

SPRE 

SCOTTISH POLICY & RESEARCH EXCHANGE

## Chair & Trustee Recruitment Pack

September 2022

Building policy  
engagement in praxis



# Who we are

SPRE is a small charity supported by a network of Scottish universities and policymaking institutions that helps new voices from the academy engage effectively with the world of public policy in order to produce better policy outcomes for Scots. We aim to improve capacity within and beyond our partner institutions through training, the provision of digital tools, strategic guidance and direct brokerage.

SPRE recently secured charitable status in its own right after operating for three years as part of the Academy of Social Sciences. The staff team is looking forward to working with a new chair and board on the next stage of SPRE's journey.

**Founded 2019**

**Charitable status 2022**

**2-3 members of staff**

**Funded by donations**

**Turnover of c. £130k pa**

“Over the course of three years, SPRE has established itself as the go-to source of expertise on policy engagement in Scotland.”

SPRE, Annual Report  
2021

**300+ Responses to calls for experts**

**6,590 website users in 12 months**

**2,348 academics trained since 2019**

**2,908 followers on Twitter**

**382 members of the Brokerage**

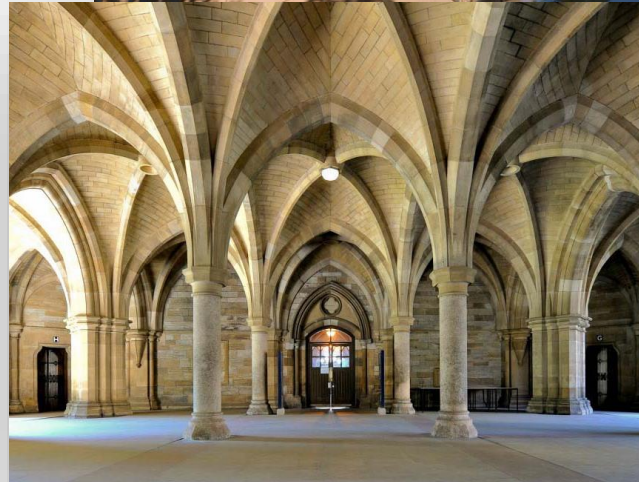


# Established Partnerships

SPRE has worked with academics at all nineteen of Scotland's higher education institutions (and a few elsewhere in the UK and beyond). We connect with officials in the Scottish Government and Parliament, as well as in local government and other public bodies.

Although SPRE was founded within social science, we now work with scholars of all disciplinary backgrounds, institutional affiliations and methodological approaches.

We have a particular commitment to encouraging engagement from academics earlier in their careers and those from marginalised backgrounds.



## Values in Practice

SPRE aims to ground its actions in values, which include commitments to being:

- **Praxis-based**  
Our practice draws on and feeds into the research about our activities
- **Inclusive**  
All our activities should seek to involve a wide range of knowledge and experience
- **Creative**  
We are open to new approaches or methods and actively seek out challenging viewpoints
- **Collaborative**  
We leverage progress through partnership with Scotland's academics and policymakers
- **Relational**  
Change is achieved through the creation of respectful and trusting relationships
- **Reflexive**  
Our goals and methods should be grounded in our own learning and that gained from our partners



# Q&A

**How are you funded?**

SPRE is funded through donations from universities and policy institutions based in Scotland. It is a core aspect of our mission that we work with researchers and officials regardless of whether we have received funds from their institution.

**Are you political?**

Although SPRE works in the world of policy, it does not take a position or campaign on any issue, nor would it. It does not have a focus on any particular research or policy topic but works to improve processes for collaboration across the board.

**Are you a think tank?**

SPRE occasionally contributes to research about how policy institutions use knowledge but we are not a research centre. We are best thought of as knowledge mobilisers although, in practice, we are more likely to support others in this work.

**Are you part of a university?**

Scotland has an extraordinary university sector, comprising an astonishing array of institutions. We are fortunate to be able to work with all of them in different ways but we also value our independence, which allows us to reach beyond the sector when needed.



# The Board

As SPRE transitions into an independent charity, it will require trustees both for formal governance arrangements and to act as a 'critical friend' for the director and team. This is an important time in SPRE's evolution and our trustees will play a key role in shaping the values, mission and goals of the new charity as it moves forward.

