

The SOC

Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 87/02

11th June 2023 Minutes

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

Session 87/02 of Council was held at 1030 hrs on the 11th June 2023 at RSPB Loch Leven

Present: Ruth Briggs (President). Jeremy Wilson (Vice-President *Birding and Science*), Lesley Creamer (Vice-President *Management and Infrastructure*), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Richard Kerr (Hon Treasurer), Zul Bhatia, Will Cresswell, Elizabeth Irwin, Alan Knox, Richard Leslie, David Rackham, Richard Somers Cocks, and Rachael Wilbourn

Present using Zoom Software: Nina O'Hanlon, Hannah Lemon, Peter Gordon and Paul Tarling.

In Attendance: Wendy Hicks

1	Apologies for absence and preliminary business	Apologies were received from Chris Wernham, Neil Stratton and Rick Goater. The President welcomed Paul Tarling to his first Council meeting, and Jeremy Wilson to his last.
2	Minutes of Council Meeting 87/01 held on 15th March 2023	The minutes for the meeting on 15th March 2023 were approved. It was noted that all action points would be considered during the course of the meeting under different agenda items. It was also noted that the call for a Recorders meeting had been replaced by a series of workshops relating to knowledge gap work.
3	Finance	<p>The treasurer referred the meeting to the papers that had been circulated. They showed that the projected deficit had been eased by receipt of generous legacies and donations. That notwithstanding, the SOC continued to operate at a deficit, which at projected levels would result in the erosion of the reserves held to a negligible value within say five years. It was suggested that a minimum floor level for reserves should be set, perhaps based on the number of weeks of operating costs that could be supported without other income.</p> <p>The Treasurer presented the draft budget, summarising the assumptions it contained. Council approved the budget.</p> <p>Wendy Hicks explained that the website needed to be redeveloped at a contemplated budget of £40,000. This figure had been the estimate of Mucky Puddle, the current contractor who is working with Jane Allison on the required specification. Notwithstanding Jane's imminent maternity leave, it was agreed</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tender process to commence</p>

	<p>that the specification be used to run a tender process so that the SOC could be shown to be getting best value from its appointee for this work. There were questions on the necessity of the work (although it was noted that the existing software would not have any further security updates), and whether the existing website was over elaborate and could be simplified. Agreed that only what was required would be done.</p>	<p>for website reconstruction</p>
4	<p>Strategy Group</p> <p>The circulated paper representing the discussions at the April meeting was considered. The President focused attention on the branches strategy paper. She explained that she would be talking to Jane and forming a Branches Strategy Working Group to deliver better grass roots level participation opportunities for members.</p>	<p>RB to form Branches Strategy Working Group</p>
5	<p>Birding and Science Committee</p> <p>Although the Committee had not met, Jeremy Wilson confirmed that its work continued. By way of examples, a knowledge gaps paper had been published in <i>Scottish Birds</i>, the Birding and Science Officer had been in contact with local bird groups and there had been coordinated feedback on the BirdTrack users group by SOC members.</p> <p>Following the resignation of Birding and Science Officer Mark Lewis in May, the process to recruit a successor was explained. The handover notes that Mark had produced were very comprehensive and were helpful in developing the new job description which had been circulated. There was discussion on the terms of the job description and the job title itself, but both remained as presented to the meeting.</p> <p>The Secretary enumerated the representations that had been made to him about making this appointment at a time when the SOC was running a deficit. Members of Council present noted that the candidate was required to contemplate fundraising potential as part of their duties. Noted that it was difficult to raise capital to cover existing revenue costs. It was agreed that the role remained important to the SOC and its objects and ambitions, and that the recruitment should go ahead, and if that process produced the right individual, the appointment be made. It was noted in passing that making the post fixed term was unhelpful at the time of recruitment and did not ameliorate salary or termination costs.</p>	<p>WH to commence recruitment process for new BSO</p>
6	<p>Management Committee</p> <p>Lesley Creamer referred to the minutes of the last Management Committee meeting. Since the meeting, benchmarking information had been sourced and would be considered against existing salary levels.</p> <p>It was noted that the planned migration of the membership database to the Sheep CRM system had been abandoned, as the system build was showing itself to be unsatisfactory and not fit for purpose. One of the key benefits of the switch from MS Access database to a CRM system was to be able to provide branch officials with access to their members' contact details, for sending direct communications from the branch, as opposed to depending on HQ staff for circulating ad hoc notices. Membership Officer Kathryn Cox is working on a manual workaround to be able to facilitate this access in a GDPR-compliant manner. Noted that the lost capital costs from the decision not to proceed were approximately £5000. There was discussion of the lessons that had been learned. They included using Jane's experience in any tender process; not to act too quickly; and to use the</p>	

