

Draft minutes AMASE AGM 12th of July 2025

Present:

Maxfield (associate member), Sonny Hallet (SH), George Burrows (GB), Autistic Jules (AJ), Gideon Henner (GH), Olly Darrah, Fergus Murray (FM), Fiona Clarke (FC), Sarah Haywood (SH), Helen (associate member), David Archibald (DA), Peter Hamilton (PH), Nat S (NS)

Apologies:

Luis Robertson (LR), Sumar Williams (SW), Leo Starrs-Cunningham (LS-C), Zoe MacIntyre (ZM)

Minutes taken by Peter Hamilton (PH). Meeting started at 15:10.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies

FM, as outgoing chair, welcomed those attending and apologies were relayed as noted above.

2. Declaration of Interests

FM works for Wild Heart Foundation and Grove as mentor/tutor for neurodivergent young people. Has previously worked with University of Edinburgh.

FC, outgoing Vice-chair, currently works 12 hours/week for Into Work, as part of a small neurodivergent team providing employer training, consultancy and peer support for neurodivergent people, but is not an officer of the charity. FC was a Trustee of Scottish Autism until May 2025, managing any conflicts of interest there and with AMASE by declaring both involvements upfront and abstaining from decisions where there may be perceived conflicts as and when appropriate.

GH, as outgoing Secretary, studies with University of Durham writing dissertation on neurodivergence and sci-fi with other non-relevant employment.

SW and **ZM** are stepping down from the Committee.

PH, as Committee member, is an Additional Support Needs teacher at Falkland House School Perth.

3. Minutes of 2024 AGM

No-one raised any comments. These were provided to membership in advance and were approved by **PH**, seconded by **FC**. There were no objections.

4. Chair's Summary of Past Year's Activities, membership

FM spoke to a document titled AMASE Activities (2025) that had been circulated with the invitation to members, stating membership had increased by roughly 140 over the last year, with full members at 589 and 214 associate members.

Social media presence has changed with AMASE dropping use of Twitter, now X, using Bluesky predominantly, also Facebook and Masterdon. Discord community remains active. AMASE:

- continues to participate in consultation of the delayed LDAN (Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill);
- has provided commentary on Daniel Johnson MSP's Restraint and Seclusion in Schools (Scotland) Bill;
- participates regularly along with other Scottish ADPOs (Autistic Disabled Peoples Organisations) in the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group (CPG) on Autism and continue to be represented in the CPG Secretariat by Marion McLaughlin;
- met the Scottish Parliament Equalities, Human Rights and Justice Committee, who are now initiating an inquiry into Neurodivergence Scotland, and Health, and another Committee is looking at Autism and ADHD waiting times for assessment;
- has held Weird Pride Day online and an in-person event at Shrub ;
- Hosted Autistic Pride Picnic in the Meadows (this years to be on 2nd August); and
- has made progress towards incorporation as a Community Interest Company (CIC).

AMASE is keen to restore My Autism Story online events and Peer Support Group meetings in the coming year.

5. Treasurer's Report (Given by **FC** on behalf of **LS-C**)

Fiona spoke to the Annual Accounts to March 2025 as provided to members in advance and shared on screen. The financial position sees a healthy unrestricted reserves balance at £1,827, with a loss of £388 for the year.

Whilst previously AMASE was able to access Scottish Government autism funding, AMASE is no longer eligible to apply as it is unincorporated. With current expenditure we are more than able to continue through the coming year and so there are no going concerns issues.

The largest outgoing is for insurance covering our events, public indemnity, officers and volunteers. Income accrued from £452 in donations and £250 for Neurodiversity Affirmative training provided to Falkland Schools.

The negative events cost of £200 represents a reversal of speaker fees previously accrued which are no longer payable. In future periods a £170 membership fee saving will be made by becoming associate member of European Council of Autistic People instead of being full members..

A Wellbeing project funding application to University of Edinburgh Communities Fund has been unsuccessful, others are submitted for creativity projects to create an anthology of neurodivergent writing, for a workshop on Sensitivity Readers and a bid for the National Lotteries Communities Scotland Fund is in progress.

