



“The Object of the Society is to promote, for the public benefit, education, study and research (and publication of the useful results of such research) in the field of construction law and related subjects both in the United Kingdom and overseas.”

CHAIR’S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

I was elected as Chair of the Society in June 2024, alongside fellow officers Jessica Tresham (Vice-Chair), David Falkenstern (Treasurer) and Andrea Stauber (Secretary). I am delighted to present my report to the membership at the Society’s 2025 AGM. In this Report, I will cover: Membership (Section 2); Conferences and Learning Events (Section 3); the Hudson Prize (Section 4); the Journal (Section 5); University Liaison and Grants (Section 6); Social Events (Section 7); Astra (Section 8); Governance and Financial Strategy (Section 9); IT and Social Media (Section 10); Ethics, Equality and Diversity (Section 11).

I am very proud of the work that has been done this year by the Society and the opportunity provided to be in touch with all those involved in it. I particularly enjoyed attending and speaking at events organized by our regional teams in Cambridge, Manchester, Dublin, Birmingham, Leeds and London, as well as attending and presenting at the annual European Society of Construction Law Congress in Antwerp last October.

The work of the Society is very much a group effort, and sincere thanks are therefore due to all of Council, our Regional Coordinators and our Astra coordinators, all of whom are unpaid volunteers who generously give their time and energy to the Society. A list of these worthy

individuals is set out in the Annex. Thanks are also due to the Society's Consultants and other service providers who have worked for and supported the Society this year.

2. MEMBERSHIP

At the time of writing, the Society has 2,939 members, which is broadly consistent with the number of members reported by my predecessor in his report last year (2,956). Of the 2,939, 2,380 are based either in the UK or in Ireland, and 559 are based outside the UK and Ireland. There are a further 443 academics who have access to the Society's database of papers.

The autorenewal and bulk renewal processes for membership introduced successfully in 2024 have been retained, and a number of small improvements have been made to them to address certain teething issues that were identified with these new systems.

3. CONFERENCES AND LEARNING EVENTS

At its heart, the Society is a learning organisation. Over the past year, a vast array of high-quality events have taken place all across the UK and in Ireland.

In London, there have been seven lectures in the National Liberal Club, including, notably:

- Two Hudson Prize winning presentations (by Will Haslam, winner of the 2023 competition, and by the joint winners of the 2024 competition, Prof. Renato Nazzini KC and Aleksander Godhe);
- Dr David Sawtell presenting the results of his PhD research, for which he was a recipient of the Frances Paterson scholarship; and
- A presentation by Richard Millett KC, lead counsel to the Grenfell Inquiry, followed by a panel discussion on 'Lessons from Grenfell'.

Also in London, there have been:

- Two so far in a series of events on the subject of AI and Construction, which are being organised jointly with TeCSA, TECBAR, the Society of Computers and Law, KCL and the TCC;

- A joint event with the CIArb on dispute resolution in Asia;
- The launch of a Report on ESG in Construction Law by the UCL Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction based on a survey of our members; and
- A number of Astra events, which I will comment on in Section 8 below.

Outside of London, conferences have taken place in the Leeds, Dublin and the South West regions. Further talks, debates and presentations have taken place in the Birmingham, Eastern, Ireland, Kent, Leeds, Manchester, Northern Ireland, Surrey/Sussex and Wales regions, with the busiest regions being Birmingham and Ireland, thanks to the energetic teams in those areas.

The popular quarterly case law reviews, organised by Jessica Neuberger and Louise Forster, have continued this year. These meetings are exclusively online, in contrast to the events mentioned above, which have been largely but not exclusively in person only. Council is aware that there is a significant appetite for more online content, in particular from our London events. Ongoing efforts are being made to locate alternative venues to the National Liberal Club, at reasonable cost, with suitable equipment to allow quality recordings to be made. I hope that these efforts will come to fruition in the near future.

