

The SOC

Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 85/01

7th March 2021 Minutes

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

Session 85/01 of Council was held at 10:00 hrs on the 7th March 2021 using Zoom 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, Alan Knox, David Rackham, Richard Somers Cocks, Neil Stratton, Jeremy Brock, Alex Banwell, Peter Gordon, Rick Goater, Richard Leslie, Bob McGowan, Nina O'Hanlon and Rachael Wilbourn.

In Attendance: Wendy Hicks

Action

- 1 **Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Chris Wernham.

- 2 **Minutes of Council Meeting 84/03 held on 29 November 2020** The minutes for the meeting on 29th November 2020 were approved, noting that Bob McGowan had appeared in them as "Bob Sleigh" and that this should be corrected.

3	Finance: Update & report	<p>The Treasurer, Andrew Thorpe, summarised the current position on income and expenditure, the reduction in both all but matching each other, which when combined with the grants that had been received, meant that the organisation should finish the financial year in surplus. He noted that, whilst the value of investments held had reduced, professional advice was that they should recover and therefore to continue to hold the portfolio. It was also reported that membership numbers had increased and that a new Life membership included a very generous gift of £9300.</p> <p>The Treasurer reported on the recent meeting of the Finance Committee, which had been convened to consider member subscription rates and the funding of the new Birding and Science Officer post.</p>	
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	<p>It had been noted that there was a daunting number of membership categories, but analysis had shown that these were really an internal administrative matter, generated by the particular circumstances of individuals that were provided as they completed their subscription applications. That notwithstanding, it was agreed that it would be necessary to consider further rationalisation when digital subscriptions were introduced and as part of the upgrading of the SOC’s database.</p> <p>The Finance Committee’s recommendation to maintain current subscription rates for another year was adopted, although it was also agreed that members be informed that they should expect increases next year, as the rates had been static for so long.</p> <p>The Treasurer reported that the Finance Committee wanted the SOC to seek external funding to finance the new Birding and Science Officer post, but had agreed that it could be funded from internal sources for a limited period.</p> <p>The Chair noted that no suitable candidate had been identified to fill the vacancy as Hon Treasurer. Adverts and leads remained live and would be pursued.</p> <p>In questions to the Treasurer, it was noted that the receipt of legacies had dropped below previous levels. After discussion on the sensitivity of the issue in the current pandemic, it was nonetheless agreed that <i>Scottish Birds</i> should contain a regular request for legacies. The discussion included a suggestion of adopting a “Free Wills” scheme, but it was suggested that the current pack available on application of how to leave a legacy to the SOC was adequate, particularly if the availability of the pack was part of the <i>Scottish Birds</i> advertisement.</p>	<p>WH to ensure that notice re subs rates be included in <i>Scottish Birds</i></p> <p>WH to ensure that <i>Scottish Birds</i> contains regular feature on legacy provision</p>
<p>5 Birding & Science</p>	<p>Jeremy Wilson reported that there had not been a meeting of the committee since the last Council meeting. He did however give a progress report on the new editorial team at <i>Scottish Birds</i> and the steps that had been taken in preparation for producing a new digital edition of the journal. He reported that Wendy Hicks and Jane Allison had worked together, with input from Will Cresswell, and proposed a flipbook-style publication as the preferred format for the digital edition. The plan was to host a trial digital edition in June 2021 on the website as a taster. The Chair congratulated the new editorial team.</p> <p>Alan Knox reported that the Library Committee had been considering how best to deal with the increasing number and volume of digital bird reports, and was considering forms of digital archive. He noted that the coordination and harmonisation of Local Bird Reports (LBRs) was an important part of this initiative, and it was agreed that the Birding and Science Committee should lead on that.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the SOC had implemented the steps discussed and agreed at the November 2020 Council meeting to deal with the issues that had been reported with LBR groups in Dumfries and Galloway, and in Clyde. In Clyde, more than 20 volunteers were working to produce reports suitable to plug the reporting gaps that had been identified.</p> <p>Jeremy Wilson initiated a debate on moving forward with recruiting for the Birding and Science Officer post, having noted the reservations from the Finance Committee for its long-term funding from internal reserves. He described the role and how it had evolved. It was noted that the level of reserves the SOC currently held was considerably more than OSCR recommended as a minimum but that the SOC was operating at a deficit in normal times, and</p>	<p>B&S Committee to consider and recommend formats for future digital reporting by LBRs</p> <p>JW to contact NatureScot re potential</p>

