", was also supported by the Clarkston Trust and the Jewish Youth Fund (Scotland), and aimed to enable people to link more easily with their families and friends using communication technology.

Last November SCoJeC wrote to the Church of Scotland, formally protesting at the Church's sponsorship of and participation in a conference to mark the 95th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, at which Rev Stephen Sizer was the "keynote" speaker. Sizer, a Church of England Minister, has repeatedly associated himself with Holocaust denial, right wing extremism, and anti-semitism and he has been condemned publicly by the Council of Christians and Jews for "conduct unbecoming of a clergyman".

Also in November SCoJeC issued a statement commenting on the fact that there are markedly more motions in the Scottish Parliament relating to Israel than to any other country in the world.

In December Creative Scotland awarded a £50,000 grant to a SCoJeC-sponsored documentary photography project by Judah Passow, to record and celebrate Jewish life in Scotland. Since then, SCoJeC outreach worker Fiona Frank has been arranging opportunities for Judah to meet and photograph people and events, including as far afield as the Shetlands.

In February a delegation from the Jewish Community including SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski met Mike Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education, in the Minister's office in the Scottish Parliament. The other members of the delegation were Paul Morron, Vice-President of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, and Nicola Livingston, Chair of Scottish Jewish Student Chaplaincy, both of whom are members of the SCoJeC executive. The meeting was arranged primarily to discuss concerns about the atmosphere of intimidation at Edinburgh University that had led to Jewish students terminating their studies early or not taking up offered places, and the inadequacy and insensitivity of the university's response, and the University's failure to take adequate steps to protect the rights of Jewish students.

In April, SCoJeC protested strongly to the Church of Scotland about the report on "The Inheritance of Abraham?", proposed by the Church and Society Council for discussion at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Council of Christians and Jews then facilitated a useful meeting, which was also attended by Walter Sneader, a former President of the Rep Council, as well as leading members of the UK community. The Church acknowledged that the drafting of the report had given cause for concern and misunderstanding of its position and required to be amended to set the context for the report and give clarity about some of the language used.

Following some revisions made by the Church of Scotland, SCoJeC and the Board of Deputies issued a statement prior to the General Assembly, acknowledging the valuable dialogue that had taken place. This had resulted in some welcome comments in the revised document regarding the rights of the State of Israel, but grave concerns were expressed about the lack of balance in the document's approach to the Middle East conflict. The joint statement went on to say that because we value our relationship with the Church, we remain fully committed to continuing dialogue, and look forward to an improved understanding that will enable us to work together on issues that are of concern to both of our communities. It was therefore hoped that, rather than adopting the report, the General Assembly would refer it back in order to permit a serious and sustained dialogue that will bring our communities together rather than driving us apart.

Despite this plea the Church of Scotland approved the report and so a further statement was issued by SCoJeC deeply regretting this approval. It was stated that although the revisions made to the report before the Assembly did remove some of the polemic, the revised version is still tendentious, and sadly contributes to a climate in which Jewish people in Scotland tell us they feel uncomfortable, alienated, and unsafe. It was felt that the Church of Scotland had deliberately and knowingly burnt the bridges with the Jewish Community in Scotland as the General Assembly was made aware of our concerns, yet voted explicitly to reject a call for continuing dialogue. It will not be easy to rebuild these bridges now that the Church has openly rejected working towards an understanding that will bring our communities together, rather than, as the this report has done, driving us further apart.

During the year, SCoJeC has submitted responses to a wide range of consultations on matters affecting the Community including "Implementation in Scotland of EU Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing", "Welfare Reform", "Equality Outcomes", "Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill", "Reshaping Care for Older People: The Contribution of Faith Communities". We have received praise from all sectors of the community for our concern to ensure that all views are properly represented in responses, especially when the subject is controversial and potentially divisive, such as same-sex marriage. All these responses can be accessed on our website at <http://www.scojec.org/consultations/consultations.html>.