4. THE HUDSON PRIZE

Chairing the Hudson Prize, the Society’s annual essay writing competition, was taken over ably by Michael Levenstein this year. The competition itself also had something of a revamp, with prize monies and publicity on social media increased, resulting in a bumper crop of quality entries. The winners of the 2024 competition were:

- First Prize: “Internationalising Adjudication: Towards an Incremental and Polycentric Harmonisation” – Professor Renato Nazzini KC and Aleksander Godhe;
- Highly Commended: “The ‘Insolvent Contributor’ Problem: Considering the Apportionment of Liability in Construction Cases” – Caitlin Moore;
- Commended: “ESG Risks in Construction Law: adding teeth to the Governance of Construction Supply Chains” - Dr Armando Castro) and Dr Mohamad El Daouk; and
- Commended: “A Risky Business?: The Building Safety Act in the First Tier Tribunal” – Nia Moseley-Roberts.

5. THE JOURNAL

One of the Society's new initiatives this year has been the creation of the Society's Journal. It is issued quarterly, in an electronic format only, each edition containing three to four papers. This formalisation of the publication of the Society's papers has resulted in an increase in the number of them being published: 13 have been published in the past year compared to six in the previous year, as listed below:

SCL Journal: Spring 2025

- "Internationalising Adjudication: Towards an Incremental and Polycentric Harmonisation" - Professor Renato Nazzini KC and Aleksander Godhe;
- "The 'Insolvent Contributor' Problem: Considering the Apportionment of Liability in Construction Cases" - Caitlin Moore;
- "ESG Risks in Construction Law: Adding Teeth to the Governance of Construction Supply Chains" - Dr Armando Castro and Dr Mohamad El Daouk;
- "A Risky Business? The Building Safety Act in the First Tier Tribunal" - Nia Moseley-Roberts.

SCL Journal: Winter 2025

- "Has The Time Come for An Irish TCC?" - Gavin Wilson;
- "What will the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive mean for the Construction Industry across the Island of Ireland?" - Ciara Keegan;
- "Contractualising Climate Change: Challenges, Solutions and Opportunities" - Anne-Marie Friel.

SCL Journal: Autumn 2024

- "EPCM Contracting: The New IChemE Blue Book" - Paul Buckingham KC, Vanessa Medina and Robert Colvin;
- "Void but Still Binding – Can Unenforceable or Void Liquidated Damages Cap a Claim for General Damages?" - David Inns and Derek Yixin;
- "Why Big Projects Fail: Lessons for Construction Professionals" - James Hooper.

SCL Journal: Summer 2024

- "The Lesser of Two Evils? Comparative Analysis of how Common Law Jurisdictions Approach Accrual of Causes of Action in Negligence Post-Pirelli" - William Haslam;
- "Enforcing Mediation and ADR Agreements in International Construction Contracts: Transnational Principles and Comparative Perspectives" - Shouyu Chong;

- “What if Construction can Change? How a ‘Green Thread’ of environmental responsibility may help to address legal liability issues associated with reuse” - Mariya Rankin.

Given the number of papers being produced in recent years on the important subject of sustainability, we have also added this as a new search term in the papers database and tagged all relevant papers appropriately.

Council has also recognized that despite the extensive and high-quality collection of nearly 500 papers published and held by the Society, they are not well known or widely cited by academics. In our April 2025 Council meeting, it was decided that those with current academic access to the papers database would be given the option to receive the Journal, and that we would contact universities where the Journal may be of interest, to offer to add a nominated point of contact to receive it at each institution. It is hoped that this will improve awareness of the Society’s work, and our cooperation with universities.

I am grateful to the Society’s Papers Editor, Joanna Howard, and our IT Consultant, Edward Peters, for all their work in helping to produce the SCL Journal.

6. UNIVERSITY LIAISON AND GRANTS

The Society continues to support and liaise with universities involved in the teaching and research of construction law. Grants were made in the past year to the following universities: Ulster; King’s College London; Anglia Ruskin; Portsmouth; Robert Gordon and Cardiff. Further monies were paid out under existing Frances Paterson Scholarships to students in Liverpool and Bristol, and a new scholarship was granted to a student from King’s College London. It is hoped that all students in receipt of the Frances Paterson Scholarship will, once their Ph.Ds are complete, present the findings of their research to the Society.

