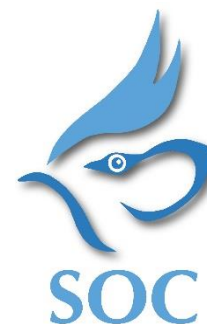


The SOC Scotland's Bird Club



COUNCIL MEETING 82/02 17th June 2018 Minutes

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

Session 82/02 of Council was held at 10.30 hrs on the 17th June 2018 at the RSPB Loch Leven, Kinross.

Present: President James Main (Chair), Jeremy Wilson (Vice President), David Heeley (Hon Secretary), Andrew Thorpe (Hon Treasurer), Zul Bhatia, Jeremy Brock, John Riddet (for Lesley Creamer), David Bain (for Peter Gordon), Alan Knox, Richard Leslie, Bob McGowan, Paul Taylor and Chris Wernham

In attendance: Wendy Hicks (Club Administrator, SOC HQ).

Action

- 1 Welcome** The Chair, James Main, welcomed Zul Bhatia as the new representative for Clyde Branch, John Riddet attending on behalf of Lesley Creamer, and former Council member David Bain attending on behalf of Peter Gordon (new representative for Highland Branch).
- 2 Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Frank Hamilton, Helen Aiton, Lesley Creamer, Will Cresswell, Roger Gooch, Peter Gordon, Melvin Morrison, David Rackham and Neil Stratton.
- 3 Absent** John Campbell, Angus McBay and Geoff Sheppard were absent.
- 4 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 11th March 2018.** The minutes for meeting 82/01 11th March were approved subject to a minor correction.
- 5 Matters arising** §5 Bird Recorders Conference. The Chair, James Main (JM) was pleased to note that c25 participants were expected to attend the Conference, which would be held on 21st July at Stirling University. A program had been devised that addressed the key issues of the Recorder's role, with the sessions being hosted by Stuart Rivers (SR), Waterston House Birding Officer. Council agreed that the emphasis should be on determining what the recorders want from the SOC in terms of support and that the Conference would be an ideal platform for getting this information. Council expressed its thanks to SR for his efforts in organising the event.
- 6 Council Appointing Panel** The Chair, James Main, informed Council that the Appointing Panel now had three members (Lesley Creamer – Dumfries, Bob McGowan – Elected Member and Paul Taylor – Fife). He noted that whilst it would be helpful to have a fourth

member as originally planned, he recommended that the Panel proceed with its tasks.

He asked those members who were Branch representatives to return to their branch committees and discuss with them potential candidates for the vacancies for President and Vice-President (Management and Infrastructure) and to forward these recommendations to the Panel by 23rd July. He urged all Council members to consider potential candidates and encouraged all to submit their recommendations as individual Council members to the Panel by the due date.

all Council

The Club Administrator, Wendy Hicks (WH) indicated that she was prepared to join the Panel discussions leading to bringing forward suggestions to Council for appointment. Council welcomed this proposal noting that it would add an important staff-oriented perspective, particularly in the case of the Vice-President.

7 Strategy Map and strategic priorities

Council received a revised version of the Strategy Map discussed at its previous meeting, and paper describing initial work by the Strategy Group on translating Mission statements and Goals into concrete priorities that should start to guide active engagement in the process of Club development.

The Group had started to focus on “The network of Branches, the enjoyment aspects of birding and training” with the Goal of creating “*a supporting environment for people to learn about birds and birding*” and “*to increase their awareness, understanding and passion about them*”. Whilst emphasising that this was still very much work in progress, the Group had developed two key priorities that should be acted on:

- The invigoration of the Branch Network
- Making mentoring and skills development available locally

The paper provoked a lively discussion, with Council supporting the development of the concept of active Priorities. It was recognised that there were always inherent difficulties in reaching out to members who were not that active, and to non-members who were. Council members agreed that there was huge scope for increased and more efficient communication with these groups. The “fun” and “enjoyment” aspects of birding were seen as being critical in this respect. The proposal for having a Branch mini-conference as part of the action priorities was welcomed, and discussed later (see §8 below).

On behalf of the Group, Chris Wernham (CW) made clear that further work would need to be done on refining the contents of the paper, and Council welcomed the proposal to continue to develop similar papers for Priorities in the three remaining areas of *Birding Recording and Study*, *Communication and Outreach* and *The Support and Promotion of Wildlife Art* to be received at a future meeting of Council.

Strategy Group

8 Branch mini-Conference

Chris Wernham (CW) presented a paper that had been developed with the Development Officer, Jane Cleaver (JC) outlining a proposal to hold a Branch mini-conference. This arose directly from consideration of the developing strategy, and recognition of the central role that Branches play in engaging members. At the same time Council learned that it had been a long standing ambition of JC’s to hold an event of this general kind. One focus of the strategy was enabling SOC to support Branches in the most effective way possible, and the mini-conference would be important step to realising this. CW emphasised the need for two way communication with branches, pointing out that these were the elements of the Club which would be central to delivering on any strategic plans. For example, one of the objectives was “*to explain to Branches what the*

new SOC strategy seeks to achieve, and to get their (Branches') ideas on how branches can play a role in achieving the new goals”.

