

Minutes of the 13th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Soqotra 2014 in Rome, Italy.

Present: Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Kay van Damme, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Sabina Knees, Katja Setzkorn, Alan Forrest, Fabio Attorre, Petr Madera, Lisa Banfield, Dana Pietsch, Peter De Geest, Dirk van Dorp, Abdul Wahab Saad Saeed, Fouad Naseeb Saeed, Malek A. Abdulaziz, Mohamed Said, El-Mashjary, Ahmed Saeed Suliman, Alfredo Guillet, Mazen Mohammed Ahdarhe, Kristen Hopper, Vladimir Melnik, Abdul al-Rahman Al-Eryani, Petr Nemeč and Raquel Vasconcelos.

Apologies: Hana Habrová, Fareed Krupp, Sue Christie, Issam Eldin Mohamed Ali, Edward Farmer, Rob Felix, Ron Felix, Ulrich Joger, Roman Loimeier, Sheehan Pahls, Hannes Pulch, Wolfgang Schneider, John Shipman, Francine Stone, Uwe Zajonz.

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1. Matters arising from the 2013 minutes:

The 2013 minutes were approved and there were no matters arising other than those below.

2. Chairman's Annual Report:

This year was quite quiet and relatively few proposed projects having taken place. Due to the security situation few people have visited Soqatra. Kay van Damme had meetings with Mohammed Amer on Socotra and was approached about assisting with the Poetry contest. Kay van Damme also said that there was a need for more follow up on projects that are proposed.

3. Friends of Soqatra Accounts and Treasurer's Financial Report and Membership:

Hugh Morris submitted Accounts for 01/01/2013 – 31/12/2013

The accounts relate to the full calendar year of 2013. This is the same period as that for our returns to the UK Charity Commission. The figures for 2012 are provided for comparison.

Income:

The income for *Friends of Soqatra* increased in 2013. This was the result of one significant donation and of a modest increase in the payment of subscriptions during the year. Subscription payments are our only reliable income and this fluctuates from year to year, (as some members choose to pay for several years at once); but we continue to have members (who no doubt consider themselves as serious supporters of *Friends of Soqatra*) who are, at any one time, not paid up. For example, as of September 2014, only 62 members had paid their subscriptions; whilst the total number of 'active' members was 104. If these 'unpaid' 42 were to pay their dues it would raise over one thousand pounds for *Friends of Soqatra* (or more – since several are more than a year in arrears). For the record, the following was our income from membership over the past few years: in 2006/7 it was £1050; in 2007/8 it was £695; in 2008/9 it was £738; in 2010 it was £1456; in 2011 it was £2348; in 2012 it was £1371, and in 2013 it was £1608.

Expenditure:

Tayf 10: 500 copies of the Arabic version of *Tayf* reached Soqatra and 74 English paper copies were distributed (and 72 electronic versions – at no cost to *Friends of Soqatra*). Thanks to Sue Christie, the Editor, arranging for the printing of the English copies (in Northern Ireland) and to Omar Hamdoon for the Arabic copies (in Makalla), our costs have remained low for what, in 2013, was the principal funded activity of *Friends of Soqatra*.

Projects: In 2013 *Friends of Soqotra* again supported the health Project of Dr Salem (£510) and we also supported Dana's soil project (£204).

Insurance: the annual premium remained unchanged (£217.50).

As is evident from the accounts *Friends of Soqotra* ended 2013, with a modest increase in our reserves, at £5732.97. At the present time, *Friends of Soqotra* has £5606 in credit – after most of the expenses for *Tayf 11* have been paid – and this is before the collection of subscriptions from those members attending Rome. However, we have not so far spent money on other projects this year.

4. Membership Fees

Hugh Morris brought forward the idea for increasing *Friends of Soqotra* membership fees. Kay van Damme said that an increase at the present time may result in fewer members and that it may prove to be difficult for many of the current members to retain their membership. Miranda Morris mentioned that it was more a fact that people are not paying each year, than the need to increase membership to bring in further funds. Miranda Morris proposed and it was agreed by the committee that Hugh put a note on the next email sent out to members that would encourage members to pay up, as it would greatly assist *Friends of Soqotra's* financial situation. Abdul Wahab Saad Saeed mentioned that on Socotra a bank account could be set up to allow the Yemeni members to pay their fees into a Yemeni account. Katia Setzkorn mentioned that they have an account on Soqotra, but will need to check that it is feasible for fees to be paid into this account.

5. Virtual Committee Meeting

Julian Jansen van Rensburg suggested and it was agreed by the committee that the Virtual Committee Meeting be held in April. All committee members are to submit points to be raised by the 1 April. Thereafter Julian Jansen van Rensburg will send out this list to the committee members to respond to. The final date for this will be 14 April, after which Julian Jansen van Rensburg will complete the minutes of the meeting and send it to the Committee. Important dates for Committee Members 1 April and 14 April.

6. Website

Dana Pietsch asked people to submit their bibliographies, a number of people are still outstanding. Dana Pietsch asked to expand the Arabic webpages, decision forthcoming. Dana Pietsch asked for people to send her pictures of fauna and flora of Soqota for the website, in order that the slide show and website could be kept 'fresh'. A list of the correct names for various areas on the island was requested. Dana Pietsch said that it would be best if this were put on the website for people to use. Miranda Morris agreed to supply a list of the correct names for the villages and areas in order that people will start to use the correct the spelling and diacritics. Miranda Morris will prepare a pdf document and fonts for people to download off the website. News and articles for the website were requested. Kay van Damme proposed

a counter for the website to allow *Friends of Soqotra* to know how many people and from where they are visiting the website from. Dana Pietsch to look into this.

