An Action Plan, 2015-2017

Change is about the acknowledgement of the present and the anticipation of the future….

It is not about criticism of the past!

1. Introduction

1.1 These are exciting and challenging times for the Guild. The contents of the Action Plan should be seen in that way.

1.2 This is a step on a journey that extends into the future and which emerges from a past in which the Guild has never sought the safe and cautious route, but rather has challenged and enquired and led, both internally and in terms of the wider church.

1.3 The fervent hope is that the plans laid out here will be embraced by the Guild, but also by others as we seek to serve.

1.4 This paper has been prepared by the General Secretary and discussed and amended by the National Executive. It has been discussed by the Presbyterial Councils of the Guild.

1.5 The intention of the document is to present a draft timetable and process which will meet the requirements of the instruction from the General Assembly.

1.6 It is presented under these main headings:

- Guild Membership
- Communications
- Operational matters
- Branding

Whilst it is helpful from a structural point of view to have these headings, they cannot be seen as discrete, rather as a web of intertwined issues.

1.7 The content of this paper has its roots in the work of a Focus Group that was established by the Guild in 2013-14, the findings of which are attached as an Appendix to this document.

2. Guild Membership

2.1   *In the last 22 years, the membership of the Guild has decreased from 66 000 to 23 000, a drop of over 60%.*

The number of groups has declined from 1545 to 917, a drop of around 40%.

(Figures as per 2014 report to the General Assembly)

2.2 This drop in membership is an indication of changing perceptions of the Guild and the Church. It is also indicative of a changing society, in which virtually every membership group shows similarly alarming drops in their numbers.

2.3 The Guild must, therefore, keep calm in the face of such statistics and recognise that what they say is not necessarily that the Guild has no future, just that it has a future that is very different from its past.

2.4 We cannot face that future expecting numbers to return to their former size. We cannot expect the Guild to thrive and remain vibrant by looking backwards at all, in fact.

2.5 Rather, we need to celebrate our tradition and use it to encourage us as we seek to find the way ahead.

2.6 Membership numbers are a sign rather than a destination, but perhaps we need to look at ways in which we can sustain membership, make it more appealing to a wider range of people and shape the Guild in ways that give it purpose, that offer opportunities for service as well as recognising the needs and expectations of the existing membership.

2.7 That means an organisation that is built on the three tenets of the Guild:

Worship, prayer and action

2.8 *The Guild is at its best when it seeks to serve, when it looks outwards rather than inwards. The future guild must recognise that and build on that view. To look inwards is to become insular and to close in on ourselves, risking the blocking of access to new people and new ideas.*

2.9 As well as the issues of numbers, the membership discussion needs to look at the place of men in the Guild and this report will make suggestions regarding that matter.

2.10 Proposals

It is proposed that we should attend to the matter of membership numbers as a consequence of other work, rather than as an end in itself. No-one can really be sure of what an encouraging level of contemporary membership might be but as a membership organisation we do have to set aims, albeit ones that may be reviewed and revised.

2.11 That said, it is to be hoped that membership numbers will respond positively to new thinking and new investment, therefore, the following targets are proposed as relatively modest measures of success. Whilst these targets are to an extent arbitrary, it is important that the Guild looks ahead positively and enthusiastically. We need to believe in ourselves if we want other people to believe in us!

- **Slow the reduction in branch numbers to 1% per annum within three years, 0% in five years**
- **Slow the reduction in membership to 1% in three years and aim to increase by 1% in five years.**
- **Increase the number of men amongst the membership to 1000 within five years.**

3.   Communications

3.1 In a national organisation with hundreds of groups and thousands of members, communication is clearly key.

3.2 At present our communications with members are fairly traditional in their format. We offer:

- 2 general mailings in September and January
- 2 Guildweek mailings in September and March
- 1 Presbyterial Council mailing in March
- 1 Treasurers' Mailing in November

The September, January and March mailings above include newsletters for each member.

