

The SOC Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 85/04 5th December 2021 Minutes

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

Session 85/04 of Council was held at 10:00 hrs on the 5th December 2021 using Zoom virtual conferencing software.

Present: Jeremy Wilson (Vice President and Chair), Lesley Creamer (Vice President), David Lindgren (Hon Secretary), Richard Kerr (Hon Treasurer), David Rackham, Zul Bhatia, Will Cresswell, Elizabeth Irwin, Alan Knox, Jeremy Brock, Richard Somers Cocks, Neil Stratton, Rachael Wilbourn, Peter Gordon, Chris Wernham, Hannah Lemon, Nina O'Hanlon

In Attendance: Wendy Hicks, Mark Lewis (Item 3)

Action

1 Apologies for absence In the absence of the President, Vice President Jeremy Wilson took the Chair. Apologies had been received from President Ian Bainbridge and Richard Leslie. The Chair welcomed Hannah Lemon to her first Council meeting and a round of introductions followed.

2 Minutes of Council Meeting 85/03 held on 19th September 2021 The minutes for the meeting on 19th September 2021 were corrected and approved, subject to correcting the list of Council members who were present.

3 Engagement and support of Local Bird Recording Community	<p>Mark Lewis presented the paper he had tabled, explaining how the Local Bird Recording (LBR) had been approached, and the issues that had been identified. He outlined how the community would be developed and solutions shared across it. The Chair reminded Council of the issues that had triggered the work that Mark had done.</p> <p>In discussion it was agreed that understanding the methodology of the LBRs was a sound start to developing the LBR community. It was also noted that the groups did not have a standard approach as to how the research and data they produced were published or otherwise shared. Mark agreed that it would be</p>	
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	beneficial to make datasets available, although this was not part of the project at its outset.	
4	<p>Appointment Process for new President</p> <p>The Secretary outlined the process by which a new President would be selected and appointed. Noting that the appointee would be co-opted onto Council and the appointment ratified by the members at the next AGM. He noted that much of the initial work for selecting the candidate would fall to the Appointments Panel. Nina O’Hanlon had volunteered to fill the gap on the panel, and her appointment was unanimously confirmed by Council.</p> <p>Council was asked to consider and suggest suitable candidates to Wendy Hicks, who would pass them on to the Appointments Panel.</p> <p>It was noted and agreed that in the interim, Jeremy Wilson would be Acting President pending co-option of a new President. Ian Bainbridge had agreed to write his final foreword for <i>Scottish Birds</i> March edition and was also engaged in writing to thank the speakers from the last Annual Conference.</p> <p>Council asked that its thanks to Ian for the excellent work he had done for the SOC in challenging circumstances. It was agreed that a suitable gift would be acquired and presented.</p>	<p>Council to consider and recommend candidates for President</p> <p>WH and LC to liaise on present</p>
5	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>The Treasurer referred to the Finance Committee meeting of 14th October and the minutes that had been circulated. He noted that the budget process had restarted now that the uncertainties attributable to the COVID pandemic and the resulting restrictions effect on the SOC’s operations appeared to be receding. A budget for the financial year 2022-23 was in preparation.</p> <p>The Finance Committee was also reviewing subscription levels and would make their recommendations to Council in order that the new subscription costs could be advertised to members in the June edition of <i>Scottish Birds</i>.</p> <p>The Treasurer referred to the Management Accounts that had been circulated. He highlighted the new income that was coming from Easy Fundraising, an option that customers could select when online shopping. He noted that guided walks were operating at a small profit. The recent art exhibition had been very popular, but any sales from it occurred after the accounts date. In aggregate, the SOC were running a small operating deficit, although this had been covered by a grant in the most recent accounting period.</p> <p>The Treasurer reported that he had met with Brewin Dolphin, who managed the SOC’s investment portfolio. They had offered to present on trustees’ investment responsibilities, and it was agreed that they be invited to the March Council meeting to address Council.</p> <p>In questions, there was discussion as to how much effort had been made to acquaint members and others with the Easy Fundraising mechanism. Noted that an email and social media channels had already been used to advertise the simple sign on process.</p>	<p>Brewin Dolphin to be invited to address Council</p>

