Explaining the Structure of SGI-UK

Introduction

SGI-UK is an organisation which exists to promote Nichiren Buddhism as taught within the SGI. Soka Gakkai International is a worldwide society for the creation of value founded upon the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. The meaning of 'Soka Gakkai' is 'Society for the Creation of Value'.

1. The purpose of this document is to explain how SGI-UK is structured first as a legal entity with a charitable purpose, and secondly as the organisation that supports our members in their Buddhist faith and practice.

Part A – The Legal Structure of SGI-UK

2. As stated above, SGI-UK is an organisation which exists to promote Nichiren Buddhism as taught within the SGI, and in order to have legal status in the UK it is constituted as a charitable company limited by guarantee. The charitable company has (at present) ten directors who are also trustees of the registered charity. These are people with a range of expertise (e.g. in law or business) in addition to having many years of Buddhist practice. In the language of our governing document (the Memorandum and Articles of Association) these ten directors are referred to as the 'members' of the company.

3. The role of the board of trustees is to make sure that SGI-UK fulfils the purpose for which it was set up, and to ensure that it is solvent and well run. The trustees have responsibility for safeguarding our volunteers, our staff, and especially any children who are involved in our activities. They also look after our organisation's assets, such as Taplow Court and the other national centres and the funds that are sincerely contributed by our members for kosen-rufu activities. The trustees are responsible for ensuring that the activities proposed by the National Committee are financially viable and in accordance with UK law and charity regulations.

4. The National Committee is the board of representative divisional leaders of SGI-UK which discusses and agrees the general direction for SGI-UK's activities (see Part B below).

SGI-UK's Trustees

5. The ten trustees are:

Stephanie Ball, Kazuo Fujii, Robert Harrap (staff), Fiona Harrow (staff), Graham Holman, Justine Marchant (staff), Robert Samuels, Chris Loewe, Aisha Oakley and Jennie Peters-Smith.

The Company Secretary is Toni-Ann Hirayama.

6. The trustees have a wide range of experience in business, law, finance, management and employment issues as well as being long standing members of SGI-UK. In addition, they take advice from experts as required.

Trustees' meetings and activities

7. The trustees meet bi-monthly to discuss the protection and development of SGI-UK's assets and resources. This includes the buildings that we own, but also means setting and monitoring financial targets. SGI-UK is funded by the voluntary contributions made to the Kosen-rufu Fund by our members. The trustees also take responsibility for other legal obligations with regard to such areas as staff, insurance, safeguarding, tax and risk.

8. In addition, the Finance Committee, a sub-committee of the Trustees, meets bi-monthly to discuss and review SGI-UK's budgets and financial strategy so that our expenditure is closely managed.

9. The trustees approve the accounts and annual report prepared by our accountants, HaysMac, who are charity specialists. The report is then published and is made available to the public via the Charity Commission website.

Caring for our assets

11. SGI-UK currently employs 38 full and part-time members of staff to support the administration and management of our membership organisation and properties.

12. The trustees ensure that buildings and grounds of SGI-UK centres are properly cared for and managed so that our activities can take place in the best and safest way.

Contacting the Trustees

13. You can contact the trustees at Taplow Court, Berry Hill, Taplow, Berkshire SL6 0ER, or by email: trustees@sgi-uk.org. We will endeavour to respond to communications within 21 days.

Part B – The Faith Structure of SGI-UK

14. The purpose of SGI-UK is to support individuals in their faith, practice and study of Nichiren Buddhism, and to promote a wider understanding of this practice in society. People join SGI-UK when they decide that they wish to practise Nichiren Buddhism and be part of the worldwide movement for peace we call 'kosen-rufu'. Simply put, this phrase means establishing a world where every individual is treated with profound respect and is able to fulfil their potential as a human being. At present there are more than 15,500 members of SGI-UK.

Being a member in a district

15. Each member of SGI-UK is also (and primarily) a member of a local district. A district usually consists of 15-20 individuals who live in a local area and come together to hold discussion meetings, chant together and encourage one another in their practice and study. In urban areas a district may consist of members living in just a few streets, whereas in other parts of the UK a district may cover a much wider geographical area.