Members were invited to share any suitable funding opportunities they were aware of with the committee.

Accounts were approved by 10 votes with no votes against and two abstentions.

6. Status of Incorporation

FM spoke on this. Following the previous decision to establish a Community Investment Company (CIC), progress has been made, with draft Articles and discussions underway around structure and how it will be run with respect to directors, membership and sub-committees.

There will be an Extraordinary AGM to approve incorporation in the autumn. Prior to this, information will be circulated and there will be a members information event.

A CIC is a form of social enterprise which enables changes to be made to its structure as it evolves and needs change. A CIC with a membership structure was thought to be better attuned to our philosophy and less regulatory restrictions than a charity. There are strict rules for CICs that mean that income must be used for supporting community in accordance with its objectives and its Community Interest Statement, and that any surplus cannot be used for other purposes, e.g. payment to shareholders.

AMASE now has a remote business address on Hill Street which can physically receive mail and a new automated emailing system (SendFox) to facilitate GDPR compliance.

7. Elections

ZM and **SW** are stepping down from the committee and not seeking to continue.

The remaining committee members, being required to step down and be re-nominated and seconded to remain on committee and take up and named position spoke to their hopes to be able to continue to serve the membership as follows:

FM is standing down as Chair but seeking to remain on committee to support new Committee and transition to CIC.

FC, having been treasurer in 2020, then vice-chair in 2021 offers to Chair. FC has a finance and accountancy background, is a carer of autistic family member, and was formally assessed as autistic 17 years ago. Since then FC has worked generally to improve matters for autistic and disabled people through campaigning, advocacy, education and empowerment experience.

GH, having been secretary, offered to continue as such for now until incorporation and hopes to help more community events happen and submit further funding proposals.

LS-C, having been Treasurer, was spoken for by Fiona. He was previously involved in setting up and running a CIC. He was previously chair of Inclusion Scotland and with a Masters in Law brings with him strong governance experience and is committed to the objectives of AMASE.

LR had provided **FM** with a prepared statement which was cut into the chat facility of the meeting which included his wish to support and pursue many important objectives including developing closer working relationships with other Autistic Disabled People's Organisations.

PH, who has a MSc in Autism Research, hoped to return and support wellbeing initiatives.

Other members were invited to offer themselves for the committee. **OD** did so introducing themselves as software engineer and former Japanese teacher, pointing out a possible conflict of interest as employee of same finance group AMASE banks with and as a relative of **PH**, willing to continue to support social media and hoping to do more informal meetups and otherwise support member involvement. **OD** is also involved in Resisting Transphobia Edinburgh though not on its Committee. There was discussion of how to prevent any ongoing conflicts of interest, with **OD** and **PH** agreeing to recuse themselves from discussions relating to each other where there could be a perceived conflict of interest, such as receiving remuneration for non-Committee work.

The new committee was established as follows with clear majority of votes cast with no named / officer positions contested and no votes against.

FC as Chair nominated by **FM**, seconded by **PH**. 9 votes for, 2 abstentions

GH as Secretary proposed by **GB**, seconded by **FM**. 9 votes for, 2 abstentions

Leo as Treasurer, proposed by **FC** seconded by **FM**. 9 votes for, 2 abstentions

FM, nominated by **PH** seconded by **SH**. 9 votes for, 2 abstentions

LR, nominated by **FM**, seconded by **PH**. 8 votes for, 2 abstentions

PH nominated by **FM**, seconded by **SH**. 8 votes for, 2 abstentions

OD nominated by **FM**, seconded by **GH**. 7 votes for, 3 abstentions

FC, as new chair, thanked **FM** for his service as chair. **FM** reiterated their thanks to **SH** as the first and previous chair of AMASE. The Committee thanked those stepping down for all their contributions to AMASE.

8. Any other business

Nothing was raised. The AGM closed at 16:20.

9. General Discussion: current developments and future direction

This addressed means of progressing peer support. **DA** noted his involvement in the Scot Gov Disability Staff Network with experience of peer support (informed by SQA level 7 peer support for mental health course) if of use, to be revisited in discord channel with further discussion by interested members.

The meeting concluded at 16:37.