

# SHOREHAM DISTRICT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by Zoom

On Tuesday 8th March 2022

	<p><b>Apologies:</b> Eva March, Sue Crane, Rebecca Parangi, John and Shena Maskell, Celia Beresford</p> <p><b>Members Present:</b> Tony Benton, Tim and Jenny Holter, Clive Hope, Sue Miles, Richard Nowak, Roger Smith, Peter Wyld, Brianne Reeve, Richard Allan, Michael and Wendy Ball, Jan Bateman, Val Bentley, Lyn Beun, Ron Bewley, Les Binns, Moira Brown, Helen Bryett, Val and Mike Bullen, Jerry Campbell, Leanne and Patrick Casey, Simon Dannatt, Gwen Davies, Avril Dean, Ann Dietmann, Mike Dixon, Maria Gardiner, Trish Hampson, Libby Hartzorne, Phil Jemmett, Robin and Vicci Johnson, Elizabeth Leahy, Kevin Midgeley, Eleanor Newman, John Newnham, David Park, Linda Priestley, Jim Prior, Jo Proctor, Mark Thompson, David and Rae Titcomb, Barrie Watson, Audrey Wende, Bob Witney, Jackie Woolcock, Mark Wright, Lili W.</p> <p><b>Members participating in ballot: 75</b></p> <p>*Historically voting has been by a show of hands at the AGM. As this was held via Zoom this was not possible this year. Papers for the AGM were circulated in advance of the meeting either electronically or by post. A Ballot system was arranged with the option of electronic voting following the AGM or postal vote. Results were collated and are reflected in the minutes below.</p>
1	<p><b>Welcome from Brianne Reeve – SDOS President</b></p> <p>Brianne welcomed members and said SDOS are the oldest bird society in Sussex, founded in 1953, and after nearly 70 years, are now a group to be respected and listened to, entirely due to the work of council members. Brianne introduced the current council members and Richard Allan, who is standing for election to council.</p>
2	<p><b>Chairman’s Report</b></p> <p>Thanks were given to our President Brianne Reeve for being Master of Ceremonies.</p> <p>This report was circulated prior to the meeting and is available on the website. Tony highlighted some themes of achievements and impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The society has successfully <b>maintained events</b> despite the backdrop of Covid, delivering 22 members walks, 3 public events, including a weekend Bees and Seas event at Brooklands, and contributing other walks in conjunction with WOW, FOSB and U3A. People have felt welcomed and supported at events and through interactions with the Usergroup, being able to ask questions. We are very proud to be a friendly and welcoming group. The full Talks programme was maintained via Zoom, with the support of Peter as Zoom facilitator, our most popular talk attracting about 70 participants. An important part of what SDOS is about is enthusing people about birds, promoting the study of birds, and providing walks, talks and events.</li><li>• <b>Reaching new audiences</b> – we are progressing well on social media. A successful Facebook group we run now has 786 subscribers, including 56% female, a figure we are proud of, reaching more people in a traditionally male dominated area. There is a good spread of ages from 18-65+ mainly from Shoreham and the local area. Some are outside the area, including a couple of international members. This group has been important in helping people connect with nature through the conduit of birds and some fantastic bird and nature images are shared, and the group includes questions about identification, where to see birds, facilities etc. This has been successful in drawing in a new audience and some subscribers have also joined SDOS. It is encouraging to meet up and recognise these faces by the river. As another part of collecting new audiences, we have been working with children, but this will be covered later in the meeting.</li><li>• <b>Conservation</b> – we have been very busy over the last year. Direct conservation work has included installing 9 nest boxes across 2 churchyards and we have also repaired or maintained a larger number. Awareness sessions have been held on the river with paddlers, targeting 35 SUP and kayak instructors over 5 sessions, highlighting the sensitivity of the Adur SSSI and how to make good choices that avoid disturbing birds and damaging the habitat features. A huge amount of work has been done with Adur and Worthing district councils around New Salts Farm, Shepherd’s Mead and Pad Farm rewilding projects. We have conducted a walk with the Adur and Worthing council Sustainability Team and were part of a Sussex Bay webinar hosted by the council with around 100 delegates. We also featured at Cop 26 as part of a video about investing in green infrastructure in and</li></ul>

around Shoreham, which achieved over 2000 views. There has been lots of work collaborating with other organisations with responsibilities for SSSI including Sussex Wildlife Trust, Inshore fisheries, Natural England, RSPB and the local council regarding better signage and interventions to improve the condition of the SSSI. We have also submitted vision documents for New Salts Farm and Adur green spaces. An impact of this work is we are now seen as an important and credible partner with good data to back up arguments about birds and nature. So a lot of hard work but it has been worthwhile.

- Thanks were extended to all Council members, (who collectively have contributed at least 1000 - 1500 hours of volunteer time over the last year) for all that has been achieved due to their hard work and effort, enabling us to maintain the website, handle membership, look after the money, advocate on behalf of birds, contribute to conservation projects, produce members newsletters, run walks and talks etc. Tony thanked Brianne as President for her encouragement to him in his first year as Chair. Special thanks were also given to John Newnham for his work in creating a digital archive, and contributing fantastic data to the user group, and sometimes on demand, which is so important for supporting our arguments on behalf of birds and nature. Thanks were also given to Val Bentley who has run our successful Garden Bird scheme for 12 years and to Sim Elliott who has kindly volunteered to take this scheme over. And thanks were also given to Ian Gifford for building, repairing, and installing birdboxes and to all members who have helped with leading walks, which are always popular and give positive feedback. Finally, thanks were extended to members for attending this evening, giving a strong mandate to talk to organisations on their behalf and to all members for their support over the last year. We aim to build on the strengths and achievements this year.