16. In order to coordinate activities, SGI-UK asks some individuals with experience of practice in the SGI to volunteer and take responsibility for a district and to lead those local activities. These leaders are usually representatives of the men and women, young men and young women (representing the four 'divisions') of that particular area.

17. Each district is responsible for the activities it holds, but commonly in any month the activities will include a discussion meeting, meetings to inspire and inform, study opportunities as well as meetings where members meet and carry out our Buddhist practice, which in our tradition centres around chanting the phrase 'Nam-myoho-renge-kyo'. In addition a district will probably be looking for ways to engage with the local community in areas of common concern. Decisions on what activities take place is reached through the consensus of those involved.

18. To support our districts and their members, other members are asked to support a collection of districts known as a chapter, often with four chapter leaders. Usually two or more districts form a chapter and some activities, e.g. study lectures, are often held on chapter level, according to local circumstances. Equally, chapters form together to make headquarters (often abbreviated to HQ), and groups of HQs make a region or area.

The shape of SGI-UK today

19. SGI-UK consists of 616 districts, organised in 171 chapters and 69 Headquarters (or HQs). In turn the HQs are supported in an Area, and there are 18 Areas in SGI-UK. Our current national membership is over 15,500. We currently have approximately 3000 people taking responsibility as leaders in their local areas.

The SGI-UK National Committee

20. The National Committee is the decision-making body for faith activities in SGI-UK, setting the national direction. Membership of the National Committee is determined by responsibility. The National Committee is composed according to divisional representation and is currently comprised as follows (those marked with an *asterisk are also members of the board of trustees):

General Director	Justine Marchant*
Vice General Director and Executive Advisor	Robert Harrap*

Vice General Directors	Kazuo Fujii*
	Sue Thornton
	Suzanne Pritchard
	Fiona Harrow*
Vice General Director and General WD Leader	Sanda McWilliam
Vice General Director and General MD Leader	Robert Samuels*
Vice General Director and Secretary General	Munish Mehta
<u>Divisional Responsibilities</u>	
Women's Division Leader	Tobi Keryk
Women's Division Secretary General	Moni Shrestha
Vice Women's Division Leaders	Colette Ferns
	Jacqueline Kington
Vice General Director and Men's Division Leader	David Woodger
Men's Division Secretary General	Manny Fernandez
Vice Men's Division Leader	Chris Nembhard
Vice Men's Division Leader	Donald Cameron
Youth Division Leader	Max Erle
Vice Youth Division Leader	Anna Hashimoto
	Ryo Ashida
Young Women's Division Leader	Alice Tosey
Vice Young Women's Leaders	Lucie Dalila
	Jenny Balba
	Akari Nakanishi
Young Men's Division Leader	Callum Arthur
Vice Young Men's Leaders	Ryan Williams
	Danilo Cabral

21. Appointments to these responsibilities are made by the National Appointments Board, in consultation with SGI-Europe's Appointments Board and SGI in Japan.

22. The National Committee has monthly meetings, held predominantly at Taplow Court. The purpose of the National Committee's meetings is to agree all policy and the national direction of activities for SGI-UK in the coming months. All members of SGI-UK are represented on the Directorate by their divisional leaders listed above.

23. The National Committee, together with other National leaders not on the National Committee, holds three Summits a year at Taplow Court for the leaders of all the 18 Areas in SGI-UK. In addition, the leaders of the 'Sovereign' Groups also attend. These are the volunteer groups which assist in the smooth running of our activities. The Summits are the opportunity for the direction to be shared so that it can be applied appropriately in the different parts of the UK.

Contacting the National Committee

24. The National Committee welcomes suggestions and feedback, and members may either contact their divisional leaders directly, or write to the General Director either at Taplow Court, or by email to justine.marchant@sgi-uk.org

SGI-UK, Taplow Court, Cliveden Road, Taplow, Berkshire, SL6 0ER

www.sgi-uk.org

SGI-UK IS A REGISTERED CHARITY No: 1104491

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE NO: 5114516.

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND & WALES.

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