SCoJeC continues to have an active involvement with inter-community organisations such as Bemis, the ethnic minority organisation in Scotland, of which Ephraim was re-elected Convener, and Interfaith Scotland.

SCoJeC's website (www.scojec.org) continues to be the first point of contact with the Jewish community for government and other officials, visitors, ex-pats, and others. Traffic on the site continues to grow, with the monthly average of hits up from 46,453 in 2012 to 53,510 so far this year.

We have continued to publish our award-winning newsletter, Four Corners (<http://www.scojec.org/4cs/4cs.html>). We also act as umbrella for the whole community for a number of legal purposes, such as child protection checks under the "Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme", confirming the bona fides of Jewish marriage celebrants from abroad after discussion with the relevant local branch of Judaism, and sponsoring visa applications for visitors to the community.

A huge amount of work is achieved by Ephraim Borowski, our Director, and by Leah Granat, our Research and Publications Officer, and I would like to thank them, my fellow members of the SCoJeC Executive and the Council, for all their efforts on behalf of our organisation and the Scottish Jewish Community.

**Hilary Rifkind
Chair**



Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

Director's Report **AGM, 9th June 2013**

This past year has probably been both the most successful and the most difficult since SCoJeC was established some 14 years ago.

The success of our Scottish Government funded *Being Jewish in Scotland* project, on which we reported to last year's AGM, has led to further success in raising funds both within the Community and externally to meet some of the needs identified by that study, such as the isolation of older people from their families, the absence of any network for the hundreds of Israelis in Scotland, and the unlimited desire of people in all parts of Scotland for more Jewish events. The original purpose of the project was simply to provide both the Scottish Government and ourselves with a better picture of the Community, but that has both helped us identify needs – i.e. made more work for ourselves – and enabled us to provide funding bodies with evidence to support our applications for their support.

However, the more successful we are with that kind of activity, the more strain it puts on our very limited resources. We have benefitted greatly from the voluntary help of Michael Wilson with preparing our grant applications, and are very grateful to him for all his assistance. We are also very lucky still to have the services of Fiona Frank, who combines the skills required to conduct the original research with boundless enthusiasm for organising events in parts of Scotland most of us have barely heard of – and then leading the dancing herself! This year we have also successfully picked up the challenge of outreach in the cities as well as remote parts of Scotland, and have been glad to collaborate with the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, particularly by seconding our interns to assist with their Community Futures project. It remains true that whatever we do, and wherever we do it, we find new Jewish people who had no previous connection with the Community.

Meanwhile, our external affairs brief has not become any lighter. We have had meetings and correspondence with several Ministers, MSPs, and officials. Topics have included the right of Jewish students to hold events on campus without intimidation, the perennial problem of SQA exams on Shavuot, aspects of community safety including the effect on individuals of obsessive and hyperbolic attacks on Jewish people for daring to identify with Israel, potential threats to shechitah, census related matters and the negative effect of greater localism on small minorities, the threat from the proposed new death certification procedure to speedy burial, and so forth. Another positive outcome of the *Being Jewish in Scotland* project was that we were invited to give a presentation on the findings to civil servants, and were able to emphasise concerns that had been expressed to us about health, education, and welfare, in particular.

This, however, has been more difficult since Leah went on aliyah. She continues as our Research and Publications officer, producing the various daily and weekly digests of information for which we receive funding from the Scottish Government Equality Fund, the

JLC, and the Board of Deputies, as well as editing *Four Corners*, maintaining our extremely popular website, and, thanks to the miracle of the internet, answering the office phone! But obviously she is not able to share the burden of meeting and networking, and that has put us under considerable strain. Some of this is difficult to share further because the success of networking depends on being recognised.

At the same time, the Executive and Council have been undertaking a review of priorities and strategy (see minute of March Council meeting). The consensus is that we are by and large doing the right things in the right way, but until the review is concluded we do not feel able to commit ourselves to employing permanent staff – and even then we will not be able to do so without greater security of funding.

