

# The SOC Scotland's Bird Club



## COUNCIL MEETING 83/04 1st December 2019 Minutes

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

Session 83/04 of Council was held at 11:00 hrs on the 1st December 2019 at RSPB Loch Leven, Kinross.

**Present:** President Ian Bainbridge (Chair), Lesley Creamer (Vice President), Jeremy Wilson (Vice President), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Andrew Thorpe (Hon Treasurer), Alex Banwell, Zul Bhatia, Peter Gordon, Elizabeth Irwin, Alan Knox, Bob McGowan, Richard Somers Cocks, and Chris Wernham

**In attendance:** Wendy Hicks (SOC HQ).

### Action

- 1 **Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Helen Aiton, Jeremy Brock, Will Cresswell, Rick Goater, Nina O'Hanlon, David Rackham and Neil Stratton.
- 2 **Absent** John Campbell Richard Leslie and Geoff Sheppard were absent.
- 3 **Minutes of Council Meeting 83/03 held on 15 September 2019** The minutes for the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2019 were approved with only the most minimal amendments to correct typographical errors.

4	<b>Action Points</b>	At the Chair's suggestion, it was agreed that any action points that had not been dealt with during the course of the meeting should be considered at the end of the meeting.	
5	<b>Strategy Group: Update</b>	<p>It was reported that the meeting of the group that had been due to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 had had to be cancelled, but would be rescheduled in the early part of 2020.</p> <p>A number of issues would be considered at the rescheduled meeting:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of a suitable risk register</li> <li>• SOC Fellowships, and the criteria as to how and when they would be offered</li> <li>• How to enhance the value of the SOC for its younger members, building upon initiatives like the "Brains' Trust" that had been available to younger members at the SOC Conference in Pitlochry.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration on how the SOC might best interact with its local branches</li> <li>• Communications strategy generally</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that this list reflected the issues that had been delegated to the Strategy Group. In discussion, it was noted that the Group intended to give priority to the interaction with branches, as it would like to have a more developed position prior to the branches' conference. It was however noted that it would probably be September 2020 before this element of strategy could be presented to Council for consideration. The strategy for younger members would be considered with a similar sense of urgency, and it was hoped that this might be in a condition whereby it could be considered at the June 2020 Council meeting. The Risk Register and the Fellowship criteria had less priority. The intention was that these subjects should have been presented to Council for consideration before the end of 2020. It was agreed that the Strategy Group should consider these delegated matters during 2020, and thereafter refer to Council to agree what then outstanding issues could best be dealt with by the Strategy Group.</p> <p>There was a discussion on Communications strategy. A paper had been produced setting out how the SOC's communications were currently structured. This provided a base for the Strategy Group to consider more generally how and to whom future communications might be addressed -be it to active members, persons who attended branch meetings and/or outings, and members whose main contact with the SOC was through <i>Scottish Birds</i>. The chair referred to the paper that he had prepared suggesting the main groups with whom the SOC interacted. It was suggested that that list be supplemented to include photographers, visitors to Scotland, wildlife artists, and academics. It was suggested that data on the SOC's interactions with its members (and others) be gathered and analysed to determine the current position, regional variations and what appeared to be working best -be it to cultivate better citizen science/bird recording by more participants and/or more members for the SOC. There was discussion on the extent to which generating new members should be a priority of a communications strategy, and suggested that a decision on this point might form part of the agenda of the Strategy Group in the future. It was noted that the app, which was provided free to all rather than limited to members, could be used differently (albeit that its use as a recruitment tool could have GDPR issues), although it had been determined to use it to encourage the generation of scientific data, and fulfil an educational role for the general public.</p>	
7	<p><b>Finance: Update &amp; report</b></p> <p>The Treasurer, Andrew Thorpe (AT) reported on the last meeting of the Finance Committee, which had taken place in August 2019.</p> <p>He asked Council to note that the annual accounts, as presented to the AGM, had been approved at the AGM and had been filed with OSCR. A new Independent Examiner had been appointed, Whitelaw Wells replacing Sandy Scotland.</p> <p>It was noted that the management accounts that had been circulated to Council would be the last in that format. In future they would be formatted to show general statements of assets, liabilities and so on, rather than the detail used hitherto -although the detail would be available to those who wished to see it. They would also be supplemented by a budget, which would allow payments to</p>	