3.3 These various mailings allow for the distribution of administration forms, news and general information as well as inviting response from members in terms of finances, statistical returns and general comment.

3.4 Given their regular pattern, they limit us in terms of fresh information, depending on a certain amount of chance with regard to timing of the receipt of ideas and information and their dissemination.

3.5 In an age of electronic communication, it is crucial that we seek to embrace new ways of communicating with our membership (and with others, of course).

3.6 This means that we have to acknowledge the limitations that some folk may have regarding access to technology and the ability to use it.

However, it is suggested that the response should be framed in terms of offering support and

alternatives to those who struggle in these areas rather than avoiding their use.

3.7 Proposals

It is proposed that we investigate the following, with the expectation that we will make use of as many of these opportunities as possible:

- **The development of the Guild web presence, either within the Church of Scotland site or on an independent platform, this to include access on-line to Guild published resources**
- **The development of an e-newsletter**
- **Building further towards "paperless" agendas and minutes**
- **On-line ordering of goods and resources (possibly including on-line payment)**
- **Electronic forms for statistical returns, event registration, etc**
- **The development of blogs with the opportunity for comment and the exchange of ideas/good practice**
- **The establishment of special interest forums for members to link with each other**
- **The development of the use of social media to help with the exchange of information and to support such elements of our work as Guild week**
- **Use of online meetings to reduce costs and to extend access**
- **The development of a system of local contacts able to access such information and facilities and to make the content of these available to those unable to access it themselves**

4.   Operational matters

4.1 A large organisation, especially one with our geographical spread, needs to have in place systems and structures that allow it to work efficiently and effectively.

4.2 Such structures and systems need to be designed to support the work of the Guild, not the other way round. They need to take account of who we are and also of who we would like to be.

4.3 Furthermore, they need to be viewed in the context of an organisation that faces practical challenges of numbers, leadership and demographics. The historical structures we have do not fit the contemporary environment and we need to be prepared to amend and adjust them so that they do.

4.4 Operational matters are the dry bones of an organisation yet the area where about which we can easily get most exercised.

4.5 Proposals here are presented as positive steps to reduce pressure on individuals and groups and to increase the efficiency with which the organisations operates, releasing energy for the real work of the Guild.

4.6 The Guild operates locally, regionally and nationally and so suggestions are made for each of these.

4.7 Locally

4.7.1 The challenges faced by Guild groups are those faced by the Church of Scotland as a whole. They exist to varying degrees in different places and can be met in different ways as well, depending on the numbers of people involved, the location, the congregational context and other factors.

4.7.2 In broad terms we have these:

- Ageing membership
- Falling numbers
- Difficulties in recruiting leadership
- Fatigue
- Loss of confidence

4.7.3 The response to these issues needs to be pragmatic in the first instance and innovative shortly afterwards.

4.7.4 It is essential that we don't lose the energy and commitment of the Guild as a result of people feeling pressured to maintain what has always been.

4.7.5 The way ahead must involve a toolkit of options that are available to assist people to continue the work of their Guild…again putting that at the centre rather than the maintenance of a system.

4.7.6 Proposals

It is proposed that we:

- **Develop resources that illustrate different ways in which local Guilds can be organised**
- **Develop dialogue with Ministers, in training and in service, to inform them of the benefits of having a Guild group**
- **Encourage Guilds to work together, even amalgamate, where that allows the sharing of resources**
- **Find ways of supporting Guilds from the regional and national levels, an area that needs to be addressed in terms of the Presbyterial Councils and the National structures**
- **Use publicity and marketing to encourage new people to see a place for them in the Guild**

4.8 Regionally

4.8.1 It is in the local group that the work of the Guild and the experience of being the Guild is most clearly seen.

4.8.2 However, the Guild is **not** a collection of separate groups.

4.8.3 The Guild is a **movement**… an organisation which has a sum greater than its parts, which has a voice at regional and national level and which has a dialogue taking place between these various elements.

We join together in groups to form a supportive and effective body.

