

Friends of Socotra AGM, 2011, NMBE, Bern, Switzerland

The AGM took place on the morning of Sunday 25th September 2011, in the Naturhistorisches Museum Der Burgergemeinde, Bern, Switzerland

Present:

Kay van Damme, Miranda Morris, Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Hugh Morris, Dana Pietsch, Lisa Banfield, Sabina Knees, Tony Miller, Salwa Barkwan, Khalid Hassan Al-Jaber, Khawla Al-Muhannadi, Henning Bauer, Okasha El Daly, Edward Farmer, Dominik Fleitmann, Hana Habrová, Irena Hubalkova, Vladimír Hula, Rebecca Klaus, Friedhelm Krupp, Issam Eldin Mohamed Ali, Eike Neubert, Jana Niedobová, Stefan Pahls, Hannes Pulch, Bohdana Rambouskova, Martin Rejzek, Wolfgang Schneider, Claudius Schulze, Katja Setzkorn, Khalid Sorour, Maité Rampelebergh, Dirk Vandorpe, Uwe Zajonz, Maren Ziegler.

Apologies:

John Dickson, Rowan Salim, Richard Porter, Sue Christie, Martin Coree, Peter de Geest and John Farrar (resigned).

Review of Minutes of 2010 AGM:

No remarks, Approved

Annual Report, Activities, News:

Several requests have been received from the media, members receiving such requests could ask for a small donation to be sent to FoS.

Article in Alpine magazine shown by the chairman Kay.

The Secretary Julian completed a piece on FoS for the Middle East in London magazine which describes friendship societies in Arabia.

The Dubai History Group has a Socotra calendar available to purchase.

The Vice Chairman Miranda mentioned that the stethoscopes had arrived on the island and were issued to the hospital.

Reading glasses were distributed by Miranda, they were in high demand and it appears there is a real need for reading glasses on the island.

Poster and stickers concerning 'Socotra is not a souvenir' were distributed to the eco-campsites, drivers, tourist guides, hotels and restaurants in Sana and Hadiboh. Bohdana reported that they were very well received and that it helped establish a good relationship with people on the island as there is a real lack of awareness by tourist. Unfortunately it was not possible to place posters in the

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airport. Bohdana reported that up to 70 kg of shells, coral and other material had been confiscated at the airport. It is hoped that these posters will help minimise this in future.

FoS leaflets have been distributed in hotels of Sana'a and on Socotra.

Eike reported that there were many dealers selling plants, animals, shells and other fauna and flora from Socotra and that action needed to be taken against them. Also there is breeding of several local endemics from Socotra (compiled in conservation article by Kay and Lisa). It has also been reported that some scientist have been illegally selling fauna from Socotra. He proposed a system on the island to prevent people taking out fauna and flora from the island. A great deal of people on the internet is offering these endemic species for sale. A proposal for FoS to name and shame these, although possible legal implications.

Kay mentioned that the health services on Socotra are in need of assistance and Khalid Sorour offered his help to try assist Dr Salem with getting supplies and help.

FoS Accounts and Treasurer's Financial Report

The Treasurer Hugh mentioned how the accounting year has been altered to coincide with the calendar year as discussed last year, this was presented in the balance sheet showing a period of seventeen months to take into account the changes which will make it easier to compare the accounts yearly.

Membership subscriptions has held up well and subs are double that of last year. Donations have significantly increased and payment of Gift Aid for UK subs has all helped increase FoS income.

The financial report shows the costs of the two Tayfs, Tayf 7 was significantly more expensive because of its size; last year it was agreed that in future all Tayfs will be limited to 20 pages. Hugh drew attention to the reason that Tayf costs were low was the significant work put in by volunteers, especially the editor Sue. Further FoS costs included the website which is now paid to 2015.

Projects previously funded have included the Darwin book, museum contribution, reading glasses, posters and stickers and Dr Salim's expenses to attend last year's conference and present his excellent paper on the health on Socotra. Friends of Socotra have spent £1673 on projects intended to benefit Socotrans.

A new account has been opened with the Royal bank of Scotland, although Nationwide account will remain open for one more year. Signatories of the new account will be the Treasurer, Secretary and editor of Tayf.