Some questions had been submitted prior to the meeting:

Kevin Midgeley asked **where we have got to regarding halls and restarting indoor meetings?**

Tony advised we are unable to go back to our existing centre, so have been talking to other venues. We have investigated nine possible halls and reduced this to a shortlist of one. A visit is planned next Monday and if it meets our criteria we can enter into a contract. We shall therefore be able to announce soon where talks will resume in October at a trial hall. If this is not successful, we will need to look again. We have focused on Shoreham as this is central to the SDOS area. We look forward to resuming meeting indoors in October.

Mike Dixon asked **what progress has been made over the last year by SDOS to work with more young people, local schools and colleges?**

Jenny advised we have lots of ideas and enthusiasm and have made a positive start. In September we were part of an event that involved 90 primary school children visiting Widewater for an outdoors event, working with WOW, and very closely with Jo Proctor who is a key person in linking with the school on this work. Activities included showing birds through the telescopes, Jo gave a talk on swans, and there was also a beachcombing activity. Another similar event is taking place next week, for which we still need volunteers. We will be working with World of Widewater and Friends of Shoreham Beach, with a focus this time on plants. A further visit is planned for the summer term. We would like to do more, but we need to manage priorities and ensure we don't over commit. The work needs a reasonable number of supporters, we feel we can sustain one school, but would need more volunteers to progress it further. We have not worked with any colleges.

In addition, we are keen to work at developing our junior membership - many years ago we had a strong junior membership, and we want to encourage young children to get involved. We now have 5 junior members and have just produced our first junior newsletter which has been sent to members and to schools we have a connection with, to see if they can use it or some of the ideas included. We plan to also distribute a Spring and Autumn edition.

There are lots of ideas for working with other groups going forward, but we need to be aware of other Council priorities and our capacity to maintain the work.

Brianne extended her thanks to Tony for this summary and encouraged members to read the report, which is excellent and shows the astonishing amount of work completed, moving the Society to an organisation that is respected and listened to. In early days it was just a happy little birding group but now is achieving things.

### **3 Treasurer's Report and Accounts**

These were circulated prior to the meeting. Thanks were extended to everyone for prompt payment this year and there are only 12 subscriptions outstanding. These fees should cover our commitments and we have strived to maintain costs, but it has been a close balance this year, despite increased membership numbers. Fees were last increased in 2006, since

	<p>when there has been an increase in costs, especially including Information Technology and postage. Over 16 years we have tried to maintain costs, but we are now facing higher hall rental costs, so when the budget is reviewed the Treasurer may need to recommend an increase to subscription costs. Reserves remain strong with £6000, available as a cushion for exceptional circumstances, such as have recently been experienced. This is an accumulation of past donations and savings and should ideally be used to cover special projects and capital purchases rather than to subsidise subscriptions.</p> <p>Kevin Midgley had submitted a question asking <b>will we maintain Zoom licence for online participation at meetings or does the cost of future venue hire exclude maintaining the Zoom licence?</b></p> <p>Tim advised there is no fixed contract for Zoom. He assumes the reference is to online viewing of a physical meeting. There are a few considerations, the main one is a lack of technical expertise currently available to us. Capital expenditure is also an issue but could be overcome by the use of reserves. Council will review this at their next meeting at next meeting.</p> <p>A huge thank you was extended to David Titcomb who has agreed to continue as accounts examiner.</p> <p>There are around 260 current memberships.</p>
	<p>Peter confirmed the online ballot will be sent out at 9PM and will close on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March. Confirmation was given of all those standing for election.</p> <p>Tony introduced Richard Allan standing for election as a new council member. Richard gave a brief introduction about himself.</p> <p>Richard has been a birdwatcher for over 40 yrs, and that has included through the lens of the camera for 10 years. His interest has expanded to general nature, starting with dragonflies, moving on to, orchids, butterflies, insects, wildflowers etc. He has lived in Shoreham for 11 months, previously 20 yrs in Crawley, and considers Sussex his adopted home, but is Yorkshire born. He has loved SDOS since he arrived, getting involved with emails, Facebook group, discussions, he has loved going on walks, acting as a sub-leader at some events on the Adur and Coronation Green and is happy engaging with the public, and is keen to enthuse them with birds nature and conservation. He wants to bring his skills and experience to SDOS, to help make it even better and stronger, and applicable to engaging with as wide a range of people as possible., as that is where the future lies.</p> <p>Brianne thanked Richard for his enthusiasm, and said we are delighted to have him join council. She also thanked the photographers who contribute their pictures, adding so much to the postings and newsletters.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Appointment of Examiners</b> This appointment was approved by ballot.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Election of Chair:</b> Tony Benton was elected to continue as Chair.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Election of Treasurer:</b> Tim Holter was elected to continue as Treasurer.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Election of Secretary:</b> Sue Miles was elected to continue in the post of Secretary.</p>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Election of Council Members:</b> The following Council Members were happy to stand for re-election: Minutes Secretary: Jenny Holter IT Co-ordinator: Peter Wyld Newsletter Editor: Roger Smith Member without Portfolio: Clive Hope Outings Co-ordinator: Richard Nowak These members were all elected to Council.</p> <p>Richard Allan was nominated for council by Tony Benton and seconded by Jenny Holter. Richard was elected to Council as a new Member without Portfolio.</p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>AOB: (questions not covered during the meeting)</b> None</p>
	<p><b>Meeting Closed</b></p>

