**ANNEX C TO**

**RAFOS/SEC/17**

**DATED 24 NOV 17**

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

I’d like to start by once again thanking Dr Alex Banks for his presentation - I’m known as one who struggles with Gulls and often refer to them as ‘Vermin’ as you’ll have noticed from the Fiendish ID Quiz posters so if he can keep my interest he must be doing a grand job - well done. We’ll hear from Keith later about how Alex’s project may translate into some activity next year.

As most will know, the position of President of the Society remains vacant following Dolly Parton’s retirement from the Service so it falls to me as a life vice-president and nearest available mug to say a few general words about the RAF. Maybe not a state of the nation address but at least something of an update which I hope many who have retired will find of interest. As a Service we remain very busy indeed on operations - predominantly in the Middle East where we’re part of the coalition air effort against Daesh. Much of this goes unreported in the national media but I’m privileged to attend the Friday morning operations round up so I get to hear on a weekly basis about the number of combat sorties being flown by Typhoons, Tornados and the remotely piloted Reaper. We hear about their targets and the activities of the coalition of ground forces who are gradually squeezing Daesh out of their Syrian locations and all the other activity going on in Iraq and Afghanistan. But operations isn't all about the Middle East and I note we’ve got people in the Falklands, East and West Africa, supporting NATO Air Policing in the Baltic and soon back in Romania, training teams in all sorts of unusual places and of course supporting the broader Defence Exercise Programme. The Red Arrows have recently completed a Middle East tour mainly in the Gulf area but making it to Karachi too; at home, we’re busy preparing for the RAF100 events next year and then we’ll have Saif Sareea III in the autumn. All this with an RAF that is a couple of thousand below strength but still steps up to the plate at very short notice to provide hurricane relief in the Caribbean. I’m delighted to report that the Reserves at Brize Norton were instrumental in meeting the initial surge of out-loading aircraft for that operation. Of note the final recovery of a Puma from there took place only last week. In such a busy Service it is perhaps not surprising that few have time for birding or to join a Society such as ours but we will keep plugging our message and try to recruit more serving members where we can.

I mentioned last year that in the last Strategic Defence Review the government decided to provision 2 more Typhoon sqns, a new Maritime Patrol Aircraft the P8, and extended the out of service date for Tornado and the Sentinel. Some of this is proving really difficult to deliver and of course money is tight as ever. But as we approach our centenary we’re in pretty good shape and CAS is preparing to reset the Service for the next 100 years with a particular emphasis on delivering expeditionary air capabilities with a modernised workforce which draws on regulars, reserves, contractors and civil servants.

So, to my task as Chairman; first of all let me thank you again for coming – it really is good to see the stalwart support we enjoy. We’re going to discuss later whether we’ve got the format for the AGM right or whether there is room for development. I note, our membership may still be bumping along at around a hundred or so but it is encouraging that in this our fifty-second year that numbers are continuing to rise, albeit slightly, and the activities of the Society are as interesting and diverse as ever. I’m not going to eat the FALO’s sandwiches but we have been very active this past year with some new events. Importantly, once again we’ve supported the citizen science activities of a number of organisations but in particular the BTO where our input is always welcomed and recognised in their publications. This year marks 75 years of wetland bird counting of one sort or another and the BTO WeBS team held a conference at Martin Mere in September where Keith Cowieson gave an outstanding (so he tells me) presentation of 20 odd years of RAFOS support through Expedition WINTER DUCK.

Now as usual I need to record formally some thanks:

Your Committee have worked hard this year and deserve your thanks as usual. Some posts are up for renewal and I’m grateful to those who will stand again to carry on the good work. One, the post of Membership Secretary, is open for offers which we will discuss under the appropriate agenda item; can I just say at this point a firm thank you to those who have completed their tours of duty on the Committee and record formally the Society’s thanks for your efforts. Team Knight, with Dick back on his feet and re-harnessed to the task, have once again done a first-class job of keeping us all on our toes and I have to note Colin Wearn’s hand, even though he has forsaken us to attend the AOS’s 50th anniversary dinner in London, in sorting today’s venue and catering out with the Mess Manager and his staff. Without all this support the AGM would not take place.

That said, the Society thrives on the activities of the Members every bit as much as the attention of the Committee. As I said, you’ll hear from Keith Cowieson about some of the successes enjoyed on expeditions various - I was particularly delighted to see how much interest there was in the new idea of a weekend away to the Somerset Levels - a soon to be repeated adventure. But there is a diverse array of activities out there from serious surveying such as WINTER DUCK to more general birding such as our traditional New Year gathering at Slimbridge. Keith has some exciting opportunities to share for next year’s plan but remember anyone, and I mean anyone, can propose, plan and run an event or expedition - variety is the spice of life.

And on that note I’ll hand over to the Secretary Bird to get on with business.