Further details are available in a separate Treasurer's report.

FoS proposed Constitution changes

The following amendments to the Constitution were recommended by Hugh:

Para 5, (b) – Delete all that lines between the brackets, as follows: {provided that no Honorary Officer shall hold the same office for more than three consecutive years. On the expiration of such

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period, one further year must elapse before any former Honorary Officer shall be eligible for re-election to that office} this would make it difficult for FoS to operate if it were enforced. The important thing is to ensure that members wishing to join the committee or to stand for election as an Honorary Officer should feel able to put their names forward.

Para 6, (a) – instead of (the Executive Committee) ‘shall meet not less than three times a year’ Hugh proposed ‘twice’ – fortunately para 10, (a), makes it clear that this can be ‘in person or through electronic communication media’

Also under Para 6, (a) regarding the numbers making up the Executive Committee, replace ‘not less than five or more than eleven members’ with ‘not less than six or more than sixteen members’.

Para 6, (d) – Delete all the lines between the brackets, as follows: {OR election shall be by a system of postal voting (the arrangements for which shall be made by the Committee) provided that the first members of the Committee shall be elected by personal vote at the first General meeting of the Association}. This is not relevant for FoS.

Para 7, (e) – This refers to members of the Committee ceasing to hold office if they are absent from ‘three consecutive meetings’. This may need to be addressed.

Para 8 – is like Para 3 one that gives FoS the ‘power’ to do certain things (in this case to set up Local Branches) and since it does not oblige FoS to act it seems to be irrelevant but not worth changing.

Para 10, (a) – I propose replacing the first part of the first sentence with ‘The Quorum at the Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be one-twentieth of the actual membership....’ This was the decision we took, quite constitutionally, at the AGM in Tübingen in 2009.

Further in the same sentence it should refer to 6 (i) and not, as it does, to 6 (a).

Paras 11 – 16 are all believed to be fine and require no changes, although 11, (b) which refers to Insurance indemnity for the Association needs to be addressed.

Hugh agreed to look into the costs of liability insurance.

The Executive Committee changes have resulted in 16 on the new Committee and Julian has replaced John Farrar as trustee.

Chairman proposed to accept the changes above, this was unanimously accepted.

Tayf distribution and content

The editor Sue apologised about the wrong caption for the photograph in the front of Tayf 8 which was not Kay.

Submissions for Tayf 9 should be made to Sue Christie by March 2012, the secretary Julian is to send out a reminder to people that they will need to meet this deadline. Also to ask conference speakers to send in their abstracts should they wish to be published in Tayf.

SCF and the SCDP will be removed from Tayf support page as both organisations are inactive at present – alternatives to be sought for the future.

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Request that there is more local content for Tayf from Socotra, although this is proving to be difficult due to access.

Five hundred copies of the Arabic version of Tayf 8 have been printed in al-Mukalla, many thanks to Salwa for arranging this. Difficulties of getting these copies to the island, proposal for paying Mohammed Amar to get them to the island, we can pay his excess baggage.

Further request to have more content from projects on the island to publish a small piece in Tayf, Miranda has agreed to add some of the excellent poetry she has gathered to each issue of Tayf.

Lisa proposed that FoS send out an electronic versions of Tayf. Whilst some people do prefer the electronic version (and are receiving it in this form), it was decided that there were still many people who preferred to have a hard copies, which should remain for the near future.

Website

John Farrar has resigned as webmaster after several years of having helped produce a great website, everyone agreed he had contributed enormously to FoS and our thanks to him for his efforts over the years.

The website has been taken over by Dana who is now the webmaster for the FoS website to be assisted by Bohdana Rambouskova.

Dana to look into transfer of domain and hosting

Bohdana and Dana are to come together and redesign the website, review what needs to be changed, modernise the logo and generally update the website.

Dana requested member help with this process of updating by contributing general statements, the workflow, structure, design proposals will then be approved and the content placed on the website. Later there will only be required a person to ensure the website is updated.

Bohdana will see if it is possible to incorporate some of the now defunct SGBP website into the FoS website.

Updates and news to be sent to Dana

Updated bibliography required, action required by Julian, Dana, Kay, Miranda, Uwe, Richard, Eike and Bohdana.