7. SOCIAL EVENTS

The SCL Lunches remain an ever-popular feature of our members’ calendars, as an excellent opportunity to network. This year eight lunches have taken place, including the inaugural event in Cambridge, and the second run of Birmingham:

- In Glasgow on 2 May 2025;
- In Birmingham on 4 April 2025;
- In London on 7 February 2025;
- In Dublin on 22 November 2024;
- In Bristol on 18 October 2024;
- In Leeds on 6 September 2024;
- In Cambridge on 3 July 2024; and
- In Manchester on 7 June 2024.

The success of our social events is largely down to the excellent team of coordinators in those regions, but also due to the work of the Social Subcommittee on Council, led by Chris Sunderland, and including Katherine Butler, Murray Armes and Jessica Neuberger, supporting all the regions. The SCL Administrators, Jill Ward and Frances Whitehead, are also an essential part of the social team.

8. ASTRA

This year saw the addition of two designated Astra Members to Council, following the 2024 changes to the Society's Constitution: Lucy Pearson and Lizzie Barry were elected last year. Lucy and Lizzie have been working with Andrea Stauber and Michael Levenstein on Council, as well as David Coyne, Chris Kent, James Frampton and Alexcia Ossei-Williams on the Astra Subcommittee, on a significant range of Astra initiatives this past year. The addition of these designated seats on Council has demonstrably been a success. Astra events in the past year include:

- Five seminars, held in person in London and online;
- The Summer Boat Party in July 2024; and
- The return of the Astra International Conference, which was held in October 2024 in Milan, Italy.

Team Astra has also spent considerable time working on the rejuvenation and establishment of Astra subcommittee members in the regions outside of London. The new regional teams were

recently put in place and are listed in the Annex to this report. I hope this means that we will see Astra events outside London during the next year.

9. GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL STRATEGY

There are ongoing efforts to modernise the organization and governance of the Society. Last year, considerable time was spent working on the contracts for our Consultants, including with external advisors, to ensure they are up to date. Work has continued this year in relation to the updating of our GDPR and privacy policies, and in relation to health and safety. Huge thanks are due to my Vice-Chair, Jessica Tresham, for her work in this area.

A decision was taken by Council this year – to be ratified at the AGM – to change the Society’s auditors from RSM UK Audit LLP to Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited. There were no issues with the work done for the Society by RSM (who have been auditing the Society’s accounts for at least the past decade), but the increasing size of their organization meant that their audit work was becoming increasingly expensive. It was also agreed that it would be beneficial from a governance perspective to have new auditors in place to review the Society’s accounts.

A Finance Subcommittee was established this year for the first time, comprising of our Treasurer, David Falkenstern, my Vice-Chair, Jessica Tresham, and Council Member, Matthew Taylor. Work has been done to update Council financial reporting and budgeting processes. Now that this framework is in place, more work is now needed to determine the Society’s future financial strategy, in terms of investment and use of the Society’s funds. A number of ideas and projects are currently under discussion by Council.

10. IT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The IT and Social Media subcommittee (Andrea Stauber, Lizzie Barry and Lucy Pearson) have worked together with our IT Consultant, Edward Peters, this year on a number of IT initiatives including software updates and other website changes to improve our email system, communications and membership application processes. An ongoing review of the website is in progress to identify where updates and corrections may be required; it is hoped that this will be implemented before the end of the year.

The Society's email consultant, Simon Hogg, stood down last year, and this function has since been covered by Edward Peters as part of his IT Consultant role. We are very grateful for the many years of support that Simon provided to the Society, including when email was a relatively new and unfamiliar form of communication!

On social media, we have started using Canva software to produce more professional looking event flyers. A decision was also taken to use the SCL website, email system and LinkedIn account for event promotion only; the SCL Twitter (now X) account is no longer in use.

11. ETHICS, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Society is committed to making its events and other offerings inclusive and accessible, and our platform diverse. We continue to monitor voluntarily provided and anonymized diversity data about our members and speakers. The Society also endeavours to avoid organizing events that would clash with any major religious holidays; I am grateful to past-Chair, Jonathan Pawlowski, and past-Astra subcommittee member, Karim Mariey, for their kind advice in this area.

