



“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 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

I was re-elected as Chair of the Society in June 2025 for a second and final year. My Vice-Chair, Jessica Tresham, stepped down from Council last June as she had reached her maximum number of terms under the Constitution, and Chris Sunderland was elected as my Vice-Chair for the 2025 / 2026 year. David Falkenstern and Andrea Stauber were both re-elected as Treasurer and Secretary respectively for a second year each.

I am delighted to present my report to the membership at the Society’s 2026 AGM, it has been a privilege to serve as Chair for a second year. 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 Manchester, Bristol, Dublin, Leeds and London, as well as attending and presenting at the bi-annual International Society of Construction Law Congress in Seoul, South Korea, last October. I was also honoured to have been invited to attend and speak at the inaugural event of SCL Poland in Warsaw 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 to this Report. Our thanks are also due to the Society's Consultants and other service providers who have worked for and supported the Society this year, and, last but not least, our outgoing President, Lord Justice Coulson, for his support and enthusiasm for the Society over the past eight years.

2. MEMBERSHIP

At the time of writing, the Society has 2,872 members, which is a slight (2%) decrease from, but broadly consistent with, the number of members that I reported last year (2,939). Of the 2,872, 2,410 (84%) are based either in the UK or in Ireland, and 462 (16%) are based outside the UK and Ireland.

There are a further 375 academics who have access to the Society's database of papers and who, in the past year, have been given the additional option of receiving the quarterly e-journal. In another innovation in the past year, the Society has now granted four generic access accounts to universities in the UK, so that all students in those locations can access the Society's papers.

The autorenewal and bulk renewal processes for membership introduced successfully in 2024 have been retained. We are aware of an issue this year with WorldPay which meant that a small number of autorenewal payments were not recognised on the membership database. We apologise to those who were affected by this and are working on a way to prevent it reoccurring.

3. CONFERENCES AND LEARNING EVENTS

The Society's core objective is learning. Reflecting this, there have been many excellent events all across the UK and Ireland in the past year. In addition to our usual programme of events, we were pleased to have added two new events of significance to the calendar last year:

- First, the return of the London conference, which took place in June 2025. This was a full day event looking at key issues affecting the future of the construction industry, and included a keynote speech from Fergus Harradence, Deputy Director of the Department of Business and Trade;

- Second, a new Advocacy and Expert Witness training day, which took place in November 2025. This event brought together solicitors, barristers and expert witnesses in the delay, quantum and architecture disciplines, for a day of mock cross-examination in front of experienced tribunal members who provided them with meaningful comments. Feedback from this inaugural event has been overwhelmingly positive and the intention is to repeat the event this year.

London also had seven lectures in the National Liberal Club, including: A Hudson Prize winning presentation by Kevin Touhey, winner of the 2025 essay writing competition; and a talk on the Future of Tall Building Design, with the lead presentation by Richard Millett KC, lead counsel to the Grenfell Inquiry, as a follow-up to the talk on ‘Lessons from Grenfell’ he gave in 2024. Elsewhere in London, there were parts 3 and 4 in a continuing 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, and a number of Astra events, which I will comment on in Section 8 below.

Outside of London, it is particularly pleasing to see that there has been increased activity, with conferences taking place in Leeds and Dublin, and further talks, debates and presentations in the Birmingham, Eastern, Ireland, Kent, Leeds, Manchester, Reading, Scotland, Sheffield and Surrey/Sussex regions. The busiest regions remain Birmingham and Ireland, thanks to the enthusiastic teams in those areas.

We are conscious that our online offering of events has decreased in the past year and are working to improve that to ensure that the Society’s membership continues to provide good value to all members, including those who cannot easily attend events in person.

4. THE HUDSON PRIZE

Michael Levenstein has continued as Chair of the Hudson Prize for the second year, the Society’s annual essay writing competition. Following the revamp of the competition in 2024, with increased prize monies and publicity, 2025 saw a large number of high-calibre entries for the second year running.

The winners of the 2025 competition were:

- First Prize: *"It's Always the First Place You Look: Finding Harm and Completing the Cause of Action in Negligence for a Defective Building"* by Kevin Touhey;
- Second Prize: *"When 'More' Is a Breach: Overdesign and the Limits of Design Obligations in Modern Construction Contracts"* by Dr Jovana Veletić;
- Highly Commended: *"What qualifies as a "dwelling" under the Defective Premises Act 1972?"* by Sheriar Khan and Nicholas Zeolla; and
- Highly Commended: *"A private law theory of the "just and equitable" requirement in remediation contribution orders"* by Alec Chen.

5. THE JOURNAL

The SCL Journal, launched in 2024 as a new format for sharing the Society's papers, has continued its success this year, with a further 13 papers being published (as listed below) more than doubling the publication rate from the year immediately prior to its launch. Amongst the 13 papers were two international papers that were re-published in the Journal as they were considered to be of wider interest to the membership, namely the papers from Dr Sean Brady (previously published by SCL Australia) and Richard Harding KC (previously published by SCL Gulf) respectively.

SCL Journal: Spring 2026

- *"It's Always the First Place You Look: Finding Harm and Completing the Cause of Action in Negligence for a Defective Building"* by Kevin Touhey
- *"When 'More' Is a Breach: Overdesign and the Limits of Design Obligations in Modern Construction Contracts"* by Dr Jovana Veletić;
- *"A Private Law Theory of the 'Just And Equitable' Requirement In Remediation Contribution Order"* by Alec Chen;
- *"What Qualifies as a 'Dwelling' under the Defective Premises Act 1972?"* by Sheriar Khan and Nicholas Zeolla.

