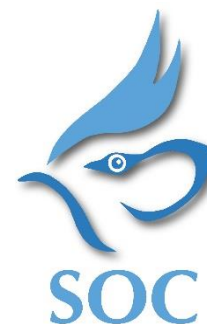


The SOC

Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 87/01

15th March 2023 Minutes

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

Session 87/01 of Council was held at 1800 hrs on the 15th March 2023 using Zoom virtual conferencing software.

Present: Ruth Briggs (President), Jeremy Wilson (Vice President), Lesley Creamer (Vice President), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Richard Kerr (Hon Treasurer), Alex Banwell, Chris Wernham, Zul Bhatia, Alan Knox, David Rackham, Elizabeth Irwin, Neil Stratton, Peter Gordon, Hannah Lemon and Rachael Wilbourn.

In Attendance: Wendy Hicks (Club Administrator), Jane Allison (Development Officer), Mark Lewis (Birding and Science Officer)

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| 1 | Apologies for absence and preliminary business | Apologies were received from Jeremy Brock, Richard Leslie, Richard Somers Cocks and Nina O'Hanlon. The President welcomed Council to its first (and trial) evening meeting. | |
| 2 | Minutes of Council Meeting 86/04 held on 4th December 2022 | The minutes for the meeting on 4 th December 2022 were approved, subject to inserting the correct spelling of Rachael Wilbourn's name. | |
| 3 | Branches Winter Meeting 2023-24 | Wendy outlined the response being put together in immediate and interim response to the discussions and feedback from the Branches. There was a majority in favour of the continued provision by HQ of four in-person meetings, rather than the proposed reduction to two (skills-based workshops). To address the issue of there being no capacity on staff to deliver this, Lothian member Stephen Hunter had been approached to take on the task of coordinating two talks for each branch, leaving Jane and Mark to focus on coordinating the workshops. Individual branches would be able to choose whether their workshops were in person or delivered virtually (via Zoom) and would nominate the workshop subjects that they wanted from a list that was being produced from the suggestions that the Branches themselves would supply on suitable topics. | JA emailing Branches for ideas of workshop topics and speakers Branch representatives on Council to ask their |

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| | | <p>To further facilitate the task of pulling together the 2023/24 programme, a small group of well-connected Club members (including David Jardine and Ken Shaw) had been identified and would be approached as a one-off exercise to provide two or three ideas each of good speakers/topics, to be fed directly to Stephen.</p> <p>In discussion, it was noted that the Aberdeen branch was keen to book an online session on BirdTrack with Scott Mayson (BTO). Clyde Branch reported that it was organising something along these lines already and suggested a joint session. This would be relayed to Jane for her to take into account when organising the workshops programme.</p> | <p>branches for feedback on the plan</p> <p>JA to note demand for BirdTrack workshop</p> |
| 4 | Finance | <p>The Treasurer presented the written Investment Review that Brewin Dolphin had produced. He highlighted that, although the risk level used to guide investment remained unchanged, the investment managers warned of continuing market volatility. The portfolio would be managed accordingly.</p> <p>From the circulated budget and profit and loss account, the Treasurer was able to show that the SOC was in a better position than had been budgeted, largely because a generous legacy had been received. He also reported that, as part of the development of the financial planning and accounting analysis capability of the SOC, he would be working towards producing individual event profit and loss analyses, initially for the Annual Conference.</p> <p>Council members were asked to approve the payment of honoraria to the editorial team of <i>Scottish Birds</i>. The three (net) payments of £220 and one payment of £550 to the appropriate team members were duly approved. It was noted that, as was required, payments of these sums were put through the Club's payroll, and therefore subject to appropriate treatment for tax purposes.</p> | <p>Treasurer to coordinate the production of event-specific analyses</p> |
| 5 | Strategy Group | <p>Ruth Briggs referred the meeting to the Strategy Group minutes and the statement of the Group's remit that she had prepared.</p> <p>A change was agreed to the draft Minutes that had been circulated to recognise the importance and involvement of staff in strategy and its implementation and the clumsiness of the way that this had originally been expressed.</p> | <p>Secretary to change draft Strategy Group minutes as agreed</p> |
| 6 | Birding and Science | <p>It was reported that since the previous Council meeting, and in discussion amongst the members of the Appointments Panel, Jeremy Wilson and Chris Wernham, it had been agreed that Council be recommended to co-opt Chris Wernham as Vice President <i>Birding and Science</i> from such date in the summer of 2023 as shall be mutually agreed between Jeremy and Chris. Council enthusiastically accepted the recommendation and prospectively co-opted Chris to the role on those terms.</p> <p>Jeremy Wilson highlighted the following from the Birding and Science Committee's minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Knowledge Gaps that had been identified were to be shared online to encourage participation to fill those gaps. • Following a lack of interest in an in-person Local Bird Recorders' conference, two online workshops had organised instead. | |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The questionnaire on BirdTrack that had been circulated had generated a big response that needed to be analysed. • The Birding and Science Officer’s work programme had filled up, and the results benefitted the Birding and Science Committee. <p>In discussion, it was suggested that the birding community and the responses it would provide would steer how perceived knowledge gaps were filled, although the SOC would be monitoring to ensure that gaps really were being dealt with. It was recognised that it was difficult for the SOC to provide a more active lead in the project due to the resources that the Club is able to allocate to the project through its research and surveys grants.</p> | |
| 7 | Management Committee | <p>Lesley Creamer referred to the minutes of the last Management Committee meeting. Noting in particular that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All appraisals had been completed • The salary increase review had concluded, aided by a benchmarking exercise against similar organisations’ wage rises. Staff were to be awarded an extra 1% from 1 April 2023 (on top of the 5% awarded in January), effectively translating to a 6% rise over the year. Noting that salary year was being moved from calendar to financial year. • The three-month trial split off of some of Wendy’s office management responsibilities to staff member Mairead Lyons was being implemented. The staff had been informed, and there had been no negative comments. • Shenaz was to be taking maternity leave, and cover was being organised using Caitlin Street, who had previously volunteered at Waterston House. <p>Council gave best wishes to Shenaz.</p> <p>Discussion as to whether training was required for Mairead to assume the duties of Wendy that she had been allotted. Suggested that the required skills accorded with her current role and capabilities.</p> <p>All staff roles and responsibilities to be benchmarked and considered later in 2023 to ensure that work is being allocated appropriately, that it can be done efficiently and that employees were not under too much pressure.</p> <p>Volunteers from Council sought to review the existing HR policies</p> | <p>Management Committee to make arrangements to benchmark existing roles</p> <p>Seeking Council members with HR expertise</p> |
| 8 | Governance and Trustee Responsibility | <p>The Secretary described the responsibilities of charitable trustees in terms of trust law, charity law and the current and proposed statute law, and related it to the current practices of the SOC.</p> <p>In questions, the Secretary was invited to consider what practices could be improved.</p> <p>Agreed to circulate the OSCR Guidelines to all Trustees.</p> | <p>Secretary to consider existing processes for trustee induction and to circulate OSCR Guidelines for Trustees</p> |

