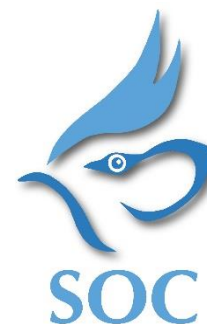


# The SOC

## Scotland's Bird Club



### COUNCIL MEETING 87/03

### 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023 Minutes

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

Session 87/03 of Council was held at 1900 hrs on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023 using Zoom Conferencing Software

**Present:** Ruth Briggs (President). Chris Wernham (Co-opted Vice-President *Birding and Science*), Lesley Creamer (Vice-President *Management and Infrastructure*), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Alex Banwell, Zul Bhatia, Will Cresswell, Pete Gordon, Alan Knox, Hannah Lemon, Nina O'Hanlon, David Rackham, Richard Somers Cocks, Neil Stratton, Paul Tarling and Will Cresswell

**In Attendance:** Sandra Boyle from Whitelaw Wells and SOC Staff members Wendy Hicks, Caitlin Street, Mairead Lyons and Jane Allison

			Action
1	<b>Apologies for absence and preliminary business</b>	Apologies were received from Elizabeth Irwin, Richard Leslie, Rick Goater, Rich Kerr and Rachael Wilbourn.	
2	<b>Presentation of the Annual Accounts for year ended 31 March 2023</b>	<p>Sandra Boyle for the Independent Examiner, Whitelaw Wells, summarised the salient highlights from the draft annual accounts that had been tabled, noting that it was a clean report given on a going concern basis, that income was up on the previous year, investment values had been down at the year end, but had recovered. Costs had increased with inflation and as a result of increased staff numbers. The cash and debtor position was and remained healthy.</p> <p>Council agreed that thanks were due to the Treasurer, Mairead and to Whitelaw Wells for the timeous preparation of the accounts. It was agreed that the draft accounts be approved and that the President should sign the accounts on behalf of the SOC.</p> <p>Sandra Boyle left the meeting.</p>	<b>RB to sign adopted Annual Accounts</b>
3	<b>SOC Website update</b>	The President summarised how the Club's current website developer, Mucky Puddle, had been appointed to migrate the SOC website to a new (secure) CMS (content management system) i.e. platform, although time and work pressures had meant that it had not been possible to run a procurement process.	

		<p>Jane Allison joined the meeting fresh from a call with Mucky Puddle and updated the paper that had been circulated with details from that call.</p> <p>Council heard how the website would function and appear during the period when it was being migrated and of mitigation measures taken on the security front- all forms (gathering sensitive information) had been removed from the site and either hosted elsewhere or alternative offline data gathering methods employed. Some high-risk countries were being temporarily blocked from accessing the site, to minimise risk of hacking. It was agreed that Mucky Puddle's tender for the work be accepted as the projected cost was within the financial parameters that had previously been agreed.</p> <p>Council thanked Jane for all her work with Mucky Puddle to pin down the details of the project.</p> <p>Jane left the meeting.</p>	
4	<b>Minutes of Council Meeting 87/02 held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023</b>	The minutes for the meeting on 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 were approved once the listed participants had been reconciled with those who had actually attended.	
5	<b>Finance</b>	<p>The tabled management accounts were noted. It was reported that the tabled Procurement Policy had also been considered by the Finance Committee, and was now being recommended for adoption. After consideration, the Policy was adopted.</p> <p>In the context of the generous legacies shown by the accounts, Alan Knox reported on a scheme being used by Aberdeen University to provide "free wills" in the hope of attracting more legacies.</p> <p>Mairread left the meeting</p>	<b>Finance Committee to consider</b>
6	<b>Strategy Group</b>	<p>The minutes of the Strategy Group were noted.</p> <p>The president confirmed that she was still recruiting for a Branches Strategy Working Group to deliver better grass roots level participation opportunities for members and carry forward outcomes from the 2022 Branches Weekend event in Speyside.</p> <p>Caitlin left the meeting</p>	<b>RB to recruit for a Branches Strategy working group</b>
7	<b>Birding and Science Committee</b>	<p>Chris Wernham commented on the tabled minutes of the meeting of the Birding and Science Committee, and on other aspects of the handover from Jeremy Wilson, including the welcome appointment of Will Cresswell onto the Committee.</p> <p>She highlighted the good communications skills and relevant volunteering experience of the newly appointed Birding and Science Officer ("BSO"), David Raffle. Neil Stratton asked that it be recorded that he did not think that the SOC should be recruiting at a time when financial projections had suggested an</p>	

