

The SOC

Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 84/03

29th November 2020 Minutes

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

Session 84/03 of Council was held at 10:30 hrs on the 29th November 2020 using GoToMeeting virtual conferencing software.

Present: President Ian Bainbridge (Chair), Lesley Creamer (Vice President *Management & Infrastructure*), Jeremy Wilson (Vice President *Birding & Science*), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Andrew Thorpe (Hon Treasurer), Zul Bhatia, Will Cresswell, Elizabeth Irwin, Alan Knox, David Rackham, Richard Somers Cocks, Neil Stratton, Jeremy Brock, Bob McGowan, Alex Barnwell, Peter Gordon and Chris Wernham

In Attendance: Wendy Hicks (Club Administrator), Mark Wilkinson (Birding & Science Committee member)

Action

- 1 **Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Nina O'Hanlon and Rick Goater.
- 2 **Minutes of Council Meeting 84/02 held on 6th September 2020** The minutes for the meeting on 6th September 2020 were approved, subject to correcting references to the Local Bird Recording Groups and to Jeremy Wilson's new job title with RSPB.

3	Strategic Planning Group	<p>The Chair reported on the most recent meeting of the Group. He outlined the developing Comms Strategy, and explained how Jane would be advancing that when she returned after her maternity leave. The Chair would be discussing this and her other priorities around the Young Birders Group and the website/app development.</p> <p>The Chair invited the representatives of the branches who had an affiliation to the Local Bird Recording group to describe the findings that they had made. The reports received showed that neither the branches nor the SOC had had, from the time that the particular Local Bird Recording group had been formed, any management locus over the committee or its reports. In the circumstances, the SOC was not responsible for the group or its actions, and it was agreed that this</p>	
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	<p>position should be reinforced by requiring the removal of the SOC logo from the committee's reports.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the branches for the considerable work they had done in researching the position. From the lessons learned he summarised the actions that the Strategy Group had suggested:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforcing the equality statement on the SOC website to include reference to policy on bullying and harassment, and that this statement be extended to apply to members and volunteers. Third parties with whom the SOC had dealings, such as non-affiliated Local Bird Recording groups should be urged to adopt similar policies. • Staff at the SOC would review the links between the SOC and Local Bird Recording groups and whether those links were accurately depicted in Reports through use of logos and so on. It was agreed that this would show a diverse range of affiliation, and recognised that changing these individual and historic relationships to any standard would be difficult. • The chair write to the original complainer outlining the findings. <p>After discussion, it was agreed that these proposals be adopted.</p> <p>There was a separate report on the issues that Clyde Branch were having with a Local Bird Recorder. Support was being provided from SOC HQ that could help progress matters.</p> <p>The Chair presented a written report on Fellowships, and the recommendations were adopted by acclamation, noting that there should only be one award in each category. The initiative would be advertised appropriately in the News and Views section of <i>Scottish Birds</i>.</p> <p>It was recognised that the ongoing restrictions to suppress COVID continued to make event planning difficult. Council considered and agreed the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting that Moray were to be holding in 2021 would be rescheduled to 2022 when it should be possible to hold a face to face meeting. A more restricted virtual event for 2021 would be considered, and it was noted that BTO would provide assistance with that. • The Branches weekend at the Grant Arms in Grantown-on-Spey would be moved to 2022 • The Local Bird Recorders meeting would also be rescheduled to 2022, again with the possibility of a less ambitious virtual (or even limited face to face) event in 2021. It was noted that the early appointment of a suitable Birding Officer would be required to facilitate this. • The Isle of May course would be reviewed, with the intention of restarting it in 2022 • The Young Birders' Training Camp scheduling needed further thought. There had been previous suggestions (including from sponsors) that it could slip to an autumn event, but the survey work was more suitable for summer months. Agreed that Jane should consider in consultation with Ben from the BTO and schedule and/or postpone as appropriate. • Conference and AGM was scheduled for 2021, as the 2020 booking had been carried over. Although the practicality of a face to face event 	<p>WH to publish policy on website</p> <p>Review of links to LBR groups to commence</p> <p>IB to write</p> <p>Fellowship announcement in <i>Scottish Birds</i></p>
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	<p>at the end of 2021 would require consideration nearer the time, planning would start now to develop a conference with a conservation theme to match the contemporaneous international focus on those issues.</p>	
4	<p>Finance: Update & report</p> <p>The Treasurer, Andrew Thorpe reported that the annual accounts and report had been approved and would be filed with OSCR. He noted the help and guidance received during the year from Whitelaw Wells, the new Independent Accountants.</p> <p>The Treasurer summarised the current position on income and expenditure, the receipt of a generous donation and the grants that had been applied for and received. All put the SOC in a stable position, and the value of investments was holding up. Membership income and numbers were also stable, although the accounts could be improved by separating and reporting on both aspects, and the intention was to do that in the accounts for 2021.</p>	<p>AT to file report and accounts</p>
5	<p>Birding & Science</p> <p>Jeremy Wilson introduced Mark Wilkinson, who took Council through the paper he had prepared on “<i>Scottish Birds goes digital</i>”. He outlined the trend in publishing newspapers and bird reports to digital productions, set out the increased audience that digital issues could reach and the economies it allowed by eliminating physical distribution costs. The difficulties of using the SOC’s existing database format for digital distribution was noted, and two solutions outlined. One involved transcribing the existing database into a contemporary proprietary format, the other developing an independently accessible member database. Mark referred to the paper circulated for the decisions that would be needed to progress the initiative.</p> <p>There followed a lively discussion on digital publication of pdfs and searchable web content, appropriate pricing models for digital and non-digital subscribers, acknowledged difficulties with the SOC database and the requirement to develop it (and possibly supporting hardware). Because of the disparate issues raised the Chair recommended that a working group be set up to determine how to progress a digital publishing initiative, what practical steps would be needed, how long it would take to become established and outline costs. The group should also consider what format should be used, as the option of searchable web content had received strong backing in the discussions of Council. It was noted that the <i>Scottish Birds</i> editorial team was being renewed, which could also take some time to settle, but nonetheless the ambition should be to have a digital version of <i>Scottish Birds</i> available in September 2021, with the possibility of a digital membership being introduced from September 2022.</p> <p>[Mark Wilkinson left the meeting after being thanked for his presentation by the Chair]</p> <p>Jeremy Wilson shared the minutes of the Birding and Science committee from 18th September 2020, noting that the discussion of producing a digital version of <i>Scottish Birds</i> had been rehearsed there. He outlined the conclusion of the committee on the requirement for a Birding Officer, who would take on the tasks that the committee had identified. This had been discussed with the Chair, and</p>	<p>Working group of WH, Jane, Mark Wilkinson and a representative of the <i>Scottish Birds</i> editorial team to be constituted</p> <p>Finance Committee to consider and report</p>

