

# The SOC Scotland's Bird Club



## COUNCIL MEETING 85/03 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021 Minutes

*SOC Scottish Charity Number: SC 009859  
A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation*

Session 85/03 of Council was held at 10:00 hrs on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021 using Zoom virtual conferencing software.

**Present:** Jeremy Wilson (Vice President and Chair), Lesley Creamer (Vice President), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Rich Kerr (Hon Treasurer), Will Cresswell, Elizabeth Irwin, Alan Knox, Jeremy Brock, Richard Somers Cocks, Bob McGowan, Neil Stratton, Jeremy Brock, Nina O'Hanlon, Alex Banwell.

**In Attendance:** Wendy Hicks,

### Action

- 1 Apologies for absence** In the absence of the President, Vice President Jeremy Wilson took the Chair. Apologies were received from President Ian Bainbridge, Chris Wernham, David Rackham, Rick Goater, Richard Leslie, Rachael Wilbourn, Peter Gordon and Zul Bhatia.
- 2 Minutes of Council Meeting 85/02 held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021** The minutes for the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were corrected and approved, having noted that Jeremy Brock should not have been listed as having been present.

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| <b>3 Finance Report</b> | <p>The Treasurer reported on the Finance Committee meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> August that had been convened to consider the financial impact of opening Waterston House for an extra day each week. He reported that the extra day opening had been approved.</p> <p>The Treasurer highlighted aspects of the Profit and Loss Report from end August 2021 that he presented to the meeting. He noted that Brewin Dolphin continued to forecast dividend levels to be lower than pre-pandemic levels. He welcomed the large donation that had been received in July, and that subscription receipts from members were steady and strong. Waterston House sales were now comparable to pre-pandemic levels, notwithstanding the more limited opening hours. He did also note that payroll costs had increased as had been expected.</p> |  |
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	<p>He also noted that costs were increasing generally in line with inflation and that there had been additional spending on the development costs of the app.</p> <p>In discussion, there was speculation as to why the membership had continued to increase, with suggestions that this might be attributed to the app, the availability of publications and to the perceived increase in interest in nature during the various lockdowns.</p> <p>The Accounts were approved subject to minor amendment. It was agreed that in future the Accounts should be seen by the Finance Committee first and their recommendation put before Council. Noted that this had not been possible on this occasion due to holidays and the effect this had had on the production of the accounts.</p> <p>WH reported on the progress that was being made with the Annual Report, which was being drafted and would be circulated to Council in October before the Annual Conference in order that it might be approved. Input from the branches was being sought, as was detail on the LBR workshop. The process was agreed. Noting that more members had agreed to receive the report electronically, so a smaller print run of the Report and Accounts would be required and more members were agreeing to email communication.</p>	<p><b>WH to circulate final draft Annual Report in October 2021</b></p>
<p>4 <b>Birding &amp; Science</b></p>	<p>The Chair referred to the minutes of the Birding and Science Committee meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021, that had been circulated.</p> <p>He noted that the Birding and Science Officer (“BSO”) was now in post and had “hit the ground running”. He was to be working to understand the issues with Local Bird Recorder groups. He was also tasked with delineating knowledge gaps in bird knowledge, in order that those gaps could be effectively targeted. He was being encouraged to visit branches</p> <p>WH outlined an opportunity that the BSO had helped secure: The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the SOC have teamed up to offer a training course at the end of this month. Places on this particular Volunteer Seabird at Sea (VSAS) course are to be open to SOC members only, with an email circulated to members inviting applications. Mark Lewis, a qualified VSAS trainer, will represent the SOC on board, as one of the trainers. WH referred to the paper that had been circulated for the details of the scheme. She reported that 26 applications had been received.</p> <p>In discussion, there was much support for the scheme, and anecdotal evidence of related initiatives operated on Brittany Ferries and to monitor whales. It was agreed that the scheme should be featured in <i>Scottish Birds</i>, and that the opportunity to publicise the SOC through the scheme be optimised. More information was needed on whether the participants in the scheme would become mentors for others and the level of their future use of the skills taught to them.</p> <p>It was reported that there had been an isolated instance of a member being unhappy at the appointment of the BSO, but that the points made had been answered in correspondence. Council agreed that the BSO should be encouraged to communicate about his role and goals to the membership and branches. The emphasis should be that the appointment was not a change of direction, but an enhancement of the ability of the SOC to fulfil its long standing goals. It was recognised that this was important at a time when COVID-19 had affected the way that SOC and its branches operate.</p> <p>The <i>Scottish Birds Goes Digital</i> project was proceeding. Mucky Puddle had built a Members-only portal on the website to allow access to a digital version</p>	<p><b>Feature the Scheme in <i>Scottish Birds</i>. Monitor its effect (ML/JA)</b></p> <p><b>BSO to continue to network, particularly at branch level.</b></p>