- ❖ Provide strategic direction for the organisation as a whole.
- ❖ Ensure that the organisation remains focused on building and supporting better relationships between research and policymaking in Scotland.
- ❖ Set our overarching strategic direction and support the director and team in its delivery.
- ❖ Maintain fiduciary oversight of the charity and ensure that it remains compliant with relevant legislation.
- ❖ Appoint a new director when required and work with them to ensure appropriate frameworks are in place for staffing and other operational responsibilities.

The Board is at some liberty to establish its own processes but it is currently envisaged that it will:

- Meet quarterly, avoiding Christmas and August
- Conduct meetings in a manner that is accessible to those with special needs and/or caring responsibilities
- Identify its own training needs and have those met by SPRE
- Appoint a treasurer from within its membership
- Establish sub-committees as required
- Act as advocates for SPRE and its approach to policy engagement
- Share professional and lived experience to the benefit of the Board and the organisation





## Trustees: Skills and experience

We are seeking to appoint in the region of six new trustees. While we would anticipate that many but not all of these would have a professional background in either academia or policy, we would also like to hear from applicants with experience of mobilizing knowledge in other sectors.

While we welcome applications from established scholars and officials working in central government and parliament, we are also keen to hear from early-career researchers and those working in local government and other public bodies. We are also keen to hear from researchers who can draw on experience of overcoming barriers to engaging with policy as a result of their social, cultural or racial background; geographical location or institutional affiliation; career stage or disciplinary background; sexuality, gender or gender identity; disability or migration status.

We are conscious that SPRE is a new charity and would welcome applications from trustees with previous board experience including, ideally, some launch experience. However, the core of SPRE's mission relates to providing opportunities for new voices and we will apply this to board recruitment, just as we would to our other activities. As such, we also welcome applications from those without previous board experience but with a commitment to our goals and values.



We are keen that trustees should recognise the importance of the values set out on p.3 and should also have:

- A commitment to the value of public policy informed by academic research
- The ability to think strategically and a commitment to building an organisation in a collaborative manner
- A commitment to being prepared and available for meetings and a willingness to support SPRE at other times where possible
- A familiarity with the obligations and duties of charity trustees in Scotland, or a willingness to undertake appropriate training
- A familiarity with meeting procedures, including financial reporting, or a willingness to undertake appropriate training
- A willingness to share professional insights where relevant in areas such as HR, financial management and charity law

We recognise that there will be many questions not addressed in this pack and that applicants, especially those who have not previously been trustees may wish to discuss these before applying. We would therefore like to invite interested parties to attend an informal (and online) session that will outline what is likely to be involved should you apply.

Towards that end, we are arranging two online events for those interested in either the trustee or chair roles and you are also very welcome to contact the director for a chat.

## Chair: Skills and experience

It is anticipated that SPRE's Chair will play a leadership role both within the charity itself and in championing its mission to the outside world. At times this may require the postholder to be available to the director and the other trustees for considerable periods of time. SPRE is a relatively small organization, so it is possible that this could be a first chair role, but applicants would need to be able to demonstrate considerable previous senior management or governance experience in a Scottish third sector organization.

It would be useful, but it is not essential, if the postholder were well-networked in Scottish policy, higher education or both. Applicants should demonstrate a familiarity with the challenges faced by researchers seeking to engage with officials (and vice versa), especially the obstacles by academics earlier in their careers and others who are not 'the usual suspects'.

SPRE is committed to a view of policy engagement that is longer-term, relationship-based and incremental. It tends to eschew quick-fix or technocratic solutions in favour of a more gradual and relational approach to securing change in the world. The Chair should be comfortable making the case for this approach in government, academia and elsewhere.

The Chair will play a key role in helping shape SPRE at an important point in its development. Different applicants will, understandably, bring different strengths and approaches but it would be useful if, in addition to a commitment to the values listed in p.3, they had:

- A track record in demonstrating or articulating the case for the efficacy of effective knowledge mobilisation in policymaking
- A proven commitment to diversifying the range of expert voices available to policymakers
- The availability to support the Director and members of the board between meetings
- A commitment to working with all levels of policymaking in Scotland and an appreciation of the strength presented by the diversity of its HEIs
- A familiarity with meeting procedures and a developed appreciation of the fiduciary role of trustees
- A willingness to act as a 'critical friend' to the Director and a 'guiding hand' to the Board

There are many different ways this role could be fulfilled. Candidates who are seriously considering the role are welcome to [email the director](#) to arrange an informal discussion. They are, of course, also welcome to attend the session mentioned on the previous page.