<p>6</p> <p>Birding & Science</p>	<p>The Chair referred to the minutes of the Birding and Science Committee meeting of 12th November 2021, that had been circulated.</p> <p>He noted that the Birding and Science Officer (“BSO”) was now settled in and took the opportunity to outline some of the BSO’s priorities and achievements since he had started in the role. These included leading representing SOC on the BirdTrack steering group, identifying gaps in contemporary bird knowledge with a planned <i>Scottish Birds</i> paper to follow, developing a new SOC partnership with the JNCC Volunteer Seabirds at Sea programme and initiating discussions over a possible future SOC role in the development of the MOTUS tagging network in Scotland.</p> <p>It was suggested that the reporting and use of BirdTrack information in Scotland was hampered because only RSPB reserves were listed with recognised site boundaries for reporting. This contrasted with the much wider range of available site polygons when using BirdTrack in England. In discussion, it was suggested that it was desirable to create a more comprehensive gazetteer of Scottish sites, but this will require these sites to be given agreed boundaries and names.</p> <p>It was reported that the NE Scotland branch would be discussing MOTUS and the role that the SOC could play in it at their Spring meeting, and anyone interested was welcome to participate.</p>	<p>Birding and Science Comm to consider Scottish mapping for BirdTrack</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Management Report</p>	<p>Lesley Creamer referred to the minutes of the Management Committee meeting that had taken place on 28th October 2021. From those minutes, she highlighted the benefits of the new telephone system that connected calls to Waterston House directly to Wendy’s telephone and noted that Mark Lewis was helping Kathryn with speaker/talk suggestions for the winter meetings programme, being well placed to assist with this task.</p>	
<p>8</p> <p>Events and Conferences</p>	<p>WH reported on the Annual Conference, which had been held online. It had attracted 180 bookings, and each day attracted around 100 participants at any one time. The donations that had been received from participants reached just under £2,000. Recorded sessions were now available online. It was agreed that, within the inevitable constraints of an online event, the conference had gone very well.</p> <p>Richard Somers Cocks reported that planning continued for the Scottish Birdwatchers Conference. It had been advertised to previous attendees and to those who had wanted to come to the events that were previously scheduled. This had attracted 51 bookings. The Conference was to be advertised through conventional SOC channels in the second week of December. The venue booking had to be made by 17th January 2022. The Chair thanked Richard and his team for their persistence in trying to hold this Conference.</p> <p>WH reported that Jane was discussing the Branches Workshop with the representatives of the branches. The Workshop was to be held at the Grant Arms, Grantown on Spey. Noted in passing that the hotel is currently for sale.</p> <p>It was proposed by Chris Wernham that the 2022 Annual Conference link with the 20th Anniversary of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme and make Raptors the theme of the Conference. The suggestion was that Friday afternoon of the conference be a raptor monitoring based, and members of the Scheme be invited to attend too – such attendance to be complimentary to them. Scottish Government representation would also be invited. Chris Wernham, Will Cresswell and Nina O’Hanlon agreed to being recruited as the organising group</p>	<p>CW to contact SRMS with Council’s approval</p>

		along with Wendy Hicks (SOC staff) and CW suggested Mike Thornton (SOC's SRMS rep) be invited to join the group. The idea was enthusiastically approved.	for raptor theme and invite Mike Thornton to the organising group
9	Membership Report	<p>Council considered the tabled report on membership numbers that the Membership Officer had prepared. The five-year trend was positive insofar as it showed the number of new members recruited each year rising, and the number of cancellations falling. It was noted that the SOC was close to reaching 3000 'memberships' (i.e. subscriptions, as opposed to individual members) and it was agreed that this milestone should be marked when the time came.</p> <p>There was a discussion on how membership numbers might be boosted. Some suggested that memberships, particularly youth memberships, be made free, or sufficiently nominal only to cover costs. Against this, it was noted that changing the membership criteria could also change the Club structure. There was also doubt whether affordability (rather than perhaps fashion) was actually the main obstacle to more youth membership. The Treasurer informed Council that he and the Finance Committee would consider all of these points as part of their consideration of subscription levels.</p>	
10	Youth Engagement Report	<p>WH presented Jane's report on youth engagement projects.</p> <p>The SOC and BTO's Youth Engagement Programme of a free monthly event for under 30s in Scotland was considered. Noting its use of The Gannet and a careers workshop. Hannah Lemon suggested that the use of "planted" questions in the audience had helped with audience participation. There had been the normal problem with free events where people book but do not then attend. Alan Knox asked for an analysis of how many participants were SOC members, and whether this was an effective recruiting tool for those who were not.</p> <p>The SOC's Lothian Branch Discussion Group were trialling a Mentoring Scheme. Clyde Branch in particular expressed interest in having the model. It was agreed that the Scheme would be featured in Scottish Birds, and the organiser invited to discuss it with other branches at the Branches Workshop. Noted that there were 30 registered mentees on the scheme and 8 mentors.</p>	Mentoring to be considered at Branches Workshop
11	Approval of Honoraria	The editorial team of <i>Scottish Birds</i> each customarily receive an honorarium. It was agreed in principle that the honoraria be approved at the agreed levels, being £550 for the Coordinating Editor, and £220 for each of the four other members of the current team.	
12	Matters Arising	The Chair announced that he intended to convene a meeting of the Strategy Group before the next Council meeting.	Strategy Group meeting to be convened
13	AOCB	None	

<p>14</p>	<p>Dates of next Council Meetings</p>	<p>6 March (later changed to 13th), 12 June, 4 September, 4 December. Chris Wernham suggested that the proposed date for Council of 4th December 2022 might be a clash with the BTO Conference.</p> <p>It was hoped that it would be possible to resume face to face meetings of Council at least once a year, starting from June 2022 at the earliest. There was a discussion around venues that might be used.</p>	<p>WH to confirm date of December meeting</p>
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