



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 15th October 2015
at Park House, University of Reading

Present: Neil Bucknell (President), Tim Ball (Chair), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Bill Nicoll (Treasurer), Robin Dryden, Chris Foster, Ted Rogers, John Walker, Richard Stansfield, Renton Righelato (RRi), Ray Reedman (RRe).

1. **Apologies for absence:** Becky Thomas, Iain Oldcorn.

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 4th June 2015**

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 10 (Website redevelopment): The help page should include information on what to do with rings found on dead birds.

Action: TB to provide link on dealing with rings on dead birds for RRi to add to website. Continuing.

Item 15 (Any other business): NB reported that the combined county website was now almost fully funded. Another meeting would be held later this month, and it was hoped that the website would go live within about six months.

4. **Formal record of items agreed by email since the last meeting**

No items had been agreed by email since the last meeting.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report, draft accounts and draft budget were circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. BN reported that the accounts had gone well this year. Expenditure had been fairly typical for the last year. He used to show the expenses for each committee member separately, but had now amalgamated them as it was more important to show what the money had been spent on rather than who spent it.

The income was atypical, because of the £10,000 donation from the BBAG. There would be a similar donation in 2015-16, when the income should again be under £25,000.

The general funds had increased by about £1,000. BN explained what he had put in the conservation fund, including royalties from Robert Gillmor's book. RRi pointed out that Robert had said these were for the Club's general funds. Bill proposed that they should go into the conservation fund; there were no objections.

BN reported that he has sent the draft accounts to the accountants who will draw up the final accounts.

Action: BN to correct minor errors in the draft accounts and to present them to the AGM.

The draft budget was similar to last years, with most figures based on recent averages. IO had agreed the projected income from subscriptions. BN had included £200 for income from advertising in annual reports, although there has not been any for the last three years. RRi explained that he should have picked this up from Colin Wilson when he took over editing the annual reports. The meeting agreed to reduce the projected income from advertising to £100. RRi said there should be two reports published in 2015-16, which would be funded by drawing on income from previous years when no reports had been published.

RRi was unsure about the likely income from data sales as TVERC had had very few requests for data. However it was decided to leave this as in the draft budget.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report and a brief update were circulated prior to this meeting.

CF reported on the progress in liaising with the University Ornithological Society. There were over 50 people who wanted to take part in the joint membership arrangement. The meeting was unsure what the Club had agreed about joint membership, but it was agreed that the Club needed to attract younger people, whether or not they are members.

NB: After the meeting, SW checked what had been agreed previously. The committee minutes of 27th March 2014 show that the following was agreed for joint membership of the BOC and the UOS:

- Annual subscription rate will be £10 - £5 to University OS and £5 to BOC.
- Members will receive all benefits of full BOC membership.
- The scheme to be administered by the University OS who will provide membership details and payment of £5 per member to the BOC.
- Students who are not joint members will still be able to attend indoor meetings free on production of their student card.

Action: CF to continue to liaise with the UOS, including obtaining contact email addresses and subscriptions.

Publicity Sub-committee Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. RRe had volunteered to give a talk at Reading Library.

RS said that we needed to repeat the leafleting now that the 2015-16 programme had been published and wanted volunteers to distribute leaflets. BN volunteered to put leaflets in the hides at Moor Green. RS had updated the posters but there were still about 20 of the first version to be used. It was agreed that he could buy more as required.

Action: All to consider other venues for leaflets and to inform RS about suitable locations.

It was agreed that we needed to publicise the Empty Skies film as much as possible, especially to any local groups (e.g. RSPB, sustainability groups) within reasonable travelling distance.

Action: RS to contact all relevant groups to publicise Empty Skies.

It was agreed to continue to publicise that members could bring friends to indoor meetings and to send out an email before each indoor meeting.

Action: TR to email members before next indoor meeting and to remind them about bringing friends.

Action: TB to remind people at the next indoor meeting about bringing friends.

It was thought that sending out most programme cards electronically may adversely affect attendance at meetings.

Action: RS to bring some printed programmes to the next indoor meeting.

Action: SW to include printed programme card when distributing 2012 report.

7. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

The first indoor meeting at Maiden Place was difficult to find and not many people attended, however it was much less expensive than the University.

Two talks in the current programme had been changed: Jackie Garner was unable to attend on 2nd December so her talk had been swapped with RS's on 6th January 2016.

Action: RRe to revise and republish 2015-16 programme.

Action: TR to email members about changes to the programme.

RRe explained his proposals for the 2016-17 indoor meetings, including holding a social event in September. His proposed dates were agreed by the meeting. He already had a good list of speakers in place.

The problem with the outdoor programme was that there were only three or four leaders holding it together. RRe was finding it difficult to get out to events. His work had expanded considerably over the years and was now too much for one person. Ideally, there should be someone to do the indoor programme, someone to co-ordinate and lead the outdoor programme, someone to be a social co-ordinator and someone to deal with coaches. He was unable to continue carrying out all these roles, but would be able to do some of them.