	<p>of the journal on a complimentary basis for the time being. Progress had been slower than had been hoped, but the work was nearly complete. Noted that correspondence from members suggested that there was enthusiasm for digital-only memberships, which were due to be introduced from September 2022.</p>	
5	<p><b>Management Report</b></p> <p>Lesley Creamer referred to the minutes of the Management Committee meeting that had taken place on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2021. She thanked WH and the rest of the staff for their continued flexibility in operating Waterston House in the current changing circumstances. There was a discussion on the extent to which the costs of working from home were balanced by the absence of commuting costs for employees.</p> <p>LC noted that there had not been much take up amongst the branches of the offer to share the SOC database. Fife Branch reported that they had considered whether they wanted to participate, but had thought the process too cumbersome. They had formed an independent WhatsApp group and used it to communicate with those that joined it.</p> <p>WH summarised the discussions on expanding the hours that Waterston House would be open.</p>	<p><b>WH to monitor results after HQ opening hours change</b></p>
6	<p><b>Event Planning</b></p> <p><b>ADD BIT ABOUT DECISION RE NO BRANCH AWARDS</b></p> <p>WH referred to the draft programme for the Annual Conference, noting that it was to be held virtually again. Alan Knox welcomed the programme, noting its theme reflected environmental concerns that would be highlighted at that time by COP26 in Glasgow. He thought that the SOC should develop and adopt its own environmental policy, to anticipate any members' questions on that point. Agreed that the Strategy Group should consider this point.</p> <p>The Secretary explained that it would not be possible to hold an AGM this year, as the conference was being held virtually and the SOC constitution did not allow for virtual members' meetings. Instead, there would be a section of the Conference where conventional members' business could be discussed. Noting that the inability to hold an AGM meant that Council appointments and the term of Council members and office bearers would continue until an AGM could be convened. That notwithstanding, Council did have powers to make appointments to fill any roles should there be resignations.</p> <p>Council agreed that as branch activities were severely hampered by COVID-19, there would be no call for Branch Recognition Awards this year.</p> <p>It was noted that Bob McGowan had intimated that he would be resigning from Council on the date of the Annual Conference (although he would continue his role on various committees). The Chair thanked Bob for the considerable service (eight years) he had already given to Council. After considering a proposal put forward by the Appointments Panel, it was agreed that Hannah Lemon should be appointed to Council as an Elected Member, at the time Bob's resignation became effective.</p> <p>It was also noted and agreed that other Office Bearers, including the Secretary and the Vice-President <i>Birding and Science</i> would continue in office pro tem until the next AGM, notwithstanding that they might exceed the periods before which they should have stood for re-election at an AGM.</p> <p>WH referred to the Youth Engagement programme that had been circulated.</p> <p>Arrangements for the Birdwatchers Conference being organised by the BTO and the SOC (Moray Branch) were described by Richard Somers Cocks, noting that the speakers had been engaged and the intention remained to hold the event as a</p>	<p><b>Strategy Group to consider adopting an environmental policy</b></p> <p><b>Appointment of Hannah Lemon to be effective from Annual Conference</b></p>

	<p>live conference in Elgin. In discussion, it was agreed that the Conference should be convened as a face-to-face event unless Scottish Government guidance nearer the time prohibited this. It was nonetheless thought prudent to have attendees book now, but pay only at the point when the format of the event could be confirmed, or irrevocable costs had been committed to by the SOC.</p> <p>RSC pointed out that Moray branch would not wish to hold over the Elgin conference further, should a face-to-face event not be possible again in 2022. It would be the turn of Central Scotland branch, which had originally been lined up to host the 2021 conference.</p>		
7	<b>Branch Activities</b>	<p>Council noted the paper that had been circulated. Most events that had been held had been virtual events, but it was anticipated that future social events would be face to face.</p>	
8	<b>Matters Arising</b>	<p>None outstanding, save for the format of future Council meetings. Agreed that the next meeting would be on Zoom. At the next Council meeting, 2022 dates would be considered and the format of those meetings.</p>	<p><b>Council to consider 2022 timetable and meeting format</b></p>
10	<b>AOCB</b>	<p>WH referred to the paper circulated regarding the situation with the Orkney Bird Report (OBR), which was close to being wound up as there was nobody willing to progress the production of the report. The paper noted that the funds from the OBR group, currently held by former report editor, Jim Williams, would be transferred to the SOC to be ring fenced for a successor OBR group for a period of five years after which time the funds would be transferred to central SOC funds for general use.</p> <p>The BSO was looking to recruit a replacement for Scott Paterson as the Perth and Kinross Local Bird Recorder.</p> <p>It was noted that Council did not receive a regular report on membership numbers and trends, as had been the case in the past. It was agreed that this report be restarted and included in Council business on a regular basis.</p>	<p><b>BSO to liaise with Jim W to try to find a solution and avoid demise of OBR.</b></p> <p><b>Include membership report at Council meetings</b></p>
11	<b>Next meeting</b>	<p>The next meeting was set for 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021.</p>	