	<p>resource of the Management Committee and Finance Committee to approve projects.</p> <p>Noting that Wendy had produced a paper on staffing requirements that would be considered at Management Committee, but preliminary indications were that increased funding would be required.</p>	
	<p><i>(The meeting adjourned temporarily, for a presentation to Jeremy Wilson, marking his long and excellent service on Council and other SOC Committees and Groups.)</i></p>	
7	<p>Council Vacancies</p> <p>Noting that Lesley Creamer was stepping down as Vice-President <i>Management and Infrastructure</i> at the AGM in November 2023. A replacement would be sought. The Appointments Panel would be emailing the remit around Council, and Branch officials would be encouraged to nominate interested and suitable candidates. Lesley was being consulted by the Appointments Panel to generate a list of the duties she had performed.</p> <p>Noted that Chris Wernham left a vacancy on Council as she was now fulfilling the role of co-opted Vice-President <i>Birding and Science</i>. Will Cresswell was also due to retire by rotation but indicated that he would stand for re-election. He also suggested that youth members who attended SOC conferences be approached to join Council, on the grounds that it would be good for Council and for them.</p>	<p>Appointments panel to progress agreed actions in VP recruitment</p>
8	<p>Event Planning</p> <p>The draft programme for the Club’s Annual Conference was approved.</p> <p>Noted that the SOC/BTO Scottish Birdwatchers’ Conference will take place on the 23rd of March 2024 probably in the Walker Halls in Troon, Ayrshire. The organising group (DR, Ayrshire Chair Brian Lennox, BTO staff Ben Darvill and Steve Willis, and WH) would explore potential for a local theme.</p> <p>Report on the 2023 Scottish Bird Camp. Deemed another great success, involving 13 keen and happy young participants.</p> <p>Zul highlighted the Peregrine Watch at the University of Glasgow, which had attracted photographers, families and school groups, as well as birders. An article is due to appear in the December issue of <i>Scottish Birds</i>.</p>	<p>David Rackham to discuss local theme with the organising group</p>
9	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>The Secretary confirmed that he was reviewing the existing Trustee induction “pack”.</p> <p>Procedures for SOC Fellowship awards were discussed. Noted that no nominations had been received so far. Discussion as to when the Fellowships should be publicised, and the extent to which objective criteria should be required from nominees. Noted that the nominations would come to Council for approval.</p>	<p>Secretary to review Trustee Induction process</p>
10	<p>Membership</p> <p>Referring to the paper compiled by SOC Membership Officer Kathryn Cox, there had been a slight decrease in member numbers, but not a statistically significant drop.</p>	<p>WH to ask KC to look for any pattern in lapsed</p>

		memberships
11	AOCB	After discussion, it was agreed that issues of <i>Scottish Birds</i> that were more than one year old could be made available online to the public, representing a change from the current policy of withholding two years' worth of issues from the public domain.
		WH to organise upload of SB back issues to the website
12	Next meeting	Would be held by Zoom on 7 th September 2023 at 7pm. Suggested that the following meeting be scheduled for 6 th December 2023, also at 7pm