



Minutes of 54th Annual General Meeting Saturday 28th November 2020 13:00 - Online

1. Present/Apologies

Present (30): Vivienne Booth, Katherine Booth Jones, Lila Buckingham, David Budworth, Stephen Chapman (representing RNBWS), Beth Clark, Sarah Dal, Francis Daunt, Zoe Deakin, Ruth Dunn, Alice Edney, Annette Fayet, Kirsty Franklin, Jonathan Green, Vickie Heaney, Liz Humphreys, Steve Hunter, Jim Lennon, Will Miles, Ravichandra Mondreti, Sean Morris, David Okill, Ellie Owen, Viola Ross Smith, Ulrich Schwantes, Jeff Stratford, Mark Tasker, Danni Thompson, Daniel Turner, Matt Wood.

Apologies: Sarah Wanless, Mike Harris, Martin Heubeck, Holly Kirk, Amy King, Ian Cleasby, Daisy Burnell, Amy King, Nina O'Hanlon.

2. Minutes of the 53rd AGM

Liz Humphreys mentioned a few key points of the minutes. One related to historical issues around non quorate meeting at a previous AGM – this has now been sorted, no decision was taken at this (non) AGM, the AGMs have been renumbered accordingly and the minutes amended. Liz Humphreys thanked the previous ExComm committee for their help with sorting this out. The second item relates to the Seabird Group compliance with GDPR, this has also now been sorted. Previous issues with lack of interest in *SEABIRD* will be discussed later in the meeting. A final point related to the possibility of holding online AGMs. Liz Humphreys explained that Covid-19 had forced our hand and we had no choice but to hold it online this year, however if this is successful we could also consider holding some AGMs online in future also.

Minutes of the 53rd AGM were proposed by Matt Wood and seconded by Ellie Owen.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

n/a

4. The 55th Annual Report

The report included information about:

- Membership summary & new Membership payment platform
- Research & Census grants summary
- SEABIRD Journal
- Newsletters
- Progress on the National Seabird Census (SEABIRDS COUNT)
- Equality & Diversity
- Social Media updates
- Upcoming website updates
- The Seabird Group shop (merchandise)
- Seabird Group Conference updates
- World Seabird Union updates

As all members were sent the report in advance of the AGM, the content was not detailed during the meeting, and only a few key points were mentioned. Liz Humphreys thanked Annette Fayet for the compilation and early circulation of documents for the Seabird Group's AGM.

New membership payment platform

Danni Thompson gave an update about the new membership payment system which should be coming soon. Ellie Owen said it was fantastic to see it happen.



New Seabird Group Shop

Danni Thompson gave an update on the Seabird Group Teemill shop which sells seabird-design clothing, which was launched around the Twitter conference. The shop has made about £500 so far and is having great success. Stephen Chapman and Ellie Owen say this is a great initiative.

WSU / Conference Updates

Liz Humphreys explained that WSC3 may be online in 2021 as an in-person meeting looks unlikely. This raises question about our next Seabird Group conference, which may be bumped by another year. She asks members' opinion on whether it would be better to postpone until 2022 for an in-person meeting or to have an online meeting (possibly merged with WSC3 earlier).

Francis Daunt thought it would be best to wait until 2022 and have our own conference, as otherwise we would be a tiny part of the larger WSC3 event and somewhat lose our identity. Danni Thompson said 2022 may be a good year for a conference as it could be an opportunity to launch the census results by JNCC if they are ready for publication at this time. Vivienne Booth was also in favour of an in-person meeting in 2022. Jonathan Green said that we should try to have an in-person meeting as soon as we can, so it would be worth aiming for Spring (instead of Autumn) 2022 if possible (perhaps limited to UK & Ireland if international travel is limited or there are strict limits on numbers). Stephen Chapman was also in favour of an in-person meeting, with possibly an online meeting in between.

Lila Buckingham said that if there are no conferences next year then a whole cohort of PhD students who started just after Liverpool in Oct 2018 will not have the opportunity to attend any seabird conference during their degree. So an event in 2021 would be great, even if online. Kirsty Franklin concurred.

Ellie Owen suggested that to increase the Seabird Group profile until then we could organise a webinar series, perhaps one a week for a few weeks, possibly focusing on ECRs to give them a chance to present their work. Sarah Dal and Liz Humphreys thought this was a very good idea.

Francis Daunt asked if we could try to increase our profit from conferences to boost our funding, perhaps by increasing registration fees. Liz Humphreys remarked that high fees may be a barrier for inclusion, so perhaps we would need a system (concessions, bursaries, etc) to help people who can't pay the full fee. Jonathan Green said that the profit in Liverpool was not made by higher registration fees but by having a large attendance. Jonathan Green and Francis Daunt disagree about the risk involved in such an approach. Francis Daunt mentioned that the SG has a "loyal" audience who comes back every time, he thought a tiered approach to registration fees would be good. Liz Humphreys also mentioned the possibility of sponsorship money. Sarah Dal said she thought low registration rates and finding other ways to make money from the conference are preferable.