		it had been agreed that a suitable job description should be produced whilst the Finance Committee was charged with determining how the post should be funded, noting that the level of reserves was greater than the levels that OSCR suggested as minimum cover.	
6	Management Report	Lesley Creamer referred to the Management Committee meeting that had taken place on 26 th November 2020 and the report that had been prepared for it by WH. She noted that appraisals were being scheduled, the HR adviser's contract was being cancelled, the possibility of increased opening of Waterston House was being considered, arrangements were to be made to meet a consultant to review GDPR policies, and the safeguarding policy that had been drafted was in the process of being finalised.	
7	Conference and AGM	WH reported on the Virtual Annual Conference and AGM. There had been 101 registrations, although only 65 attendees. Technology issues had excluded some members. This was disappointing as a specialist platform had been used for the event, but it had not performed well. (A compensatory credit had been received from the organisers.) The talks and other content had been made available on YouTube and other platforms for those who had not been able to attend.	
8	Honoraria	The honorarium for the Hon Treasurer was approved. It was noted that this would be the last year that this was paid, as OSCR suggested that the practice of payment of honoraria to office bearers did not accord with contemporary good governance and therefore arrangements with the current Hon Secretary and any replacement for the current Hon Treasurer would reflect this. Honoraria for the editorial team at Scottish Birds were not affected by this change, and levels of honoraria would be considered and set by the Finance Committee.	
9	Matters Arising	None outstanding.	
10	AOCB	In answer to a question, WH said that she would confirm whether links to the Spoonbill Sandpiper talk from the Conference could be made available more widely than the membership. The Chair acknowledged the welcome receipt of the Marsh Award for Local Ornithology for the app. It also noted that Mike Sinclair had been honoured by Marsh in the Young Ornithologist category.	WH to confirm