7. *Friends of Soqotra* Facebook Page

Lisa Banfield requested that people with news, articles and photos send them to her for inclusion on the *Friends of Soqotra* Facebook page. The *Friends of Soqotra* Facebook page has 87 likes so far.

8. Ongoing and Potential projects

Dana Pietsch mentioned that she and Kay van Damme had received an email from Adnan Zakaria to ask *Friends of Soqotra* for support concerning ecotourism and biodiversity tourism on the website.

Leaflets

Miranda Morris, mentioned that she had spoken to Matthew Byrne, Director of the Soqotra Training Centre, who said that he often gets requests on many aspects of Soqotra from Soqotran tourist guides. Miranda Morris said that after a discussion with Matthew Byrne they suggested that it would be useful to have:

A4 double-sided, laminated sheets, kept in a folder in Soqotri tourist guide's vehicles for tourists and guides to consult, and for Soqotran Hotels and for Soqotran Tourist Agents.

These leaflets to be handed out to a few of each of these initially.

They should, according to the Soqotri guides, be written in English, Arabic, French, Italian, German and Russian.

Subjects suggested by Soqotri tourist guides included: - birds, small plants and trees, language and culture, advice to tourists on dress and appropriate behaviour. Suggested by Matthew Byrne, basic information on the Soqotri way of life.

Julian Jansen van Rensburg mentioned that while this is a good idea it should be careful as to what information is included (i.e. no rare plants or animals) and that each sheet should have a reference to *Friends of Soqotra* and the *Friends of Soqotra* website address. Hugh Morris proposed to have someone to be a project manager to chase up the projects to ensure that the projects proposed are actually realised, Julian Jansen van Rensburg agreed to this. Lisa Banfield agreed to draft a template for leaflets birds, plants and reptiles, (language and culture, tourists on dress and appropriate behaviour, and basic information will be text rather than pictures). Julian Jansen van Rensburg to ensure that people agree what comes in to the template, people to agree what they will do and then ensure it is actioned by Lisa Banfield. Miranda Morris to ask Matthew Byrne how many leaflets he requires and whether he needs a laminator, etc...

Leaflets proposed,

Lisa Banfield and Sabina Knees, Plants and trees,

Richard Porter and Ahmed Saeed Suliman, Birds

Miranda Morris, Language and Culture, Tourist advice, basic information on the Soqotran way of life.

Raquel Vasconcelos, Reptiles

Children with special needs.

Miranda Morris said that she had been approached about a project concerning children with special needs, which is requesting funding. Hugh Morris suggested a donation of £300 pounds, as an initial support grant. Further funding to be made once this stage of funding has been made and a report given. This was agreed by the committee.

Footballs

Kay van Damme mentioned that it may be a good idea to assist in the bringing of footballs to the island. This was agreed by the committee and Kay van Damme will investigate how this will be possible.

9. *Tayf* Production and Editing

Presenters to submit photographs and an abstract to Sue Christie for inclusion in *Tayf*. Hugh Morris and Julian Jansen van Rensburg to action this and ensure articles are received.

***Tayf* on Soqotra**

Miranda Morris, mentioned that *Tayf* is being sent out to Socotra but does not seem to be getting to the places needed. Fouad Nasseb Saeed agreed to check on why this is not happening.

10. Discussion concerning membership of the Committee and the succession of Office Bearers.

It was decided to leave this to the next Virtual Committee Meeting

11. The Election of *Friends of Soqotra* Executive Committee (2014 – 2015).

The following are the Executive Committee for 2014 - 2015:

Fabio Attore, Lisa Banfield, Salwa Barkwan, Sue Christie, Peter De Geest, Hana Habrova, Mohamed-Ali Isam-Eldin, Julian Jansen Van Rensburg, Sabina Knees, Vladimir Melnik, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Dana Pietsch, Bohdana Rambuskova, Kay Van Damme and Raquel Vasconcelos

12. The Office Bearers for 2014 – 2015 are as follows:

Chairperson Kay Van Damme, Vice-Chairperson Dana Pietsch (replacing Miranda Morris), Secretary Julian Jansen Van Rensburg and Treasurer Hugh Morris

13. The Trustees of *Friends of Soqotra* remain the following:

Diccon Alexander, Lisa Banfield, Sue Christie, Martin Coree, John Dickson, Roderic Dutton, Julian Jansen Van Rensburg, Nick Jeffries, Sabina Knees, Tony Miller, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Dana Pietsch, Rowan Salim and Kay Van Damme

14. Venue for 2015

Raquel Vasconcelos proposed to host the next *Friends of Soqotra* conference and AGM in Porto, Portugal. This was unanimously agreed upon by the committee. The date set is 11-13 September 2015.

15. Any Other Business

The need for the roles of committee members to be defined. Julian Jansen van Rensburg to send email out to all committee members on their role and duties and what gaps need to be filled.

It was agreed that at the next AGM, the official business of elections will take place immediately after the Chairman's and the Treasurer's report

Ahmed Saeed Suliman mentioned that the Soqotra Environmental Protection Agency has a Facebook page and new website.

Small Island Development States and Regional Networks in the Western Indian Ocean.

Fabio Attorre suggested *Friends of Soqotra* be involved in this network, which looks at the exchange of information amongst island societies and help share in information, solutions, etc.... The committee agreed to look into this, Fabio Attorre to investigate how *Friends of Soqotra* can become involved.

Dana Pietsch suggested to get support from the German Island group, and mentioned that it could be a good idea for people to submit papers to the Island Study Journal.