



## LETTER FROM THE FORMER CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends

Following our AGM on 18 December, I retired as Chairman of English-Speaking Union Scotland after 6 years, and I would like to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on my time as Chairman and look forward to the coming years.

Over the last 6 years I have been proud to lead an organisation which I believe has rediscovered its public mission, its enthusiasm and its passion to make a difference in Scottish society. We have started or revitalised many of our programmes and initiatives and have rightfully regained our position as an organisation pre-eminent in the field of speech and debate within Scotland.

There are so many programmes and events that have taken place over the last 6 years that it would take too long to even summarise them. But for me, our debates outreach programme which has interacted with over 5,000 children in the last 5 years, and has given them an opportunity to learn about and take part in debating is a particularly proud achievement and goes from strength to strength. I would also have to single out the ESU World Conference held in Edinburgh in September 2008 as another time which I will reflect on in years to come with much affection, pride and sense of achievement, and cemented our position at the heart of the international ESU family.

In the last year or so ESU Scotland has, like so many public, private and charitable organisations, faced the consequences of the credit crunch and ongoing recession. This has meant that the Scottish National Committee has had at times to take some difficult decisions, and will continue to have to do so, in order to ensure that ESU Scotland has a long-term future - an objective which we all share. As many of you know, this meant that in 2009 we lost our Director, John Duncan, I would like on behalf of the SNC to publicly thank John for his contribution to ESU Scotland which was significant and will be felt for years to come.

ESU Scotland's range of programmes and reach is much larger than it should be for an organisation of our small size. This is due to the dedication of our small team of staff members past and present, and the enthusiasm and involvement of our Trustees, volunteers and members, and I would like to thank all of them for all of their contributions and urge them to continue to stay involved with our good work. It has been a privilege to lead the ESU over the last 6 years and to meet so many wonderful people whom I count as valued colleagues and friends.

I remain optimistic about ESU Scotland's future: we have a committed existing membership base; our recruitment of younger members continues apace, and our members' events are growing in their attendance; our work with young people remains as relevant and important as it ever was, and the ESU's reputation and stature in Scottish public life is significant. We face challenges, most significantly in the short term financial challenges, just like any other organisation at the moment, but I am confident that the incoming Scottish National Committee, under the leadership of Brian Monteith, will be well placed to cope with them.

I hope you all had a wonderful Festive break and I look forward to meeting you all at one of the ESU events in 2010.

With best wishes

*Jon Dye*

**Former Chairman, English-Speaking Union Scotland**