



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Wednesday 15th January 2014
at Park House, University of Reading

Present: Neil Bucknell (president), Tim Ball (chair), Mike Turton (Secretary), Bill Nicoll (Treasurer), Chris Foster, Ted Rogers, Ray Reedman (RRe), Iain Oldcorn, Robin Dryden, Renton Righelato (RRi).

1. Apologies for absence: John Walker, Martin Sell
2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 22nd October 2013**

The minutes were approved and signed by Neil Bucknell.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 3(14 - data projector): Projector and bulb have been purchased. The projector was used for the quiz.

Item 11: IO has been sending publicity for meetings to newspapers covering the Reading area and East Berks. IO to contact RRe to get more detail on the talks.

4. **Treasurer's Report**

Report circulated prior to meeting.

The Committee approved *nem com* the addition of Tim Ball to the list of signatories for all Club accounts. All other signatories on the list remain unchanged.

Discrepancies between the Treasurer's and Membership Secretary's reports are due partly to the timing of payments and partly as a result of inconsistencies in record keeping in previous years which are slowly being corrected.

Amount received in subscriptions expected to be similar to last year.

RRe proposed that the Atlas Fund be transferred to the BBAG. Once all bills have been paid, BBAG will transfer the surplus to the Conservation Fund. Approved *nem com*.

Action: BN to transfer money once Gift Aid has been received.

Membership Secretary's Report

Report circulated prior to meeting.

There continues to be a problem with members not informing the Club of changes to contact details.

The number of unpaid memberships has decreased from 60 (as at the last committee meeting) to 29. All these will receive final reminders shortly, after which their membership will be terminated at the end of March.

Only one application for membership has been received as a result of the leaflets put out following the October committee meeting.

Publicity and member recruitment will be discussed at a committee meeting later this year.

The Treasurer and Membership Secretary are investigating the feasibility of merging QMR, membership and Treasurer's spreadsheets. This would be very difficult using Excel. A volunteer is needed to investigate whether a proper database is available which would be suitable and to do the data conversion.

5. Editorial Board Report

The minutes of the December Editorial Board meeting were circulated prior to this meeting. The 2009/10 reports should be with Rob Still by the end of January and published in mid-late February.

Action: MT to arrange for members to collect at indoor meetings, then mail out the remainder.

Need a volunteer to sell advertising space in future annual reports.

Action: RRI to ask for a volunteer at the next indoor meeting.

Future reports

Derek Barker has agreed to become editor for the systematic list in future reports and manage the team of SAWs.

Main problem is with data collection and validation. Feasibility of using online validation could be looked at.

Data needs to be reviewed before species accounts written, not afterwards. The BRC have accepted that they need to change the way in which they review data.

NDOC have been consulted on the recording and reporting process.

The Quinquennial County Recorder and BRC review is due at the end of this year.

Action: RRI to put forward a proposal on the review to the summer committee meeting in line with agreed procedure.

6. Programme Sub-committee report

Bookings for 2014/15 sent to University, but not yet confirmed. Earley St Peters booked for social and ID workshop.

Mike Clarke (RSPB) approached to do talk. If he agrees, the big lecture theatre will need to be booked. A number of other speakers have been booked. Still a couple of blank slots.

Action: any ideas from committee members for other speakers to be sent to RRe.

Outdoor programme not yet started - need more leaders.

7. Conservation

Minutes of November Conservation Committee meeting circulated prior to the meeting.

Terms of Reference for the Conservation Committee approved *nem com*.

Conservation Committee Membership: Peter Standley has stood down. Becky Thomas has agreed to join the committee. The Conservation Committee to consider inviting Lesley Staves or another West Berks representative. Membership approved *nem com*.

A number of planning groups, councils and private landowners have approached the Club asking for advice.

The meeting discussed an issue raised by West Berks Council about the need for Network Rail to mitigate for clearing lineside vegetation and the need to retain these as important wildlife corridors.

The Conservation Committee has received a grant application for nest boxes at a community site in Jealott's Hill.