Format to follow RGB, structuring of website required to be completed by the end of this year.

Bohdana requested to update the FoS logo, agreed to look at it and Bohdana to contact Diccon Alexander for his help.

Lisa agreed to proofread the website.

Projects running on the island to be incorporated on the website

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Ongoing and possible Projects 2011

The need for parts of the website to be translated into Arabic, text to be prepared and Isam would need to be paid for his translation.

Medical supplies to the island for Dr Salim, Dr Khalid Sorour agreed to contact him to see what was required. Salwa agreed to investigate how to get these supplies to the island.

Kay proposed to set up a bank account on Socotra from which emergency funds to people on Socotra could be issued. Uwe proposed to use his organisations account where FoS contributions could be sent and from which it could then be distributed to people requiring funds in an emergency.

Nick Jeffries proposed a solar steam pump. To look at these as a means to replace petrol pumps on the island rather than adding new pumps which could further affect the water table on the island. Nick to look at the viability of this and return with a proposal, Adeeb's nursery is considered the best place for this type of arrangement.

Dana proposes a follow up on the planting on Homhill to ensure fences are kept and that project continues.

Lisa proposed the need for money to keep the nursery functioning.

Henning Bauer and Katja Setzkorn from GIZ said that there may be funding available for projects on Socotra, a template for these funding proposals is required. Also funding maybe in place for bringing a Socotri to the next AGM, require names and rationale for people that we wish to invite, 6 months before the conference to ensure time for visas and flights. Funding proposals will require a transparent mechanism to avoid allegations of unfairness.

Uwe proposed that it would be good to keep several projects running, turtle monitoring and policing; Eco-police and rangers, training required; to maintain a fisheries data collection; to help fund annual outer island EPA trip for conservation work, medical supplies and monitoring

Dana mentioned how troubles in Yemen have greatly affected projects on Socotra and how skills training will be lost if no funding and help is available, it was agreed that these difficulties had already arisen.

Required to send a letter to the people who sent letters to the FoS conference to allow them to know we are still concerned. And to lobby UNESCO and other funding bodies to ensure that projects are kept running during these times of trouble so as not to lose the expertise and training already in place. The role of FoS would be to mediate with funding bodies and help provide lists of projects requiring emergency and essential aid.

Kay mentioned that insecticides being used by Ministry of Health for mosquito eradication program are banned in Europe and are killing the wildlife on Socotra. Dr Khalid Sorour said he would contact them and let them know about this.

Dr Oskasha El Daly said he would like to see FoS leaflets distributed to a wider audience and would like to help by distributing leaflets and look at magazines that could be used to mention FoS.

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Lisa proposed setting up a LinkedIn page and Facebook page. Linked In page was agreed and Lisa to put together something to face book and return to the committee with this.

Election of FoS Executive Committee, Office bearers and trustees

Tony Miller has withdrawn from the Executive committee but remains a Trustee

Roderic Dutton will remain on the committee but Hugh Morris will take over the Membership Secretary role.

John Farrar has resigned from Committee

John Dickson is no longer on the Executive Committee

Rowan Salim re-confirmed as being on the Executive Committee

Miranda proposed Isam Edin Mohamed Ali as an Executive committee member, seconded by Julian

Kay proposed Hana Habrová as an executive Committee member, Hugh seconded

The re-elected executive committee are,

Kay van Damme – Chairman

Miranda Morris – Vice Chair

Hugh Morris – Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Julian Jansen van Rensburg – Secretary

Sue Christine – Tayf Editor

Lisa Banfield – Communications Officer

Diccon Alexander

Salwa Barkwan

Martin Coree

Roderic Dutton

Nick Jeffreis

Sabina Knees

Dana Pietsch

Rowan Salim

Issam Eldin Mohamed Ali

Hana Habrová

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Julian to replace John Farrar as a Trustee

FoS meeting next year

Julian proposed Exeter, Hana proposed Czech Republic and Uwe Zajonz proposed Frankfurt, it was unanimously voted that it be held in Frankfurt, and the proposed dates 22-23 September 2012 were given. Kay asked people to chase up attendees and reminded all that it would be best to ensure that we were able to apply early to ensure that it would be possible for people from Socotra to attend.

Meeting Adjourned