Vivienne Booth suggested that perhaps there could be extra things that people could pay for which would increase profit, without affecting registration, for example a silent auction. Stephen Chapman also suggest that an engaging visit programmes may help (like Bass Rock in Edinburgh). Jonathan Green pointed out Liverpool was not a good location for wildlife tours so they weren't able to offer any. He also explained that for the Liverpool conference they used artist donations as prizes as part of their sponsorship in 2018, but only through a couple of personal contacts, and he thought the net could be cast wider.

Liz Humphreys thanked everyone for their input and said these things will be discussed within ExComm.

Newsletter

Katherine Booth Jones gave an update about the newsletters this year. She had lots of great content to



publish, which included, amongst other things, support for a campaign from the Scottish Seabird Centre and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory, and interesting results from census work and research the Seabird Group helped to fund. There was a special issue about seabird research in British Overseas Territories. She invited everyone to suggest ideas or send articles to her for future newsletter (newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk).

Social Media

Vivienne Booth gave an update on the Seabird Group Facebook Page, which has been revived since she took over in spring 2020, and is now doing well. Beth Clark gave an update on our Twitter engagement. There has been a lot of engagement, especially around Twitter seabird events, EDI issues, and design competitions for our T-shirts. This has broadened the following of the group (see stats in the Annual Report). She reported our biggest day on Twitter ever was on the 18th November for #LGBTQSTEMDay where 85,000 people saw our Tweets revealing the winners of our LGBTQ+ seabird design competition for our clothing shop. Danni Thompson added that the higher social media presence also helped boost membership. Lila Buckingham, Jonathan Green and Sarah Dal all said it has been great to see this increased social media presence.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Issues

Liz Humphreys explained how the SG has been trying to amplify movements such as BLM and Pride especially around conservation and ornithology. She said there are very few Black seabird scientists in the UK/Europe and we must try to do our best to change this. She explained she wants the society to support and celebrate diversity, and asked for members opinions.

Matt Wood said he fully supports this and says this shows how inclusive and supportive the SG is. He says the issues around few BAME people in academia and science in general will be a long term challenge to address but that highlighting and amplifying diverse people will inspire others to join and is a good thing (and naysayers should be ignored). Steve Hunter suggested we could approach seabird scientists in the US, South Africa and other countries to write pieces for our newsletters or website or for webinars, as it would help to showcase role models and inspire people which may feel unrepresented. Lila Buckingham said that anything we can do to make all seabird activities more inclusive, including fieldwork, are important. Jim Lennon agreed that this is a good initiative and that presenting role models will help contribute to change. Ravichandra Mondreti suggested the society could focus on inclusivity for people in developing areas as well, for example by encouraging collaboration and by helping local scientists to develop their own monitoring programmes following common protocols. He also suggested the option of having a specific fund targeting seabirders in developing nations.

Liz Humphreys explained she does not want to stop at our EDI statement and mentioned the current EDI working group's activities. A session surrounding BAME issues will take place next year, she invited Ravichandra Mondreti to join as well as anyone else with a desire to help tackle these issues (contact her at chair@seabirdgroup.org.uk).

Annual Report proposed by Vicky Hearney, seconded by Vivienne Booth.

[AP: ExComm to discuss suggestions surrounding the SG conference.](#)

5. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

Liz Humphreys gave a summary of the proposed changes, detailing which aspects we aim to clarify and spell out in the constitution. This includes clarifying the roles of the ordinary members (Social Media Manager, Newsletter Support & Social Media Support, Early-Career Representative, Census representative) whose roles have changed since the constitution was last amended (2013), and to



amend the duration of some of their terms. This also includes clarifying the role of ExComm members as trustees and their duties as such, and mentioning the possibility that AGM can take place online.

Ellie Owen said that the ECR role was initially co-opted because it would allow the role holder more flexibility, and this was important because PhD students may struggle to hold the role while towards the end of their studies, and so it may be too hard to ask people to commit for two years. Beth Clark explained she thinks that one year is only just enough time to get to grips with the role and so that a second year allowed her to do much more. Danni Thompson said it doesn't have to be a student, as long as it is an early-career member. Annette Fayet pointed out that the constitution is being amended to reflect that the role can be held by an early-career member even if not a student.

Stephen Chapman asked about what happens to the assets if the group is dissolved, and whether we should clarify this point in the constitution now. Danni Thompson pointed out this is already covered in point 10 of the constitution.

Liz Humphreys then explained the rationale behind creating a new EDI role on ExComm as dealing with this topic takes time.

The amendments to the constitution were proposed by Steve Hunter, seconded by Steve Chapman.

6. 2019-20 Accounts and Treasurers Report

Liz Humphreys gave a brief overview of the accounts, and clarified they did not include profits from the merchandise. She mentioned there are £6k left on the census fund, which finishes this year. Will Miles explained that covid-19 has caused a lot of hesitation in planning for fieldwork and so the fund has not been used to its maximum this year. He explained that him and JNCC have been encouraging everyone to apply.

Ellie Owen said that it was ExComm's decision to focus the fund on the Census and so if there are left over funds they could be redirected towards other things. Will Miles said he expects short notice applications in mid-season so he's hoping some of the funds will be used in 2021. Jim Lennon suggested left over money could be kept for one-off or opportunistic surveys. Jonathan Green suggested to ask JNCC if there are things the funds could be prioritised towards. Danni Thompson mentioned there will be a census meeting next week so priority areas will be discussed.