Council welcomed the strong and attractive agenda for the meeting, which had been proposed for Spring 2019. Overall it was agreed that this was an excellent initiative which should be supported. It was agreed that Branches would be invited to send two people (not necessarily branch committee members), that SOC would meet all costs and that the Treasurer (AT) would provide a cost estimate for approval by the Finance Committee. Council commended CW and JC for their work on this project.

JC / CW

AT

9 Finance

The Treasurer, Andrew Thorpe (AT) provided Council with a verbal report on the various activities and issues that he had been involved with concerning Club finances.

Guidance on accounting terminology: Referring to the request from Council for guidance notes on interpreting some of the terminology used in the Accounts (Council Minute 82/01 §9 pp 5) AT explained that this was an issue that he was addressing with Mairead Lyons (ML), the Finance Officer. The confusing terminology was, in fact, symptomatic of a wider problem associated with the computer software that the Club currently used for accounting purposes. ML, who is experienced in accounting practices, had been having a number of difficulties with the system in ways that hampered efficient workflow. AT noted that the software was not used by other organisations that the External Financial Examiner (Sandy Scotland) was familiar with, noting further the difficulties it created when attempting to gain a true picture of the overall financial state of the Club. He noted that he was seeking external advice about a new system, and would bring a recommendation to Council at a future meeting.

Ethical Policy for investments: AT informed Council that he was drafting a statement based on information provided by Brewin Dolphin, the Club's investment advisors. In addition, he had written a Reserves Policy which was being scrutinised by Brewin Dolphin, which when returned with their comments would be discussed at the Finance Committee.

Waterston House: Buildings insurance for Waterston House had been renewed. The revaluation that had been carried out recently (Management Committee Minutes, 2nd February 2018, §5) placed a rebuild value lower than the current insured value, which had been automatically increasing on an annual basis to compensate for inflation. Re-insuring at the current valuation had resulted in a welcome saving of some £1k on the premium. AT noted that the Club were fortunate to be covered by the current insurer as most companies were very reluctant to take on the risks associated with the wood-frame construction.

Annual Accounts: The Annual Accounts were in the process of being finalised and would be presented to the next meeting of Council in September, although AT noted that they did not have to be submitted to OSCR until the end of the year. Overall he anticipated that the Club would return a small surplus.

Legacies: Some £60k of legacies were pending. The Finance Committee would be looking at the issue of “allocating” legacies to a specific project or use. AT was of the opinion that this would be a constructive approach which would enable the donor to get an idea of how the funds were being used.

**Finance
Committee**

Finance generally: Art commissions had generated £33.5k; investment income fell slightly to £13k; the nett income from subscriptions had gone up despite a slight drop in membership following the increase in subscriptions.

- 10 Branch and Membership Development** Council noted the report from the Development Officer, Jane Cleaver (JC). No questions were arising.
- The Chair, James Main (JM) drew Council's attention to the application that JC had made on behalf of the Club to the RSPB's *Nature of Scotland Awards* 2018, and thanked Vice-President Jeremy Wilson (JW) for the helpful feedback that he had been able to provide on previous, but ultimately unsuccessful applications. As a consequence JC had been able to refine the current application placing greater emphasis on the impact that the *Young Birders Training Course* had on the participants. Council noted that the shortlist would be announced in September 2018 with the awards dinner to be held in November.
- JM informed Council that Jane Cleaver had been participating in the Strategy Group discussions about Branch development, enhancement and invigoration and that the Group had found her contributions to be particularly informative and useful.
- 11 Conference Update.** 2018 Annual Conference: Council noted the mailing announcing the 2018 Annual Conference that had been included with the latest issues of *Scottish Birds*. The Club Administrator, Wendy Hicks (WH) acknowledged the help of Highland Branch with the organisation of the outings events on Saturday morning and was pleased to report that there were some backup talks on file should there been an unexpected cancellation of speaker.
- 2018 AGM: It was agreed that the Secretary, David Heeley (DH) should draft a few explanatory paragraphs for circulation to Members with the AGM papers, requesting approval for changes to the Constitution to permit the appointment of President and Vice-President under the new governance structures. **DH**
- Spring Conferences: WH noted the excellent level of positive feedback that had been received about the 2018 Spring Conference. Council offered its compliments to the local Branches involved for all of their efforts in making it such a success. Council noted that the 2019 Spring Conference would be held in Oban.
- 12 AOCB** There was no other competent business.
- 13 Papers received** Council received the following documents:
- Minutes of the Management Committee 4th May 2018 (unapproved)
- 14 Next Meeting** 9th September 2018 : 10.30 at RSPB Loch Leven

Signed:



Date: 9th September 2018

James Main, President