

Farewell thoughts from Heather Baily QPM, outgoing Chair of the SIA

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Heather Baily QPM reflects on the SIA's public protection role and its collaboration with the private security industry and partners during her time as chair.

Public protection is, and will always remain, at the heart of everything that drives myself, the SIA Chief Executive Michelle Russell, our Board and the whole of the SIA. We understand both this purpose and our duty to the public.

At this critical juncture in the SIA's history, our responsibility to deliver the Martyn's Law regulator sits high on our agenda. We remain grateful to Figen Murray for her tireless campaign, her support as a critical friend to the SIA and her challenge as we prepare to play our part in implementing this incredibly important law.

The SIA has a long track record of making effective and positive change in its role as a UK regulator. In the last 5 years the SIA has become a more responsive and innovative organisation, with a Board that desires and demands improved public safety outcomes. We have reviewed our licence-linked training requirements and strengthened areas focussed on public protection. This includes mandatory counter-terrorism and first aid training for close protection licence holders, and the introduction of first aid training for door supervisors and security guards. This was subsequently enhanced in line with recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry. We implemented initiatives to combat violence against women and girls, strengthened the integrity of the SIA licence, and increased our proactive enforcement to prevent those who pose a risk to the public from keeping their licence.

Under the stewardship of Michelle Russell and our new Chair Mike Cunningham, the SIA will continue to raise standards across the private security industry. The emphasis going forward is about quality of service rather than the number of licence holders or approved businesses.

I am proud of the work we continue to do in collaboration with the industry and public sector stakeholders. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to our thinking in recent years, like our stakeholder forum members, our special interest groups, our partners such as the APCC, NPCC, and local government, and those in the devolved administrations of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The SIA now has one of the most talented, creative and experienced boards of any public sector arm's length body - a fact of which I am particularly proud.

I am also proud of the fact that we continue to maintain the integrity of the independence of the SIA as a regulator operating as an arm's length body of government. That balance must be maintained to ensure that our regulation is objective, evidence-based and trusted by the public who we serve.

We have a constructive and productive working relationship with the Home Office and with the Security Minister, in particular. We had a similar productive working relationship with the Safeguarding Minister, who will also want to understand the practical outcomes of what we do in respect of protecting women, girls and anyone who is vulnerable in any way, through the work of our licence holders.

I want to pay tribute to the 458,075 individual licence holders who play a critical role keeping us, our public spaces and businesses safe 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year across the UK. Thank you for your dedication and professionalism – you really do contribute to community wellbeing and public safety in your own specific fields of security.

To our wonderful staff at the SIA: just continue to be fabulous. As a relatively small organisation, you have made and will continue to make a big impact. As someone who has worked in the public sector for more than 46 years, I remain incredibly proud of what you have achieved and continue to do.

And to my Board, thank you for your continual endeavours for the last 5 years. With Mike Cunningham's leadership, I know you will continue to deliver the outcomes which are needed to ensure the SIA remains a major contributor to better public safety outcomes.

It has been a privilege!

Heather Baily QPM

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/farewell-thoughts-from-heather-baily-qpm-outgoing-chair-of-the-sia>