We join together in Presbyterial Councils to do the same on a wider basis.

4.8.4 The problem is that the issues that face Guilds locally are reflected in some cases at Council level.

4.8.5 Other issues that affect the role of Presbyterial Council are:

- Historic patterns which have been left behind by Presbytery boundary changes in some places
- Perhaps a loss of identity as the emphasis can be seen on the national and local rather than on the middle "layer", resulting in a lessening of the sense of purpose of the Councils.
- Again, difficulty in finding leaders and office bearers

4.8.6 We currently have 63 Councils listed as operating in our database.

We have 47 Presbyteries in Scotland and England.

This means that there is a disconnection between the two, which can have implications for reporting and for the relationship between a Presbytery and its Guilds.

4.8.7 Equally, it can be argued that there is an option for us to have groupings of Councils to allow sharing of ideas, events and resources.

4.8.8 If we take this issues alongside the others listed above and the reducing numbers of Guilds and members, then perhaps we are at a stage when we need to think seriously about the numbers of Councils we are operating, again looking at how we can reduce the pressure on those running them.

4.8.9 Furthermore, we can look at the role of the Council and give it more clarity and purpose in the expectation that we can increase enthusiasm for people to be involved.

4.8.10 Clearly, there is a balance to be struck between the local knowledge required of a Council and it being large enough to be effective.

4.8.11 Proposals

It is proposed that we look at a series of options, some of which are complementary and some mutually exclusive:

- **We review the number of Councils in the light of the membership statistics and changing Presbyterial boundaries**
- **We explore the possibility of reducing the number of Councils to create a more regional than Presbyterial structure**
- **That we re-examine the role of the Council, particularly regarding the devolution of remits and enabling them to have a support and servicing role rather than a business focus**
- **That we look to have a regular pattern of "maxi-rallies" to offer an accessible and motivational event for Guild members, these to offer opportunity for the dissemination of resources and information**
- **We review the roles of Educational Representatives and other offices within Councils alongside national reviews as listed below**

4.9 Nationally

4.9.1 As has been said earlier, the Guild is a movement. Its national existence is much more than a series of bureaucratic forms and committees. Rather, it is an organic entity which allows the Guild to have a voice in the national church, in councils and committees and on issues within the wider society, recent examples being human trafficking and domestic abuse. Similarly, our partnership

with the National Youth Assembly and emerging partnerships with Crossreach demonstrate how the collective nature of the Guild can be brought to bear across a wide agenda.

4.9.2 The Guild is not an exclusively female organisation, but it does offer a voice to the women of the church as it always has.

4.9.3 It is also now in a place where it can look to *encourage* participation by men rather than just recognise that it is open to them to join.

4.9.4 Nationally, the Guild's biggest challenge has been the changing environment in which it finds itself. In church terms this has most clearly been the result of women being welcomed as ministers and elders. These changes have diluted this *need* for the Guild.

4.9.5 As at local and regional level, we therefore experience a lessening of confidence and identity that tend to result in defensive responses…a turning inwards and protecting what we know.

4.9.6 We also suffer from an acceptance of other people's views of who we are and what we can be. If stereotypes are presented often enough it is easy, even inevitable, that we begin to believe them.

4.9.7 The role of the National Guild is:

- To support the work of the local and regional groups through advice and resources
- To encourage a feeling of belonging to something bigger than the local group
- To co-ordinate major events and initiatives, not least the Project Partnership scheme
- To represent the Guild within the national structures of the Church of Scotland
- To act as a conduit for the exchange of information and ideas and good practice
- To connect with people in other places, both at home and abroad, who share our interests
- To represent the Guild (and often the Church of Scotland) on external groups

4.9.8 The challenge is always one of communication…how to stay close to so many groups and individuals and to be a useful and inspirational support to them.