Jonathan Green suggested to ask members if they want to carry out some work on these priority areas to be more proactive. Ellie Owen said that the group had had plans to organised field expeditions with a mix of young seabirders and more seasoned one, and perhaps from a mix of background, to allow for transfer of skills. Beth Clark explained that these plans had been scuppered by covid-19. Jim Lennon said that the Shiant's Ringing Group always keep a free spot on their expedition for the RSPB but this could instead be for an ECR person. Matt Wood suggested an ECR could also join MarPAMM in the Hebrides & Ireland in 2021. Steve Hunter suggested we could identify people from underrepresented backgrounds to give them the opportunity to join these expeditions (possibly with SG financial support), which Jonathan Green said was an excellent idea.

The Accounts & Treasurer's Report was proposed by Dave Okill and seconded by Viola Ross-Smith.

7. Nominations to the Executive Committee

Ruth Dunn was elected Ordinary Member - Social Media Manager (proposed by Lily Buckingham, seconded by Jonathan Green).



Kirsty Franklin was elected Ordinary Member - Newsletter Support & Social Media Support (proposed by Francis Daunt, seconded by Jim Lennon).

Zoe Deakin was co-opted as Early-Career Member Representative.

The outgoing committee members, Beth Clark and Vivienne Booth, were thanked for their fantastic contributions.

8. Discussion about SEABIRD journal

Viola Ross Smith gave an update about the journal, the difficulties surrounding *SEABIRD* 32 this year, and the working group set up to discuss how to resolve some of these issues (e.g. low submission numbers). She explained the key ideas arising from these meetings, including adding DOIs to old and new articles (not very expensive), a manuscript support service to support early-career or amateur people writing manuscripts, and having the papers online on acceptance. She then introduced the question surrounding the hard copy of *SEABIRD*. The hard copy is liked by many but costly and less environmentally friendly, and asks for members' opinions on this.

Stephen Chapman approved encouraging ECR submissions and short notes. Francis Daunt asked what is required to get ISI status (he pointed out Marine Ornithology has ISI status). Viola explained the criteria are too hard for *SEABIRD* to meet, and it's costly.

Daniel Turner said the print version always looks fantastic and it would be a shame to lose the hard copy. Dave Okill concurred. Matt Wood explained he knows supervisors who don't encourage their students to publish in *SEABIRD* because it's not ISI. Beth said it may be good for PhD students' side projects even if not for their main PhD chapters. Jonathan Green said there is now a demand for undergrad to publish to secure places in competitive DTPs and *SEABIRD* would be a great place for these papers. He also suggested we make it clearer on the website that it's free to read and to publish. Dave Okill said the *SEABIRD* issues were always popular in the Fair Isle library.

Sarah Dal said she was in favour of opting out of the hard copy, while Jim Lennon said like the printed version and it is a key part of being a SG member, and part of the group's social profile. Jonathan Green also supported the hard copy.

Opinion poll: 85% of members present preferred an optional hard copy with membership, 15% preferred always having the hard copy. No one preferred the online-only option.

9. Discussion about online voting options for members

Liz Humphreys discussed the possibility to have a system allowing all members to vote, regardless of whether or not they can attend the AGM. She asks members for their opinion on this.

Mark Tasker said online would be preferable as it's more democratic than just turning up at the AGM. Vivienne Booth was also in favour as she could never attend AGM. Jim Lennon said the BTO is now doing all their voting online, as well as surveys etc, and it works very well, he is also in favour. Daniel Turner explained that he also had not been able to attend an AGM before as too far away, and he really enjoyed being allowed to attend the AGM and vote, he is strongly in favour. Sarah Dal agreed that online AGM and voting is great. Steve Hunter in favour of online voting as well.

Ruth Dunn pointed out some people can't join online. Jim Lennon said we should always offer an alternative for the people who cannot vote online. Liz Humphreys mentioned that decoupling key decisions from an in-person AGM would allow to involve more members. It was also suggested one could appoint a proxy if they cannot vote. Danni Thompson added that she thought it is really important to give all our members a chance to vote, with a perspective to be as inclusive as possible.

AP: ExComm to investigate options and take this forward.

10. AOB

Liz Humphreys mentioned other possible benefits members could have. Viola Ross Smith suggested discounts on the shop, Liz Humphreys also mentions possible discounts at other shops. Annette Fayet was in favour of discounts on conference registration fees as she thought it could be really attractive. Ellie Owen suggested access to a mentor. Steve Hunter said access to people giving them access to seabird ringing monitoring etc would also be useful.

Lila Buckingham asked about when the new EDI role would be filled. Liz Humphreys explained this will be discussed at the next ExComm meeting and hopefully things will happen soon afterwards. Danni mentioned this could be a good opportunity to test a new online voting system.

Daniel Turner said he thought the online AGM had been very good, the society is doing well, and thanked the committee.

AP: ExComm to discuss and organise the new EDI role.

The meeting ended at 15:00.