Splitting his work into two separate roles (indoor and outdoor) and possible candidates were discussed. BN offered to participate in the programme organisation, but he was hoping to lead fewer trips. See item 13.

Ken and Sarah White had offered to arrange a trip to Florida in October 2016. It was agreed to ask them to cost it. Early publicity would be necessary.

Action: RRe to ask Ken and Sarah White to cost the proposed trip to Florida.

JW raised the issue of whether the BOC had any liability for trips like this. He thought that trips were organised under the auspices of the BOC and NDOC because of their insurance. NB said that the Club had investigated this in the past, and found that the BOC's Trustees were not responsible for safety issues on trips. It was up to individuals to get their own insurance. However, it was thought that the BOC had some duty of care to its members, and that it was important that the Club's role and responsibilities were defined.

Action: SW to ask the Club's insurers about its liability for trips outside the UK and what would be involved in covering them in the Club's insurance.

8. Conservation Sub-committee report

The report and the minutes of the last conservation meeting, held on 28.7.15, were circulated before this meeting and discussed.

RRi reported that the Canal and River Trust were trying to get planning permission for houses at Padworth, so discussions about creating a nature reserve were on hold. Des Sussex, of Natural England, was due to attend the next conservation committee meeting. The committee were considering organising a water rail survey next year and may be looking for volunteers in spring.

A number of projects required working parties. Until now, these were usually organised under the auspices of other organisations that have suitable insurance. It was decided to find out whether the BOC's insurance could cover them. RRi could provide a brief description of the activities involved if necessary.

Action: SW to ask the Club's insurers whether the insurance could be extended to cover working parties and how much this would cost.

9. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

The 2012 report should be ready for printing by the middle/end of November, and for distribution about mid-December. The species account writers had done a good job and had provided their texts by early June. However, the BRC had not provided their review of records until the end of September. Obtaining the BRC's review earlier would make it easier for the species writers and reduce the time taken to prepare the report by about three months.

RRi planned to commission the species accounts for the 2013 report after Christmas. He said that he wanted someone else to work with him to create the 2013 report, then to take over the role of managing editor. See item 13.

RRi was talking to Marek Walford about providing online access to the bird records database. If a suitably edited and structured database was easily available, it would not be necessary to include the current level of detail in the reports, which could then be made more interesting, with more photographs, anecdotes etc. The data available (e.g. BerksBirds, county database, BirdTrack) and the purpose of the reports were discussed at length. NB said that the options needed to be properly reviewed, by the people who understood how it all worked. It would probably need people who are IT literate to work out how to produce suitable data.

It was decided to continue with the 2013 report as planned.

NB proposed setting up a review group to consider the annual report and the relevant data. He volunteered to be involved, as did RS.

Action: RRi to set up review group to determine the future for the annual reports and the relevant databases.

10. Website Redevelopment

The report was circulated before this meeting and discussed.

The new website was now established and could therefore be removed from the agenda.

11. County Recorder/BRC review

After the last committee meeting, the revised constitution was agreed; Peter Standley had confirmed that the BRC accepted it. CH was asked to implement it, including increasing the size of the BRC and speeding up the review process. There had been no response.

The issues involved were discussed. It was decided that the lack of action was not acceptable and that the review panel should be reconvened.

Action: RRi to contact NDOC, then reconvene the review panel to consider the current issues and find a suitable solution.

12. Events

Events since last committee meeting

RRe gave a brief summary of recent events. The average number of people on outdoor events was about 10.

Future events

See 2015/16 programme.

13. Elections to Committee

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and was discussed. There were four vacancies on the committee: Chairman, Treasurer and two Ordinary Members.

IO has to stand down as an Ordinary Member of the committee at the AGM, but was willing to continue as Membership Secretary. The committee appointed him as a Non-executive Officer.

One person had contacted TR after he sent out an email about the vacancies. A number of other people were discussed as potential committee members or to fulfil other roles (e.g. organising meetings).

NB agreed to contact people who might be willing to take on a position.

Action: All to let NB know about possible volunteers.

Action: NB to contact potential committee members, as discussed.

14. Reports for consideration

Social Media Update

CF gave a brief verbal report. The BOC's presence on social media was continuing as usual, including posting events. He was happy to post information as required.

15. Any Other Business

RRi asked whether Thames Water had responded about renewing the access agreement for QMR. They had not.

Action: SW to email TW again about QMR.

RD informed the meeting that peregrines were present on his company's building in Bracknell. He was trying to persuade his company to put up a nest box and a webcam, and he had already contacted the BTO about a schedule 1 licence. He suggested that the webcam could be broadcast from the BOC's website, which was welcomed.

Action: RD to continue as planned, and to report progress to the committee.

16. Date and venue for next meeting

Thursday 14th January at 7.30 pm, Park House, University of Reading. CF said that he and BT would make sure the room was booked.

RD had kindly agreed to take the minutes at the AGM on Wednesday 18th November.

Sally Wearing
22nd October 2015