4.9.9 Proposals

To better fulfil the remit of the National Guild, it is proposed that we:

- **Develop and enhance our communications processes in the ways outlined earlier in this paper**
- **Review our financial processes that we have in place, including payment for events, speakers and resources**
- **Review the role of the National Executive in the workings of the Guild to ensure that it is an effective place of dialogue between Councils and the Leadership team**
- **Aspire to having a system of regional support remits, either on a paid or voluntary basis. These to provide accessible contact and practical support to the Guilds at the regional and local levels**
- **Review the role of Educational Representatives, Theme and Topic Days and other relevant roles and concepts**
- **Review the format, title and structure of the annual meeting to include local inputs as well as national ones and to better reflect the nature of the event**
- **Develop membership services to offer added value to membership, to include events, interest groups and member benefits**
- **Offer regular maxi-rally events as described in the section on regional Guild**
- **Hold a conference on the place of men in the Guild and seek to develop a particular piece of national work/initiative to encourage this**

5.   Branding

5.1 One of the biggest, perhaps **the** biggest, issues facing the Guild is one of image.

People have a view of what the Guild is which does not reflect so much of the amazing work that we do:

- The pastoral role the Guild plays towards its members
- The local activity in congregations that happens because of the Guild
- The learning and faith development that takes place within the Guild
- The work of the Project Partnership scheme
- To take a leading role in bringing issues of concern to the notice of the whole Church of Scotland

5.2 If we are to appeal to a wider group of people and encourage more involvement, then we need to overcome these established views.

5.3 That means an exercise in marketing and publicity which demonstrates the breadth and depth of the Guild.

5.4 It has been suggested that the name of the organisation is itself a barrier to those outside it and that may well be the case. However, there is a very strong and valid view that says the Guild is who we are…that the many thousands of members within it firmly identify themselves as members of the "Guild". Indeed, the change of the name was a suggestion in the major review of the Woman's Guild in 1997 and such was the feeling at the time that the review agreed that changing to the Church of Scotland Guild to reflect the acceptance of men into membership was change enough.

5.5 There is no current suggestion that the name of the organisation should change.

5.6 However, there do exist some groups who have adopted a different name at a local level whilst remaining within the Guild "family".

5.7 Perhaps this offers a way forward in which the on-going membership and their expectations can be complemented by those of new members.

5.8 Beyond the name, there are many other areas in which "branding" can be addressed.

These include:

- The advertising of Guild events and meetings
- The presentation of resources
- The profile we have within the Church and elsewhere
- The ways in which people can join and attend
- Relationships with other groups
- Technical but significant things such as logos and the wording of our aim

5.9 Proposals

It is proposed that:

- **The Guild looks to a major recruitment and renewal drive within the Church, including those places where no Guild currently exists**
- **Open meetings and information sessions to be offered locally and at General Assembly**
- **Emphasis is given to informing men that they can be part of the Guild**

- **The design and delivery of resources is refreshed to make them more interesting and appealing**
- **Communications are developed to increase the profile and reach of the Guild**
- **Recognise that local groups may want to adopt a local name for a group while remaining affiliated to the Guild…("XXXX group"…part of the Church of Scotland Guild)**
- **Programmes and syllabi are refreshed to encourage new membership…including circulating these to non-members**

Action Plan and Timeline

A.   Overall targets

- **Slow the reduction in branch numbers to 1% per annum within three years, 0% in five years by:**
    - *Developing support and advice services through National Executive, Presbyterial Councils, staff, and ambassadors, eg, former national leaders of the Guild and other supporters of the movement*
    - *Modelling new ways of forming and running Guilds*

- **Slow the reduction in membership to 1% in three years and aim to increase by 1% in five years.**

    - *Using all opportunities such as Guild week to feature a recruitment drive*
    - *Building on the work of the Project Partnership Scheme to encourage new, active involvement*
    - *Increased circulation and regularity of Guild newsletters and social media blogs*

- **Increase the number of men amongst the membership to 1000 within five years**

