



Web Coordinator's Annual Report 2026

Overview

I am pleased to report that the website continues to perform well, with stable performance and no significant ongoing issues.

Incidents

Since my last report for the AGM in May 2024, we have had one incident. On 19 July 2025, a fake Cloudflare verification page started blocking the website. I suspect this was “injected” to our website potentially through a weak third-party plugin (these are tools we use on the website to add various functions), although the exact offending plugin could not be definitively established. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Alan G. James who spotted the issues and alerted me at 12:01 hours, which allowed me to troubleshoot and fix it by 13:35 hours on the same day. There have been no lasting issues, and no reports of any other affected users. This incident prompted an upgrade to our security and protection, and there have been no further issues since.

Other than that, the website was very slow and timing out on 18-19 March 2026. A comprehensive investigation demonstrated that there were no issues with the website itself, and the underperformance was potentially due to a temporary hosting/domain issue, which resolved itself. There have been no issues since.

In the past year several persons associated with the Society have had their personal e-mail addresses hacked, and the hackers sent out e-mails to all their contacts requesting money. This is nothing to do with the website or its security, however, I'd like to use this opportunity to remind everyone to 1) set strong, secure e-mail passwords and use two-factor authentication where available; and 2) to be suspicious of odd / unexpected e-mails, especially if this leads to a conversation about money or gift cards being transferred by you.

Resources

A major event in the past year was the launch of the book *Place-names of East Lothian: A journey through time* by Liz Curtis. The book was published on the SPNS website on 16 July 2025, with the current (third) edition available in the Resources section of the website since 21 March 2026. Since Liz's excellent book was published

on the website, it has attracted hundreds of visits and clicks, especially since articles about it were published in the East Lothian Courier – online edition on 13 April 2026, and print edition on 23 April 2026 (p.8). I also want to express my gratitude to Liz for her work on the Useful Links section of the website, which continues to expand with excellent new additions largely due to her contributions.

As always, I would like to mention, and thank, Dr Alan G. James, who continues to supply us with regular updates of BLITON, which is one of our most popular resources. The latest edition has been available in the Resources section of the website since 1 November 2025.

Upgrades and improvements

The new registration process for the online Autumn 2025 conference represented a major improvement of our digital processes. Previously, in order to avoid the Zoom conference being hijacked by wrongins, we charged a small fee to confirm the identity and intentions of those who registered. This often presented an issue for delegates from abroad who did not have a UK bank account. The new process removed the need for a fee by introducing mobile verification: the delegates confirmed their identities through a code sent to their mobile number as part of the registration (similar process is used by most banks and major websites). The process works with mobile numbers in most countries, and is free of charge for the delegate, with the cost to the Society being negligible. The small number of delegates who did not have mobile numbers or adequate phone signal were verified manually. The new process reduced administrative burden significantly, streamlining the registration process and the number of non-automatic e-mails exchanged with delegates. I believe the process also contributed to achieving the Society's objective of advancing and encouraging research in and understanding of place-names by allowing anyone with a mobile number to join the conference without having to make a payment, thereby lowering barriers to participation.

The Society continues to enjoy a steady flow of enquiries from the website, which prompted the introduction of a new process for recording and monitoring them. The process is still being polished, however it aims to ensure that we always acknowledge the enquiry and provide a response (even if that response says that we are unable to help). I will provide further updates on the development of this process in due course.

Anniversary and feedback

Finally, I would like to mention that September 2026 will mark 10 years since the “new” website launched in, more or less, its current format. Before that, the website was maintained by Henry Gough-Cooper, who is the administrator of the Scottish Place-Name Society Facebook group. The last 10 years have brought about a lot of changes in line with the advances in technology, including our online conferences, the e-mail updates sent out to our ever-increasing e-mail subscribers, online registrations for conferences, increased and regularly updated resources etc. etc.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of the website to its current version and functionality, and I look forward to receiving more of your feedback and ideas.

I am always very keen to hear from members who have any ideas or suggestions on how we can improve the website, and what other features would be of use to our visitors. If you would like to share any comments or suggestions, you can do so via the contact form on the website - <https://spns.org.uk/contact>. Please also show your support by sending the website to anyone you feel might be interested in visiting, and encourage them to subscribe to our e-mail news system via the form found on each page.

Simeon Krastev
SPNS Web Coordinator
25 April 2026

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