8. Co-option to fill Committee vacancy

The proposal that Becky Thomas be co-opted back onto the committee until the next AGM to fill the vacancy caused by Tim Ball's election as chair was approved *nem com*.

Charity Commission guidance was sought on whether Becky could be re-elected, even though she has only just stood down from the committee. Their view is that this was a decision to be made by the Committee.

9. **Quorum for General Meetings & length of term of office for Committee members**

Quorum for General Meetings

Discussion document was circulated prior to the meeting. Main points of the discussion:

- It is currently difficult to rearrange a meeting and ensure that we get a suitable quorum.
- Quorum is higher than that for similar organisations.
- Need to ensure that we have a popular speaker for the AGM – tends to boost attendance. There may be an issue with only being able to offer half the evening to a good speaker. Loss of popular speaker at short notice in 2013 was unfortunate.
- Options for proxy voting contained in the constitution were discussed. It would be difficult to use proxy voting for AGM elections. Doubt over whether members who don't come to the AGM would bother to send in a proxy vote.
- Is a change to the arrangements necessary? AGM has been quorate in 7 out of the last 10 years.
- If we reduce the quorum, this should not impact on the way that the AGM is run. It should still be an opportunity for members to raise issues on the way that the Club is run.
- Is it possible to change constitution so that, if a quorum is not present at the start time, we wait for 30 minutes and then hold it with the numbers present? There will then be no need to reschedule the meeting.
- Need to increase publicity for the AGM to encourage members to come.
- Can we change the notice to be given for the adjourned AGM so that it can be held at the following indoor meeting rather than waiting for the social, which always has fewer attendees?
- Send out names of people nominated for elections to members by email once the 7-day deadline has passed.

It was proposed that the quorum be reduced from 25% with a minimum of 50 members, to 20% with a minimum of 40 members. Approved unanimously.

It was noted that the wording of this clause in the constitution is ambiguous and needs to be made clearer.

It was also proposed that the amount of notice to be given for an adjourned AGM should be reduced from 14 days to 10 days. Approved: 7 in favour, 1 against.

Action: MT to bring revisions to constitution to the next Committee meeting.

The decision on whether to put the changes to the next AGM or call an Extraordinary General Meeting for the first indoor meeting of the 2014/15 season was postponed until the speakers for that meeting and the AGM are known.

Length of term of office for Committee members

Discussion document circulated prior to meeting. Main points of the discussion:

- Options already exist in the constitution to co-opt people on to the committee to fill vacancies and to appoint Non-executive Officers.
- Some benefits in doing it to retain people with specific skills
- Second 3-year term should be an option, not an expectation.

It was agreed that this change to the constitution was not necessary.

10. **Reports for consideration:**

Social Media Update

Report submitted by Becky Thomas. The BOC Facebook group now has 49 members, and is still growing. The group has a mix of members, including many students. The posts on the group consist of advertising for the meetings, posts about the BTO or RSPB, news articles and people posting about bird sightings. With a bit more advertising Becky thinks the group will continue to grow and will be a good way of advertising BOC meetings and events.

Can members be invited to join the group rather than having to apply?

11. **Any Other Business**

Offer of telescope and tripod from Ralph and Angela Stafford received by RRe. It was agreed that these should be held by the Club for use on excursions. If it is not used, then it could be donated for use in a 3rd world country.

Action: RRe to contact Ralph & Angela and to review usage in 12 months time.

Action: anyone who holds BOC assets to let MT know. MT to maintain register.

Request received by MT to circulate details of 2nd hand optical equipment for sale round Club membership. Approved – could also be put on berksbirds and BOC website.

Action: MT to circulate details

RRi made Committee aware that he currently holds archive of annual Birds of Berkshire reports.

Action: MT to ask if anyone would be interested in becoming the Club archivist

RSPB and Reading Museum currently ordinary members. IO requested permission to make them corporate members. It was also agreed that Chris Robinson could become a country member.

TR requested articles for next newsletter due out in early March.

12. **Date and venue for next meeting.**

Thursday 27th March at 7.30pm, Park House, University of Reading.