    - *Develop a focus for the place of men in the Guild, eg a foreign connection*
    - *Introduce and develop the "Men's Shed" idea to Scotland*
    - *Aim to have t least one man on each Presbyterial Council and four on National Executive*
    - *Include men's section in newsletters*
    - *Using Guild week to feature a recruitment drive*
    - *Encourage existing men's groups to become affiliated Guild groups*

B.   Communications

1. **The development of the Guild web presence, either within the Church of Scotland site or on an independent platform, this to include access on-line to Guild published resources (April 15)**

    - *Work with appropriate Church of Scotland Departments to facilitate changes*
    - *Refresh the general appearance of the website and advertise it across all networks*

- o *Develop the website as a major area of communication and dialogue as per the points below*

2. **The development of an e-newsletter (April 15)**

   - o *Meet with Church of Scotland Communications department to discuss, develop and implement this resource, including format, management, editing and timing*
   - o *Meet with other departments of the Church of Scotland to explore their experience of such newsletter*

3. **Building further towards "paperless" agendas and minutes (On-going, in place April 17)**

   - o *Establish electronic communication of papers as the norm ,with processes in place to support those who require "hard-copy" materials*

4. **On-line ordering of goods and resources (possibly including on-line payment) (Dec 15)**

5. **Electronic forms for statistical returns, event registration, etc (Dec 15)**

   - o *Trial programme of this undertaken with ten Presbyterial Councils and their Guilds, these to be self-selecting*
   - o *"Roll out" to all Councils and Groups for session 2015-16*

6. **The development of blogs with the opportunity for comment and the exchange of ideas/good practice (April 15)**

   - o *Begin with Convener and/or General Secretary*

7. **The establishment of special interest forums for members to link with each other, initially promoted and supported at Presbyterial Council level (Dec 15)**

   - o *These to be either online discussion-based groups or social groups which are self-managed. Examples to include book groups, sports groups, cultural interest groups*

8. **The development of the use of social media to help with the exchange of information and to support such elements of our work as Guild week (On-going, in place April 17)**

   - o *Sharing of resources and ideas*
   - o *Exchange of good practice*
   - o *Mutual support*

9. **Use of online and conference call meetings to reduce costs and to extend access (Dec 15)**

   - o *Begin with national leadership team having one meeting in session 15-16 in this way*
   - o *Develop strategy for those who are unable to be involved in such meetings (see below)*

10. **The development of a system of local contacts able to access such information and facilities and to make the content of these available to those unable to access it themselves (April 16)**

   o *Seek volunteers to pilot and explore this way of working*

C.   Local Issues

11. **Develop resources that illustrate different ways in which local Guilds can be organised (Dec 15)**

   o *Use people who have introduced new approaches to disseminate their practice and experience*
   o *Use of maxi-rallies and other speaking invitations to promote innovatory approaches*
   o *Use of online forums to promote these ideas*

12. **Develop dialogue with Ministers, in training and in service, to inform them of the value of having a Guild group (On-going, in place April 17)**

   o *Dialogue with Ministries Council to explore routes by which this can happen*
   o *Invite ministers and parish workers to be included in e-newsletter circulation*

13. **Encourage Guilds to work together, even amalgamate, where that allows the sharing of resources (On-going, in place April 17)**

   o *As per 11, above*

14. **Find ways of supporting Guilds from the regional and national levels, an area that needs to be addressed in terms of the Presbyterial Councils and the National structures (On-going, in place April 17)**

   o *Explore options for staff and/or elected members being contacts for regions and Guilds within regions*
   o *Refresh and/or affirm the role of Presbyterial Councils in this*
   o *Review the role of Educational Representatives to allow them to be Resource or Theme Representatives*
   o *Review representation at national level*

15. **Use publicity and marketing to encourage new people to see a place for them in the Guild (On-going, in place April 17)**

   o *Use of all platforms to raise the profile of the Guild and to challenge stereotypes*
   o *Local meetings or presentations to promote Guild membership and participation*
   o *Produce a DVD and/or Powerpoint presentation on the life and work of the Guild, this to be reviewed annually*

