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About SCOLAG:
The purposes of the Group are to increase understanding of the law and legal services, and work to improve the legal system for the benefit of those people in Scotland who are economically, socially, or otherwise disadvantaged. It is a registered charity funded by membership subscription.

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Editorial Comment

Charity Changes a Backward Step

Recent changes to the rules of charity incorporation appear a backward step. According to the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) the change in how to establish a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) is to offer the clarity of a single procedure, but that clarity seems of little benefit to anyone other than OSCR while setting a burden of work and even larger obstacles as disincentives to established charities changing their status.

Currently any small charity incorporated before 2011 will be a company limited by guarantee and face the burden of double regulation. Changes, annual reports and accounts must be filed with Companies House, and also with OSCR. Yet, since 2011, new charities can decide to incorporate as a SCIO, regulated by and reporting only to OSCR. And, until the end of last year it was possible for an established charitable company to 'convert' to a SCIO.

Now, however, any small charity seeking to save the cost and burden of double reporting will not be able to convert its status. Instead OSCR's changes mean that the charity must first wind itself up and then set up a new separate body as a SCIO. Importantly, the new SCIO will not be able to carry the same name as the previous limited company. That is major disincentive: requiring changes to bank accounts, contracts, leases, stationery, publicity materials, publications, web sites and, moreover, potentially losing a charity future bequests if legacies have been left to it in its previous name.

The removal of the option to convert from a company to a SCIO is a retrograde step hampering the development of the SCIO and burdening small charities unnecessarily.

Two Notes of Thanks

Pressure of space in our pages too often means having to leave some issues unaddressed, points unmade, and things unsaid but this month their importance demands the time and space to note much deserved thanks to two long standing contributors to the Scottish Legal Action Group and *SCOLAG Legal Journal*.

First, we note belated thanks to Robert Sutherland, who stepped down from the board of directors last year. After joining the board in 1998, Robert fulfilled various roles, finally serving as the Convenor of the Group for over twelve years. He has also contributed articles and updates to this journal over the years. In addition to a busy practice at the Scottish bar, Robert continues to write, and we hope to include the occasional article from him in future.

Second, we wish to thank Brian Dempsey for his long service as book reviews editor. Brian has coordinated the reviews pages of *SCOLAG Legal Journal* for over seventeen years. First as editor of this journal and then as reviews editor, Brian has been persuading publishers, placing review copies and chasing reviewers in order to keep a broader readership aware of a wide range of socio-legal literature. His stepping down from that role, will result in a hiatus in our published reviews over coming months. Thankfully, however, Brian will continue to be an active contributor to the journal, most notably with a quarterly update of legislation, case law, policy and research on family law (the next due in our April edition).

Would you like to participate?

The purpose of the Scottish Legal Action Group (SCOLAG) is to explain and improve the law and legal services, particularly for the more disadvantaged members of society. The group publishes *SCOLAG Legal Journal*, holds meetings and seminars, makes representations and participates in consultations on legal and policy matters.

Its directors currently meet once a quarter in Edinburgh and in the intervening months by online video conferencing. They welcome academics, lawyers and others who are interested getting involved either by joining the Board or volunteering with the Group.

If you would be interested in assisting and participating in the work of the Group please contact Eamon Keane, convenor: Scottish Legal Action Group, The SSC Library, 11 Parliament Square, Edinburgh EH1 1RF; convenor@scolag.org.