It would be useful if applicants for the role of Chair would indicate if they would also consider joining the Board as a trustee in the event they are unsuccessful.



# Meet the Team

SPRE is normally a three-person operation, with ambitions to expand a bit more. At the moment, there's just two of us, Dave and Nick.

## Nick Bibby

Nick founded SPRE and is its first director. He develops and delivers much of its training work, manages its communications and fundraising,



and is the main contact for activities involving the Scottish Government and Parliament. He is currently working with officials to develop a series of opportunities for ECRs to meet with government analysts, collaborations between Irish and Scottish officials, new digital resources for knowledge

brokers and PhD studentships supported jointly by universities and local authorities. While most of his work focusses on delivering SPRE's projects or liaising with its partners, he still enjoys meeting with individual researchers to help connect them to policy. His prompt for establishing SPRE in the first place was to extend and diversify the range of voices available to policymakers. That remains his motivation for developing the organization, delivering training, building new tools or working with individuals.

## Dave Bell

Dave is the Networks and Learning Lead for SPRE. He is currently focused on developing relationships with local government organisations and networks in order to support capacities for better access to and use of research evidence. As part of this, he sits on the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) council, and co-leads LARIA engagement activities within Scotland. He is also working on ways to apply research on research-policy engagement and support a learning focused 'praxis' approach within SPRE. This work has a particular emphasis on drawing on insights from critical theories and complex systems thinking, for the purpose of advancing equity and supporting more ethical and effective systems, structures and practices. As part of this, he Co-Chairs the University Policy Engagement Network's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee.





# Nuts and Bolts

The trustee and chair positions are all voluntary posts.

Although no payment would be made for time spent on SPRE activities, reasonable expenses such as travel, accommodation, BSL interpretation or childcare will be paid.

SPRE is funded by donations from universities and policy institutions in Scotland. For officials and academics in posts that make decisions on such contributions, it may be worth checking whether there is a conflict of interest.

Many meetings will be online but attendance at others in person would sometimes be helpful.

While it is up to individual trustees how much time they commit to their role, it is hoped that they will be actively involved beyond attendance at meetings.

It would be up to the chair to manage their involvement but it might be sensible to allow for commitment between a few hours and a day and a half per month.

## Further Information

- **What SPRE does**  
An insight into SPRE's recent and current activities is provided by our last annual report, published in December 2021 and [available by following this link](#).
- **Being a trustee**  
There are legal responsibilities involved in being a trustee. These are not onerous but they should be taken seriously. [A guide to these responsibilities is available at this link](#).
- **What is policy engagement?**  
Policy engagement is a catch-all term for ways in which academics connect with public policy. [It has itself been the subject of extensive research, such as this recent article by Hannah Durrant & Eleanor MacKillop](#).



# Application Process

It's great that you're interested in applying to join SPRE either as our chair or as a trustee. We will host informal (and online) drop-in events as outlined below to answer any questions you might have and you can also contact the director, Nick Bibby, directly on [nick.bibby@spre.scot](mailto:nick.bibby@spre.scot) if that's helpful.

➤ **If you have questions, please join one of our potential trustee information sessions**

29 September 2.30-3.30: [Please register September event here](#)

12 October 1-2: [Please register for the October event here](#)

➤ **Submit a CV and covering letter**

Please highlight how your professional, voluntary or lived experience would help inform, shape and guide SPRE's work. You needn't have professional experience or knowledge mobilisation, but we'd like to hear about it if you do. We would also be keen to hear about how your personal or professional background could help us reach researchers who may not have previously engaged with policy and deliver our objective of promoting new voices and perspectives.

➤ **Deadline: Monday 14 November at 12 noon**

➤ **Interviews: During the week beginning 24 October**

Please send your application by email to:

[contact@spre.scot](mailto:contact@spre.scot)






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If you require any further information, or need this pack in another format, please email [contact@spre.scot](mailto:contact@spre.scot)