	<p>funding a new post would inevitably affect the size of the operating deficit, at least in the short term. Even if it were possible, it would take time to seek and obtain seed corn funding from an external source, and this was incompatible with the desire to fill the new post as quickly as possible. In the ensuing debate, it was agreed that, whilst preliminary enquiries should be made of NatureScot about external financial support, this short lead-in time should not postpone the recruitment process. The point was made that an improved SOC offering, represented by the additional scientific capacity that the new post would bring, could in itself attract more funding.</p> <p>Wendy Hicks reported that there had only be one fresh application for research funds. The four applications from 2020 had been held over until there was clarification as to when restrictions, introduced as part of the response to the pandemic, might be eased. The SOC was continuing to support ornithological publications through the Birds of Scotland Fund and it was agreed that these should be featured in <i>Scottish Birds</i> and the SOC's Annual Report.</p>	<p>funding for BSO post</p> <p>WH to publicise projects that had been funded.</p>
6	<p>Management Report</p> <p>Lesley Creamer referred to the minutes of the Management Committee meeting that had taken place on 11th February 2021. Although she was disappointed not to be able to report the completion of the Safeguarding Policy, she noted that it was close to completion.</p>	
7	<p>Events</p> <p>It was reported that a Spring event on 27th March, consisting of a midweek quiz had attracted 200 bookings.</p> <p>Decisions on other events awaited further clarity on what would be permitted in terms of the applicable pandemic related regulations. WH noted that a provisional booking with the venue for the Annual Conference was in place for November. There was agreement that the conservation/biodiversity theme originally planned for the 2020 conference should be adopted and IB and JW would have a think about potential speakers (whether for a physical or virtual event, as circumstances nearer the time ditate).</p> <p>There were discussions about the form that branch meetings might take over the remainder of the year. Although the model of physical meetings that also allowed virtual participation was attractive, it was also difficult to implement on any scale. It was noted that some branches had ambitions to convene such hybrid meetings when regulations allowed, and it was agreed that this should be a decision that the individual branches should be allowed to make.</p> <p>Reference was made to the Youth Engagement Work paper that had been circulated, and which outlined the progress being made with the Young Birders Training Course and the Scottish Bird Camp, albeit that these were both now re-scheduled for 2022. Noting too that a programme of virtual events was being developed and rolled out to young birder groups.</p>	<p>IB & JW to develop draft programme for Annual Conference</p>
8	<p>EGM</p> <p>The Secretary referred to the paper that had been circulated and which referenced the inability of the SOC to hold a members' meeting virtually in terms of the Club's current Constitution, save where specific legislation relaxed that restriction, as had been the case at the 2020 AGM. After discussion, it was agreed that it was not appropriate to rush through amendments to a constitution that had been introduced just over a year ago. Future members' meetings would be convened to conform to the SOC's Constitution and the legislation current at the time of the meeting.</p>	

9	Matters Arising	None outstanding.
10	AOCB	<p>Elizabeth Irwin suggested that secretarial support be provided by SOC staff, particularly for the provision of agendas and minutes.</p> <p>Rachael Wilbourn requested a strategy to allow branch officials to be able to access their members' contact details within the constraints of the GDPR legislation. It was noted that this was being considered by the Management Committee.</p>
		IB and DL to discuss secretarial support

Ian Bainbridge, SOC President