After Council discussion, the Society's historic practice of awarding wine or champagne as part of the Hudson Prize or a thank you for papers has been discontinued, not just because it was no longer seen as the best use of the Society's funds, but also because it was not an inclusive approach for those members, contributors of papers or competition entrants who do not drink alcohol. As I noted above, the cash prizes for the Hudson Competition have increased this year, more than commensurately with the lack of champagne.

The SCL Mentoring Scheme, organized by Andrea Stauder, was successfully run last year and is running again this year. Feedback has been consistently positive from both the mentors and mentees, across the professions that make up the Society's membership.

Rebecca Shorter
Chair, SCL
7 May 2025

ANNEX: List of President, Officers, Council Members, Regional Coordinators, and Astra Regional Coordinators for the year 2024 / 2025

PRESIDENT: The Right Honourable Lord Justice Coulson

OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL

Chair - Rebecca Shorter
Vice-Chair - Jessica Tresham
Secretary - Andrea Stauber
Treasurer - David Falkenstern

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Murray Armes
Amy Armitage
Lizzie Barry
Katherine Butler
Arran Dowling Hussey
David Falkenstern
Louise Forster
Sean Gibbs
Sue Kim
Michael Levenstein
Jessica Neuberger
Lucy Pearson
Rebecca Shorter
Andrea Stauber
Chris Sunderland
Matthew Taylor
Jessica Tresham
Khaleda Wheeler (co-opted)

REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

Birmingham: Mike Bennett; Martino Giaquinto; Lindsay Hammond; Michael O'Shea
Eastern: Alistair Cull; Alison Garrett; Colin Jones; Hanna McNab.
Ireland: John Delaney; Catherine Needham; Shane O'Connor; Marian Regan.
Kent: Richard Begbey; Chris Kirby-Turner; Duncan Hughes-Phillips; Jane Ryland.
Leeds: Neil Boothroyd; Helen Johnson; Sarah Maylor; Mark Pountney.
London: Rebecca Shorter; Lucy Pearson; Amy Armitage; Murray Armes; Louise Forster.
Manchester: Fraser Askham; Bill Bordill.
North East: Michael Foster; Deborah Robinson.
Northern Ireland: Julie-Ann McCaffrey; Claire McCarry; Aaron Moore; James Turner.
Oxford: Dominic Jones
Reading: Mamas Stavrou; Ruth Wilkinson
Scotland: Gerry Brannigan; Andrew Groom; Scott Johnston; Caroline McDermott.
Sheffield/Derby/Nottingham: Stuart Andrews; Michael Sadler; Rob Varney.
South West: Nicola Huxtable; Andrew Langmaid; David McArdle; Jonathan Spencer; Oliver Williams.
Southern: Ryan Greening; Jessica Tresham.
Surrey/Sussex: Kimberley Eyssell; Andrew Keeley.
Wales: Kate Howell; Iwan Jenkins; Professor Sarah Lupton; Tony Norris.

ASTRA REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Birmingham: Kuljeet Sarai; Alexandra Oxborrow; Terl Patrick; Jastinder Samra; J Anthony Mercure; Priyanka Kale.

Cambridge: Liam Hendry; Laura Lintott; Niall Tutt.

Leeds: Casper Hammond; Joshua Curry; Joelle Nassif.

London: Andrea Stauber; Lucy Pearson; Michael Levenstein; Lizzie Barry; David Coyne; Chris Kent; James Frampton; Alexcia Ossei-Williams.

Manchester: Laura Brunt; Lucy Bailey; Carl Simms; Ryan Bennett; Josh Morris.

Northern Ireland: Fiona Egan; Alan Brady; John Blade; Mary Liz Mahony; Ciara Dooley; Kate Liddy Cormican; Martin Cooney; Kate Monaghan.

Scotland: Maya Allen; James Callender; Douglas Morton; Calum Mackenzie; Andrew Paul.

UK Regional: Robert Garvan; Mark Latham; Fiona Wilkie; Jade Clark.