		<p>be anticipated and made from pre-committed budgets, rather than from general funds.</p> <p>The current deficit had been discussed with the new Independent Examiner, who was satisfied with the strategy behind it and that it did not in any way affect the SOC's status as a going concern.</p> <p>The Secretary foolishly volunteered to fill a gap on the Finance Committee.</p>	
8	<b>Birding and Science Committee</b>	<p>The Vice President, Jeremy Wilson (JW) referred to the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Committee, which had been tabled. A second meeting was scheduled for 14 February 2020, and it was intended to have two meetings each year.</p> <p>In discussion and developing the themes highlighted in the minutes, it was suggested that the SOC as a whole should endeavour to continue to improve how it communicated and integrated with the bird recording community, and suggestions as to how the State of Scotland's Birds report could be updated (including by following existing initiatives by the RSPB and BTO) were discussed.</p>	
9	<b>Management Committee</b>	<p>The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee were tabled.</p> <p>Council discussed the refurbishment of the foyer at Waterston House. It was noted there were challenges in implementing this at present due to staff constraints. It was agreed that the project to redevelop the area substantially was a matter that would require prior input from the Strategy Group, although the current modest plans to refurbish the area should be implemented when resources allowed.</p> <p>It was noted that a safeguarding procedure had been drafted to match the safeguarding policy. The work done in this area, and member comments, had highlighted the absence of an appropriate risk assessment. This had been noted by the Committee, and it was agreed that they would develop a template that would be made available through the website and which could then be used as was appropriate.</p>	
10	<b>Conferences: update &amp; report</b>	<p>The President reported how pleased he had been by the standard and delivery of the Annual Conference in Pitlochry. Apart perhaps from the absence of pudding on the first night, he had heard only praise from attendees.</p> <p>He was particularly pleased at how the sessions with young birders had been received and intended that the SOC follow up with them, reminding them about the SOC branch network, asking them to get involved on local committees, getting input from them on what they would like to see included in future conferences, and finding out from them how many were looking for careers in conservation and birding. He also recognised the need to use Youth Connect and social media better to keep in contact with them. It was suggested that at future conferences, young birders be seated at tables over dinner with potential mentors.</p> <p>In 2020, it was suggested that the Annual Conference be themed around the successes and challenges of conservation. Thought should be given to including one talk that was not just based on Scotland, if the subject had audience appeal. It was agreed that shorter sessions could be included in the programme, thus</p>	

		<p>encouraging younger researchers to present topics to the conference. There was also consideration as to whether workshop sessions be included, say on the use of the app; basic bird identification; and, use of BirdTrack. It was however noted that around 70% of the audience already participated in the smaller groups that went on the guided walks early on Saturday. A working group from the Birding and Science Committee would work on the draft agenda for the next annual conference. The suggested date for the Conference was 20 November 2020, although it would have to be confirmed that this did not clash with the bird ringers' event that was also scheduled for the end of 2020.</p> <p>A programme for the Scottish Birdwatchers Conference was circulated and noted.</p> <p>A Branch Conference was scheduled for the Grant Arms in Grantown-on-Spey. An invitation list was being prepared, with a view to encouraging active participation from each branch.</p>	
11	<b>Young Birders Training Update</b>	It was noted that this training was being reviewed, and that the review would have been completed and the training available in 2021, and used at the course then.	
12	<b>New Forward Dates for Council Meetings</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> September 2020 and 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2020	
13	<b>Other Matters arising</b>	Referring to the Action List, Council noted that all matters had been covered during the course of the meeting.	
14	<b>AOCB</b>	<p>Alan Knox presented a summary of how the app was being used. There had been two approaches enquiring if we would be interested in publishing a book version of Where to Watch Birds but this would be a great deal of work unless simply extracted from the app as it is, and this did not seem to be a good idea. It would quickly get out of date as well. After discussion, it was agreed that this might be pursued as an option, but only if the production of a book could be undertaken by a publisher with little expenditure of effort or time by the SOC.</p> <p>It was noted that the app was generating interesting data on where people were birding and the species they were interested in, both of which varied seasonally. There were also demographic data about the users which might be of interest in other contexts such as the SOC's marketing and audience development.</p> <p>It was noted that the app continued to generate useful data. The data is being retained and will be used for the benefit of the SOC and birding in Scotland generally.</p>	
15	<b>Next Meeting</b>	8 March 2020: 11:00 am at RSPB Loch Leven ( <b>Note: Subsequently changed to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020</b> )	