I have been very impressed by the ability of a number of projects that we are supporting to raise large sums of money: the Genealogy Project from the Rothschild Foundation, and the Photography Project from Creative Scotland and private donors, but it has to be said that, however valuable in themselves, these are not central to our work. We have to hope that the generous individuals who have contributed to preserving a snapshot of our community at one point in time will also be prepared to contribute to preserving the community itself.

I commented last year that our agenda is not proportional to the size of the community. With a few exceptions we face the same issues as the Board of Deputies, but they have a budget of over a million pounds and a staff of more than a dozen; we have a core budget of around £50 000, and no full-time staff. Almost everything we do is dependent in whole or in part on the generosity and dedication of volunteers, whether they are giving their services as members of our Executive and Council, or working longer hours than we are able to pay for, or giving us the benefit of their experience and expertise. Without them all we would not be able to achieve half of what we do, so to all of them, I, and we – both SCoJeC as an organisation and the Jewish Community of Scotland that we serve – our unqualified thanks.

As *Pirkei Avot* says, “The time is short, the task is huge, the workers are lazy, the reward is great, and the master is demanding. ... You are not obliged to finish the task, but you are not free to desist from it.” Fortunately our workers are not lazy, and unfortunately there is no material reward, but there is increasingly too much to do, not enough time or resources to do it, and increasing urgency, so it is ever more difficult to desist.

Ephraim Borowski
Director



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Appendix: **Activities since last AGM**

Consultation Responses submitted since the last AGM

Note that copies of all of these responses, and of responses submitted in previous years, are available on SCoJeC's website at <http://www.scojec.org/consultations/consultations.html>

Reshaping Care for Older People: The Contribution of Faith Communities (*Faith in Older People*)

Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill (*Scottish Government*)

Equality Outcomes (*Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service*)

Welfare Reform (*Voluntary Action Fund*)

The Way Ahead: Consultation on Savings Options (*North Lanarkshire Council*)

Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee Call for Written Evidence (*Scottish Parliament*)

Implementation in Scotland of EU Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing (*Scottish Government*)

Events since the last AGM

July 2012

Being Jewish on Skye and Jura

http://www.scojec.org/news/2012/12vii_bjis_skye/bjis.html

August 2012

Being Jewish in Orkney and Shetland

http://www.scojec.org/news/2012/12viii_bjis_shetland/bjis.html

February 2013

Purim party in Lochaline

http://www.scojec.org/news/2013/13ii_purim/purim.html

March 2013

Author event in Oban

http://www.scojec.org/news/2013/13iii_oban/oban.html

April 2013

Klezmatize ceilidhs in Dunoon, Inverness, Findhorn, Glasgow, Maybole, and Dundee

http://www.scojec.org/news/2013/13iv_klezmatize/kezmatize.html

April 2013

"Israelis in Scotland" Yom Ha'Atzmaut event

http://www.scojec.org/news/2013/13iv_ya/ya.html and

http://www.scojec.org/news/2013/13iv_ya/ya_ivrit.html

Meetings, Briefings, Conferences etc attended since the last AGM

Regular meetings

Scottish Government consultation: Death certification, burials and cremation

Scottish Government Community Safety Unit

Strathclyde Police Lay Advisory Group

Central Police Diversity Advisory Group

Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice

Scottish Joint Committee on Religious and Moral Education

BEMIS

Interfaith Scotland (formerly Scottish Inter-Faith Council)

Faith in Communities Scotland

Board of Deputies:

Plenary meetings

Regional Council and Assembly

Defence and Group Relations Division

Community Issues Division

Executive Committee

Antisemitism Coordinating Committee (Jewish Leadership Council)

There have been no meetings this year with the Church of Scotland (Church and Society Council) or with the STUC.