D.   Regional Issues

16. **Review the number of Councils in the light of the membership statistics and changing Presbyterial boundaries (April 16)**

- Undertake a broad consultation with Councils to assess the variety of needs, expectations and issues
- Recognise the geographical issues that may restrict the options
- Encourage neighbouring Councils to work collaboratively

17. **We explore the possibility of significantly reducing the number of Councils to create a more regional than Presbyterial structure (April 16)**

  - This idea to be addressed in parallel with 16, above

18. **That we re-examine the role of the Council, particularly regarding the devolution of remits and enabling them to have a support and servicing role rather than a business focus (Dec 15)**

  - This idea to be addressed in parallel with 16, above

19. **That we look to have a regular pattern of "maxi-rallies" to offer an accessible and motivational event for Guild members (April 15)**

  - Two maxi-rallies to be held each session, in autumn and spring

E. **National Issues**

20. **Develop and enhance our communications processes to make maximum benefit of electronic options (On-going, in place April 17)**

  - Regular e-news letters
  - Blogs and forums
  - Electronic communication of meeting papers
  - Electronic forms for conference registration, admin and financial returns, etc

21. **Review the financial processes that we have in place, including payment for events, speakers and resources (Dec 15)**

  - Undertake a comprehensive review of the financial model operated in the Guild, including capitation fees, Council dues, conference fees
  - Review the operation of the Guild Initiative Fund
  - Enter discussions with "Go for it" and other sources of funding to explore possible Guild innovations and funding for these

22. **Review the role of the National Executive in the workings of the Guild to ensure that it is an effective place of dialogue between Councils and the Leadership team (Dec 15)**

  - Further develop current structure to ensure the Executive is a place of discussion and motivation rather than a technical business meeting
  - Develop training and induction process for new members to help them fulfil their role most effectively
  - Consider moving to a pattern of National Council with a smaller group operating as the "Executive", perhaps in a cabinet model with Committee Conveners meeting to develop policy

- *Circulate a digest of the Executive quickly to the wider membership*

23. **Aspire to having a system of regional support remits, either on a paid or voluntary basis. (April 16)**

    - *In the light of issues such as difficulty in finding leaders and office-bearers, we look to have staff available to support groups and councils*
    - *Use reserve funding to undertake a three year trial scheme, with evaluation of the scheme based on membership sustainability and feedback from local groups and councils*
    - *Explore the establishment of a training and support programme for office-bearers*

24. **Review the role of Educational Representatives, Theme and Topic Days and other relevant roles and concepts (April 15)**

    - *Recognising that Educational Representatives are often under-used and often unsure of their role, redefine that role to a clearer one of Theme Representative*
    - *Discontinue the present Theme and Topic Days and divert funding to support the work of the Theme/Resource Representatives*
    - *Promote resources through these Reps and through the enhanced communications options described elsewhere in this document*

25. **Review the format, name and structure of the annual meeting to include local inputs as well as national ones and to better reflect the nature of the event (April 15)**

    - *Rename the meeting to reflect its nature as a celebration of the Guild*
    - *Devote one section of the meeting to local news and celebration of local groups*
    - *Consider a light-hearted, but positive "awards" section with such as "Guild of the Year", "Outstanding Service", "Breaking the Mould" headings*

26. **Develop membership services to offer added value to membership, to include events, interest groups and member benefits (On-going, in place April 17)**

    - *See 7, above*

27. **Organise 2/3 "maxi-rally" events annually (April 15)**

    - *See 19, above*

28. **Hold a conference on the place of men in the Guild and seek to develop a particular piece of national work/initiative to encourage this (April 15)**
    - *Conference to look at the experience of men in the Guild, how to encourage others to join, to give a focus to their work and to look at how Guild groups can design syllabi to reflect mixed membership*

F. **Branding**

29. **The Guild looks to a major recruitment and renewal drive within the Church, including those places where no Guild currently exists (April 16)**

- *Promotional material published, including printed, online and video resources*
- *Widely publicised events held in up to six locations and at times suited to different lifestyles, eg evening and weekend options as outlined in 31-36, below*