		<p>annual deficit of around £100,000, with no firm proposals to increase revenue. The President noted that these points had been discussed at the previous Council meeting but that it had been Council's wish to continue with the recruitment of a BSO and to make the appointment. It was, however, agreed that the SOC should remain aware and focused upon the financial position. There was further discussion on the extent to which the SOC should be implementing income generating activities (and data selling was suggested, acknowledging that there could be issues with Local Bird Recorders in connection with some data).</p>	
8	<b>Management Committee</b>	<p>Lesley Creamer referred to the minutes of the last Management Committee meeting. She also reported that another Staff Day had been held, that an appointment had been made to cover the maternity leave of Development Officer Jane Allison, the benchmarking process was continuing satisfactorily, and that the previous arrangements to split off the Office Manager from the wider Club administration were being refined in the short term by having Mairead work four days a week instead of three i.e. an extra day in addition to her Finance Officer shift.</p> <p>The President noted that this was Lesley's last Council meeting and enumerated with thanks all of the work that Lesley had been involved in and her commitment to the SOC and to supporting staff.</p>	
9	<b>Council and Committee vacancies and nominations</b>	<p>On behalf of the Appointments Panel, Pete Gordon outlined the candidates for vacant posts within the SOC. After discussion, it was agreed that:-</p> <p>George Ross be recommended to the members at the AGM as the new Vice-President <i>Management and Infrastructure</i>;</p> <p>Brian Cox be so recommended as an Elected Member to Council;</p> <p>Will Creswell's appointment to the Birding and Science committee be noted;</p> <p>Stephen Metcalfe's appointment to the Management Committee be noted; and</p> <p>Nina O'Hanlon's appointment to the BS3 Fund Committee be noted.</p>	
10	<b>Event Planning</b>	<p>Wendy summarised the work that she was currently doing on events, and it was noted that she had matters under control, with all speakers for the annual conference confirmed. She noted that Jane had worked hard alongside branch officials to finalise the Winter Meetings Programme in time for including an attractive and comprehensive printed brochure in the September Club mailing, The planned new skills workshops element of the programme was proving to be a much bigger and more challenging task than anticipated, particularly as it had fallen to her in the absence of a BSO.</p> <p>Planning of the Youth Events programme of online talks/workshops was delayed, with discussions still to take place with SOC's YE partner, BTO Scotland.</p> <p>David Rackham updated Council on arrangements being made for the Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference, to be held in Troon on 23 March 2024. The venue, Troon Concert and Walker Halls had been booked and the programme almost finalised, apart from one slot. He asked Council for suggestions of a speaker on raptors.</p>	

11	<b>Membership Trends</b>	Kathryn Cox's excellent report showing stable member numbers was noted.	
12	<b>Fellowships</b>	Noting that seven notes of support for a fellowship nomination for Nick Picozzi had been received, and that the Appointments Panel were recommending that the award be made. The President pointed out Nick's important work on Black Grouse, Capercaillie and Hen Harriers in particular, noting that he had had papers on these subjects published as well as contributing articles to periodicals. Council agreed with the recommendation and that the fellowship be awarded to Nick Picozzi at the forthcoming SOC Annual Conference.	<b>RB to write to successful candidate</b>
13	<b>Matters Arising</b>	Work remained to be completed on updating the Trustee induction process.	<b>RB and DL to discuss</b>
14	<b>AOCB</b>	The circulated Winter Meetings Programme was noted with approval. Noting the amount of work from Jane and the branches that had gone into this.	
15	<b>Next meeting</b>	<p>Council's next meeting was to be held by Zoom on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7pm. Suggested that the provisional schedule for Council meetings in 2024 be as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 March (Zoom)</li> <li>• 9 June (face to face, and possibly somewhere other than RSPB Loch Leven)</li> <li>• 4 September (Zoom)</li> <li>• 4 December (Zoom)</li> </ul>	

Signed by Ruth Briggs (SOC President):



Date: 6 December 2023