SCL Journal: Winter 2026

- *"An Inequality of Arms? The Costs of Arbitration under the Public Works Contracts"* by Paddy Mockler;
- *"Suspension Rights: Diverging Paths in the UK and Ireland"* by Melissa de Oliveira;

- *“Professional liability after the Building Safety Act 2022”* by Seb Oram.

SCL Journal: Autumn 2025

- *“Limitations of Liability”* by Simon Hale KC;
- *“How Complex Systems Fail: Lessons from Boeing’s 737 Max 8 Crashes”* by Dr Sean Brady;
- *“A Cross-Jurisdictional Comparison of a Contractor’s Duty to Warn of Design Defects Under English Law and French Law”* by Professor Anthony Lavers and Rebecca Shorter.

SCL Journal: Summer 2025

- *“Contracting Practices for Tunnelling and Underground Works”* by Ben Mellors;
- *“‘Hybrid’ Contracts: Not a Villain – Just Misunderstood”* by James Bowling and Matthew Thorne;
- *“The New Saudi Civil Code and its Effect on Construction Contracts”* by Richard Harding KC.

The past year has seen a number of papers being produced relating or relevant to The Building Safety Act, so we have added this as a new search term in the papers database and tagged all relevant papers appropriately.

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 University; King’s College London; Robert Gordon University; Cardiff University; Cambridge University; the University of Salford and the University of Portsmouth. No payments were made under existing Frances Paterson Scholarships during the past year, nor were any new Scholarships awarded. Applications for new Scholarships remain open.

7. SOCIAL EVENTS

The SCL Lunches remain an ever-popular feature of our members' calendars, as an excellent opportunity to network with others in the industry. This year seven lunches have taken place in:

- Glasgow on 8 May 2026;
- Birmingham on 24 April 2026;
- London on 6 February 2026;
- Dublin on 28 November 2025;
- Bristol on 17 October 2025;
- Leeds on 12 September 2025; and
- Manchester on 6 June 2025.

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 and Regions Subcommittees on Council (Chris Sunderland, Katherine Butler, Murray Armes, Sue Kim, Anna Laney KC, Jessica Neuberger, Matthew Taylor and Khaleda Wheeler) who support these events. The SCL Administrators, Jill Ward and Frances Whitehead, are also an essential part of the team for these events.

8. ASTRA

Following the re-establishment of a network of regional Astra co-ordinators, there have been Astra events in London, Cambridge, Birmingham, Leeds and Scotland in the past year, including the Summer Boat Party on the River Thames in July 2025. The Astra Team on Council (Lucy Pearson, Lizzie Barry, Andrea Stauber and Michael Levenstein) is currently working on preparations for the next Astra international conference which is being hosted in Belgrade, Serbia in October this year.

9. GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL STRATEGY

As I reported last year, there have been in recent years continuing efforts to modernise the organization and governance of the Society. The focus this year has been on a review of the Constitution and the legal structure of the Society itself which has resulted in the proposed changes to the Constitution currently being voted on by the Society. A separate note summarising

the proposed changes and the rationale for them has already been circulated to the membership, and can be read on the website: [Vote on Proposed Changes to the SCL Constitution | Society of Construction Law UK](#)

Following the establishment of a finance subcommittee last year, work has also been started this year by a subcommittee looking at the future financial strategy of the Society, in terms of investment and use of the Society's funds, including potential future projects. This work has been paused pending the proposed constitutional changes noted above, but will be continued by the new Council after the AGM once the result of the vote on the constitutional changes is known.

10. IT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The IT and Social Media subcommittee (Andrea Stauber, Lizzie Barry and Lucy Pearson) has continued to work with the Society's 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. The work to review the contents and structure of the website is ongoing and there is likely to be a bigger project involving the website in the next one to two years.

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 continued advice in this area.

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
19 May 2025

ANNEX: List of President, Officers, Council Members, Regional Coordinators, and Astra
Regional Coordinators for the year 2025 / 2026

PRESIDENT: The Right Honourable Lord Justice Coulson

OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL

Chair: Rebecca Shorter
Vice-Chair: Chris Sunderland
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, Anna Laney KC, Michael Levenstein, Jessica Neuberger, Lucy Pearson, Rebecca Shorter, Andrea Stauber, Chris Sunderland, Matthew Taylor, Khaleda Wheeler.

REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

Birmingham: Mike Bennett; Martino Giaquinto; Lindsay Hammond.

Eastern: Alistair Cull; Edward Freeman; 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; Sue Kim.

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; Professor Sarah Lupton; Tony Norris.

Thanks are also due to Dr Miranda Terry, Iwan Jenkins and Michael O'Shea, who stepped down from their positions as regional co-ordinators in Cambridge, Wales and Birmingham respectively during the past year.

ASTRA REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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

Cambridge: Liam Hendry; Laura Lintott; Niall Tutt; Francesca Bishop.

Leeds: Casper Hammond; Joshua Curry; Joelle Nassif.

London: Andrea Stauber; Lucy Pearson; Michael Levenstein; Lizzie Barry; 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.

Thanks are also due to David Coyne and Chris Kent who stepped down from their positions as regional Astra representatives in London during the past year.