30. **Open meetings and information sessions to be offered locally and at General Assembly (April 16)**
31. **Emphasis given to informing men that they can be part of the Guild and explore ways of supporting and focussing their membership (April 15) (See 28, above)**
32. **The design and delivery of resources is refreshed to make them more interesting and appealing (Dec 15)**
33. **Communications are developed to increase the profile and reach of the Guild (On-going, in place April 17)**
34. **Recognise that local groups may want to adopt a local name for a group while remaining affiliated to the Guild (On-going, in place April 17)**
35. **The content, planning and delivery of programmes and syllabi to be refreshed to encourage new membership…including circulating these to non-members (On-going, in place April 17)**
36. **Commission a new logo for the Guild to accompany a re-launch of the organisation (April 17)**
37. **Consider the wording of the aim of the Guild (April 17)**

Table 1   Timeline by numbers of recommendations

Initiated by	Recommendation Numbers
April 2015	**1, 2,6,19,25,26,28,29,32**
December 2015	**4,5,7,9,11,18,22,23,33**
April 2016	**10,16,17,24,30,31**
On-going (in place by Apr 17)	**3,8,12,13,14,15,21,27,34,35,36,37**

Table 2 Detailed timeline

Target dates	Recommendation Numbers	Action
Initiated by April 2015 and in place by December 2015	• **The development of the Guild web presence, either within the Church of Scotland site or on an independent platform, this to include access on-line to Guild published resources** • **The development of an e-newsletter** • **The development of blogs with the opportunity for comment and the exchange of ideas/good practice** • **That we look to have a regular pattern of "maxi-rallies" to offer an accessible and motivational event for Guild members** • **Review the role of Educational Representatives, Theme and Topic Days and other relevant roles and concepts** • **Review the format, title and structure of the annual meeting to include local inputs as well as national ones and to better reflect the nature of the event** • **Organise 2/3 "maxi-rally" events annually** • **Hold a conference on the place of men in the Guild and seek to develop a particular piece of national work/initiative to encourage this** • **Emphasis given to informing men that they can be part of the Guild and explore ways of supporting and focussing their membership**	• **1-3 Staff and Marketing and Publicity Committee** • **4-5 Conveners' Group** • **6 Annual Meeting Planning Group** • **7-9 Conveners' Group**

Initiated December 2015 and in place by April 2016	• **On-line ordering of goods and resources (possibly including on-line payment)** • **Electronic forms for statistical returns, event registration, etc** • **The establishment of special interest forums for members to link with each other** • **Use of online meetings to reduce costs and to extend access** • **Develop resources that illustrate different ways in which local Guilds can be organised** • **That we re-examine the role of the Council, particularly regarding the devolution of remits and enabling them to have a support and servicing role rather than a business focus** • **We review the roles of Educational Representatives and other offices within Councils alongside national reviews as listed below** • **Review the financial processes that we have in place, including payment for events, speakers and resources** • **Review the role of the National Executive in the workings of the Guild to ensure that it is an effective place of dialogue between Councils and the Leadership team** • **The design and delivery of resources is refreshed to make them more interesting and appealing**	
Initiated by April 2016 and in place by April 2017	• **The development of a system of local contacts able to access such information and facilities and to make the content of these available to those unable to access it themselves** • **We review the number of Councils in the light of the membership statistics and changing Presbyterial boundaries** • **We explore the possibility of significantly reducing the number of Councils to create a more regional than Presbyterial structure** • **Aspire to having a system of regional support remits, either on a paid or voluntary basis.** • **The Guild looks to a major recruitment and renewal drive within the Church, including those places where no Guild currently exists** • **Open meetings and information sessions to be offered locally and at General Assembly**	
On-going (in place by Apr 17)	• **Building further towards "paperless" agendas and minutes** • **The development of the use of social media to help with the exchange of information and to support such elements of our work as Guild week**	•