Occasional and one-off meetings, seminars and conferences

Scottish Government:

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning: Michael Russell

Minister for External Affairs and International Development: Humza Yousaf

Lord Advocate: Frank Mulholland

Scottish Government equality network seminar (as speakers)

Various MSPs to discuss matters of concern to the community

Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Human Rights

Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Race Equality

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Service

Church and Society Council (facilitated by CCJ)

CST telephone briefings on antisemitic incident statistics

Edinburgh University: conference on "Edinburgh Jews" (as speakers)

Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice Equality and Diversity seminar (as speaker)

National Holocaust Memorial Day

Disclosure Scotland

Scottish Refugee Council

Voluntary Action Fund seminars

Scottish Catholic Media Office

Education Scotland

Holocaust Education Trust Parliamentary reception

Denis Canavan discussions about St Andrew's Day

Show Racism the Red Card conference



Scottish Council of
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Outreach Projects Report

AGM, 9th June 2013

The year has been busy and stimulating. Last summer we completed the work on the *Being Jewish in Scotland* project and reported to the Scottish Government. I was then offered the opportunity of continuing a role within SCoJeC, following up issues which had come out of *Being Jewish in Scotland*. Our first success was to receive funding for the *Jewish Interlinks* project, meeting the dual need of helping older people communicate with their children and grandchildren living outwith Scotland, and helping Jewish students around Scotland connect with their local Jewish communities. This pilot project involved 6 students and young people from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee who received training at ACE IT, Edinburgh, and then worked with older people in their own homes and in residential care to help them use the internet.

Another issue which came up during *Being Jewish in Scotland* was people around Scotland wanting better communications links including an online bulletin board and opportunities to access online learning. We have just learned that we were successful in an bid to the Lottery *Investing in Ideas* programme for financial support for an online bulletin board which includes funding for an 'online outreach worker' as well as technical support to set up and maintain the board.

We have presented information about the *BJIS* inquiry to civil servants in the Scottish Government, the Equalities Officer in Shetland, Limmud, the Scottish Oral History Centre at the University of Strathclyde, Tayside and Fife Jewish Community, Edinburgh University Jewish Studies Centre, and to local groups in Orkney, Oban, and Inverness.

Now assisted by a Volunteer Local Ambassador, Linda Martin, we have organised events in Skye, Orkney, Shetland, Aberdeen, Pitlochry, Inverness, Lochgilphead, Oban, Lochaline, Maybole, Findhorn, Dundee, Glasgow, Dunoon, and Dalbeattie. These have included films and discussions, a six stop Klezmer dance tour, a talk by a Jewish writer, Jewish art talks and gallery openings, a Purim party, and 'meet the artist' sessions with Miriam Margolyes, who met members of the Aberdeen and Inverness Jewish communities, talked about her work, and gave a personal performance, when she was touring in Scotland with her show 'Dickens' Women'. We have supported the Tayside and Fife community in publicising their Israeli dance series, and Sharon and Susan Levy in promoting their Oxfam-BoD *Grow Tazmiach* "Roots Kitchen" survey. The most unusual event we were involved with was meeting up with a group of rabbis who were cycling from Lands End to John o'Groats! At each event I led a discussion with local Jewish people and was able to find out about local issues and concerns.

I was seconded for a total of 30 days to Glasgow Jewish Representative Council to carry out a consultation exercise for the 'Glasgow Jewish Community Futures' programme. I worked with two interns, Shani Zour and Conrad Cohen, for whom we received funding from the Adopt an Intern programme and the Youth Fund (Scotland). Shani worked with Israelis and young people and Conrad worked with Jewish school students alongside Glasgow's youth workers. After this project we have continued to work with Israelis across Scotland, supporting Israelis in Scotland to hold a buffet and Israeli dance afternoon to celebrate Israel's independence day.

To supplement *Four Corners* I have produced a series of E-newsletters this year to promote our activities and spread information about other activities of interest.

