

The SOC

Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 84/02

6th September 2020 Minutes

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

Session 84/02 of Council was held at 10:30 hrs on the 6th September 2020 using GoToMeeting virtual conferencing software.

Present: President Ian Bainbridge (Chair), Lesley Creamer (Vice President), Jeremy Wilson (Vice President), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Andrew Thorpe (Hon Treasurer), Zul Bhatia, Will Cresswell, Elizabeth Irwin, Nina O'Hanlon, Alan Knox, David Rackham, Richard Somers Cocks, Neil Stratton, Richard Leslie, Chris Wernham

In Attendance: Wendy Hicks

		Action
1	Apologies for absence	Apologies were received from Alex Banwell, Peter Gordon, Jeremy Brock and Rick Goater. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and explained conventions to be followed in a virtual meeting. The Chair noted with sadness the passing of Jimmy Maxwell, who had a long and auspicious involvement with the SOC.
2	Minutes of Council Meeting 84/01 held on 14 June 2020	The minutes for the meeting on 14 th June 2020 were approved, subject to correct references to the meeting session being included.
3	Strategic Planning Group	<p>The Chair reported on the most recent meeting of the Group. He explained that there had been investigations into two matters relating to local bird report groups, and summarised what had been discovered about those individual cases.</p> <p>In the ensuing discussions, examples of organisations extending modified staff policies on harassment to volunteers were noted, as were the guidelines of the Association of European Records and Rarities Committee in relation to the governance of recording committees.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the relationships between the various local bird report groups and the SOC were often unclear, but it was agreed that the SOC should have appropriate policies on matters such as bullying and harassment, that these</p>

Strategic Planning Group to commission appropriate policies. Individual cases to be investigated with the

	<p>should be publicised to branches who would require that they be adopted by local volunteers and, where appropriate, local bird report groups. Moves should also be made to standardise relations with local bird report groups.</p> <p>The Chair described the progress that had been made with the Communications Strategy. It would provide structure and targets when Jane Allison returned to work at the end of November 2020.</p> <p>The Chair noted that David Rackham was stepping down from the Strategic Planning Group. Elizabeth Irwin was gently cajoled into taking his place on the Group.</p>	<p>help of local branches concerned.</p>
4	<p>Finance: Update & report</p> <p>The Treasurer, Andrew Thorpe (AT) referred to the tabled reports from the Finance Committee. He described the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had had on income from exhibitions, sales and events. He noted that a local authority grant for £20,000 had been received and that one staff member had been furloughed under the Government scheme. The combined net effect was that the organisation was very slightly ahead of last year's position.</p> <p>Cash reserves had been eroded slightly, but were projected to recover when membership subscriptions were received in September. The performance of investments held during the year had suffered from market volatility, but had recovered much of their value.</p> <p>The production of the year end accounts by the new independent examiner was taking more time than expected, perhaps as a result of remote working. Whilst the accounts would be ready on time, perhaps some of the more ambitious aspirations for the annual report would have to wait until the next set of accounts.</p> <p>There was discussion of developing online retail ability to boost income, noting however the potential expense and resource commitment necessary. Schemes to receive commissions from retailers to whom members had been referred (eg, Viking) and charitable donations from retailers (eg Amazon Smile) were also mentioned.</p>	<p>WH to look into such schemes</p>
5	<p>Birding & Science</p> <p>Jeremy Wilson reported that as a result of the impact of COVID-19 (which included the furloughing of a member of staff) some of the planned actions and initiatives had had to be modified and output from the group was accordingly less than had originally been planned.</p> <p>He noted that steps had been taken to collate the knowledge gaps in <i>The Birds of Scotland</i> (BS3). In discussion with Alan Knox, it was noted that this would be used to target future funding. Jeremy described the work that Stuart Rivers was doing now that his furlough was finished and he was back at work. This included following up with local bird recorders working on better access to local bird reports on the SOC website and liaising with BTO on nocturnal migration recording. Jeremy also noted that the group was represented on the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group by Mike Thornton.</p> <p>The Chair took a moment to congratulate Jeremy Wilson on his promotion within the RSPB to Head of Research in Scotland, Conservation Science.</p>	

6	<p>Management Report</p> <p>Lesley Creamer referred to the Committee minutes that had been circulated, highlighting the work that Wendy Hicks (WH) had done on HR policies for staff.</p> <p>WH reported on the reopening of Waterston House. Early signs were that fewer people were visiting, which meant that there had been no outdoor queuing. Team meetings were continuing to develop practical solutions for issues as they arose or were anticipated and to refine the operation of staff working from home.</p> <p>The Chair, on behalf of Council, congratulated the whole staff team for the way that they have dealt with the challenges that have been posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Chair thanked David Rackham and his team for the paper that they had prepared on conducting virtual meetings. In discussion it was noted that some speakers were sensitive to their talks being recorded, and it was agreed that this could be discussed with them, and would be optional.</p>	
7	<p>Conferences</p> <p>The Chair referred to the paper that had been prepared on developing a programme for an online AGM and conference spread over a weekend. There was discussion on potential conference platforms, and on paid for sessions (or encouraging donations) to defray these specific costs. Noting that focus should be on catering for members at the conference, notwithstanding that there was an ability to open it to a much wider audience.</p> <p>It was agreed that the projected Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference could not be held face to face. WH would announce this on the website. It was agreed that the work that had been done on this conference could be used in on line presentations, for instance during Spring 2021.</p>	<p>WH to tell members of cancellation</p>
8	<p><i>Scottish Birds</i></p> <p>Congratulations were given to the existing team for continuing to produce <i>Scottish Birds</i> during the pandemic. The Chair noted that Ian Andrews had intimated that he wished to stand down. The Chair asked Council to consider who might make a suitable replacement. It was reported that the position would be advertised in the next issue of <i>Scottish Birds</i>.</p>	<p>JW and WH to discuss this significant appointment.</p>
9	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None outstanding.</p>	
10	<p>AOCB</p> <p>Noted that good nominations had been received for the Branch Awards, and that the Awards would be made at the Autumn Conference.</p> <p>Branch secretaries wanted to share data held on the central database. Because this was not held on "the Cloud" that information could not be shared in this way at present.</p> <p>There was a polite request that draft Council minutes be available more quickly on the SOC website.</p> <p>Alan Knox gave an update on App use, which had recovered from the dip that had been noticed at the start of lockdown.</p>	<p>Management Committee to consider constructing an accessible database for branches</p>
15	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>29th November 2020 : 11:00 am and to be held virtually</p>	