Develop dialogue with Ministers, in training and in service, to inform them of the benefits of having a Guild group **Encourage Guilds to work together, even amalgamate, where that allows the sharing of resources** **Find ways of supporting Guilds from the regional and national levels, an area that needs to be addressed in terms of the Presbyterial Councils and the National structures** **Use publicity and marketing to encourage new people to see a place for them in the Guild** **Develop and enhance our communications processes to make maximum benefit of electronic options** **Develop membership services to offer added value to membership, to include events, interest groups and member benefits** **Communications are developed to increase the profile and reach of the Guild** **Recognise that local groups may want to adopt a local name for a group while remaining affiliated to the Guild …("XXXX group"…part of the Church of Scotland Guild)** **Programmes and syllabi to be refreshed to encourage new membership…including circulating these to non-members** **Consider the wording of the aim of the Guild** **Commission a new logo for the Guild to accompany a re-launch of the organisation**	

Appendix   Findings of the Guild Focus Group, 2014

1.   Introduction

1.1 During the 2013-14 session, the Guild invited a Focus Group of around 12 people to look at the ways in which the organisation works now and where change might benefit it in the future, with regard to numbers and, more significantly, purpose.

1.2 Subsequently, when the work of the group was reported to the General Assembly of 2014, the result was an instruction from the Assembly in these terms:

Instruct the Church of Scotland Guild to create a strategy, underpinned by an action plan, using the insights of the Focus Group recommendations, to provide a positive future for the Church of Scotland Guild and report to the General Assembly of 2015.

1.3 As it says, this builds on the recommendations of the Focus Group, which were as follows (extracted from the Focus Group's report):

1. The Findings		
Section	**Heading**	**The Findings**
2	The Guild of Today – To Change or Not To Change?	The Focus Group found that: • Plans for the future must be based on radical change. • Whilst radical thinking should be founded on the historic tradition of the Guild the development of the Guild should not be constrained by past traditions • Future planning should be a development from the present Guild – it should not be based on a completely new concept.
3	The Vision for the Future	The Focus Group recommends that the stated purpose of the Guild should be: • The Guild is a positive, Christian based organisation in which people support one another and support others by living, learning and working together within the Church and in the wider community On organisation, the Focus Group recommends that:

3	The Vision for the Future cont.	• The Guild should be restructured with key emphasis on an appropriate number of area groups supported by the Churches in their geographic area • The driving force of the Guild should be to focus on active involvement in local communities whilst not forgetting potential involvement in national and international initiative • The central organisation should be streamlined to become more focused on policy, communication and support • The continuation and development of a fellowship role for all who wish to be involved with the Guild at local Church level should be supported • The use of the word "project" should be dropped the word" initiative" should be used instead On people, the Focus Group recommends that: • The Guild should be focused on all men and women who have the time, the energy and the willingness to become actively involved in the new organisation. On image, the Focus Group recommends that: • Once the plans for the future are agreed in principle, the issue of rebranding must be thoroughly investigated and a new image must be created. Thereafter the implementation plan must include a comprehensive and wide-reaching communications programme about all aspects of the new look Guild.
4	Other Matters	The Focus Group suggests that the following points should be addressed in the next stage of the process: • How to reconcile the Christian ethos with other more secular outlooks • The use of technology is an opportunity for the future .

1.4 The above plan was discussed by the National Executive in March of 2014 and a further set of proposals, based on that discussion, was presented to the Executive in June 2014 by the General Secretary and the Associate Secretary. At that point, the following process was agreed:

Discussion of draft document	23/24 June 2014
Re-drafting of paper by General Secretary and Associate Secretary in conjunction with Leadership Team	July 2014
Review of second draft	National Executive, Sep 2014
Re-drafting of paper by General Secretary and Associate Secretary in conjunction with Leadership Team	By mid-October 2014
Consultation with Presbyterial Councils and other stakeholders as agreed by Executive	By mid-December 2014
Final report to Executive	February 2015
Report to General Assembly	May 2015