Plans for 2013-14

We are awaiting final confirmation before we can start to run the new on line communications project (which has potential for partnership work with the new BOD small communities project). Again we will be planning events for Chanukah, Purim, and Tu b'shvat, continuing work with Israelis, and delivering a general cultural programme around the country. We will respond to invitations, interest in various areas and visiting speakers when they are 'on tour', but also plan to be proactive as follows:

Voluntary Action Fund has published a call for interest in funding for a project to support and recruit volunteers. We will hear next week whether we have received a small grant to support volunteers in our constituent organisations including assistance with recruiting new volunteers, mentoring existing ones, and a substantial contribution for provision of training for volunteers at all levels within the partner organisations, from training at Chair and Board level to practical training for events organisers, minute takers and book keepers. If this bid is not successful, there is a possibility of submitting a bid for a larger 'cluster grant' in partnership with five of our constituent organisations which would provide the same kind of support for larger numbers, if there is interest in this type of support.

There is growing interest in Jewish book groups across Scotland and Linda Martin, our volunteer local ambassador, is very interested in setting up some 'virtual book discussions'.

We have been contacted by some 'new' people in Stirling – both American Jewish women married to Scots! We plan to hold a small gathering there to decide about going forward with additional activity in the area.

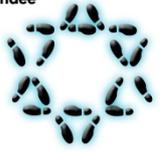
As we were not able to include Edinburgh and Aberdeen in our 'six stop Klezmer tour' in April we hope to rectify this over the next months.

We are hoping to encourage independent cinemas around the country to put on Jewish films around which we will be able to hang discussion events with our trademark kosher buffets. We are getting considerable help with this from Marc David Jacobs and Mirella Yandoli from the Edinburgh Filmhouse.

We are awaiting news of funding for a possible national roll-out of our *Interlinks* project and for continuing work with Scottish Israelis. Both of these projects will allow us to recruit temporary workers for a one- or two-year period.

In Shetland I had a most useful meeting with the Equalities Officer, and Ephraim who was recently in Orkney had a most interesting email exchange with the local Equalities Officer postholder there. At each event around the country, as well as linking with local Jewish people, I will be taking the opportunity to meet the local member of the Scottish Equalities Network and other front-line staff to discuss the findings of the *Being Jewish in Scotland* inquiry and see how it has relevance to their work.

And finally: Conrad Cohen, our e-learning and Research intern, happens to be a great graphic artist...

<p>SCoJeC, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, presents a talk on:</p> <h2>Being Jewish in Scotland</h2>  <p>A talk and question and answer session by Ephraim Borowski, Director of SCoJeC</p> <p>Orkney Library and Archive 44 Junction Road, Kirkwall Orkney KW15 1AG Tel: 01856 873166</p> <p>6pm Thursday 30th May 2013</p> <p>For more information contact Fiona Frank (Outreach Worker) by phone: 07779-206-522 or by email: fiona@scojec.org</p>  <p><small>SCoJeC is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation no. SC029438</small></p>	<p>TAYSIDE AND FIFE JEWISH COMMUNITY</p> <h2>Israeli Dance Classes</h2> <p>Boogie away and get healthy through dancing!</p> <p>Two Thursdays a month at the Synagogue Hall 9 St Mary Place, Dundee</p> <p>From 7pm till 9pm</p> <p>May: 16th & 30th June: 13th & 27th July: 11th & 25th August: 15th & 29th September: 12th & 26th</p>  <p>Suggested donation £4 (£2 concessions) per session</p> <p>Further information from tel: 0000-000-0000 email: xxx@x.xcom</p> 	<p>MUSIC! DANCING!</p>  <h2>Klezmatize</h2> <p>Erinno Sliman - Clarinet John Sikorski - Accordion</p>  <p>Free - All welcome A collection will be taken to help cover expenses</p> <p>Further information from Fiona Frank email: fiona@scojec.org tel: 07779-206522</p> <p>Also at 6pm Kosher buffet, discussion and 'meet the band'</p> <p>A Klezmer concert and dance with Jewish roots and Scottish soul. Come on your own, come with a partner, come ready to listen or ready to dance!</p> <p>7:30pm Thur 11th April Gordon Cockburn Gallery, 41 High St, Maybole KA19 7AD</p> <p>Sponsored by SCoJeC (Scottish Council of Jewish Communities) www.scojec.org</p> <p><small>Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation no. SC029438</small></p>
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**Fiona Frank
Projects and Outreach Worker**