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| 9 | Event Planning | <p>Wendy described the work being done to develop the 2023 Annual Conference on (or including) Bird Sounds.</p> <p>The following list of potential topics and ideas was circulated</p> <p>“Sound birding: the acoustic world of birds”</p> <p>Bird song dialects Passive acoustic monitoring/ nocturnal migration listening – use and getting started Bird song in music and culture Individual recognition using calls and songs Surveying shy/invisible but noisy species Bird song/call evolution/change in urban areas Learning bird song/calls; apps and techniques Use and ethics of playback Bird song archives; Xeno canto project Duets in birds Identifying “cryptic” species and their evolution through studying differences in calls</p> <p>Bird quiz – calls and songs only!</p> <p>Noted that Alan Knox and Rosie should be involved in planning the event if it was to include the SOC Sound Archives.</p> <p>There was debate on whether the Young Birders attending conference should be split from the other delegates. The prevailing opinion was that they should not.</p> <p>It was noted that 240 people were due to attend this year’s Scottish Birdwatchers’ Conference (Stirling, 18th March). By rotation, Ayrshire Branch were currently considering hosting the 2024 Conference. Other venues being considered for future conferences were Dundee and Orkney.</p> | |
| 10 | Matters Arising | <p>Alan Knox repeated his opinion that the Application for Fellowship procedure should include stated criteria against which applications would be judged.</p> <p>Jane Allison would be reporting on the actions she is taking to engage with Branches to meet the various points raised at the Branches Weekend.</p> | RB to look at the criteria |
| 11 | Membership Trends | <p>The tabled report on membership trends was considered. It was noted that there was a small upward trend in membership numbers. Around 30% of new members were opting for the digital option. This was comparable to the proportion of existing members who had converted their membership to digital.</p> | |
| 12 | AOCB | <p>There was none.</p> | |
| 13 | Next meeting | <p>Would be held in person at Loch Leven on 11 June 2023.</p> | |

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| | <p>Zoom meetings were proposed for dates around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First week September 2023 (weekday evening)• First week December 2023 (weekday evening) -avoiding clash with the BTO Conference <p>If it was agreed to persist with midweek zoom meetings, it was suggested that they be held between 1900hrs and 2100hrs.</p> | |
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