



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 7th July 2016
at Park House, University of Reading

Present: Neil Bucknell (President), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Robin Dryden, Becky Thomas, Chris Foster, Sue Charnley, Andy Horscroft, Renton Righelato (RRi), Ray Reedman (RRe), Iain Oldcorn, Ted Rogers.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Richard Stansfield (Acting Chair).

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 31st March 2016**

The item 8 action to give a presentation on Padworth Lake should have been for RRi, not RRe.

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 8 (Retirement of Jeremy Davy, WBC Biodiversity Officer): RRi had provided input to RS to write to the Head of WBC's planning department to explain the value of what Jeremy had done and the importance of West Berks as a conservation area.

Action: RS, with input from RRi and NB, to write to Jeremy Davy and WBC.

Item 11 (Queen Mother Reservoir): Thames Water required the Club to provide adequate health and safety advice to members visiting QMR.

Action: SW & Mike Mckee to develop QMR safety guidance, for the website and with permits.

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

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

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting. EP was still trying to persuade Santander to close one account. IO was now able to view the Santander balance online.

Review of subscriptions: there was no need to change these at present.

EP said that Colin Wilson had found someone who was willing to review the accounts this year, however Bill Nicoll had also volunteered to do so. She felt that Bill would understand them better. RRi asked whether Bill would be considered independent enough; it was felt that he would be.

Action: EP to contact Colin Wilson and Bill Nicoll to decide who should review the accounts.

6. **Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

NB expressed his concern that membership was continuing to drift downwards. This needed to be considered when discussing publicity and elections of officers.

Publicity Sub-committee

RS was unable to attend this meeting and had not provided an update on actions raised at the last meeting, which have therefore been kept on the minutes.

Action: RS to send leaflets and posters to IO and anyone else who may be able to use them.

Action: RS to contact BBC Radio Berks, Berkshire Media Group, Maidenhead Advertiser, Reading Post and any other suitable publications, with suitable news items (e.g. housing development in conservation report).

Action: RS to contact London Camera Exchange to ask them to take leaflets.

Action: RS to bring leaflets to indoor meetings to ask members to distribute them.

7. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

Outdoor programme: More volunteers were needed to lead outdoor meetings. As March was usually a quiet time, RRe was proposing to include a mid-week walk with a pub lunch, however a leader was required. Carol White had not yet finalised the venue for the Christmas lunch.

TR volunteered to lead an evening walk at Wishmoor.

Indoor programme: The draft programme had been circulated before the last meeting, but Jan Stannard had pulled out, so RRe had reorganised some meetings. He had now included Hein van Grouw of the Natural History Museum to speak on pigmentation in birds. RRe distributed copies of the programme as it currently stood. The titles were not yet definite. RRe would be contacting speakers shortly to finalise the programme.

8. Conservation Sub-committee report

The draft minutes from the most recent conservation meeting, held on 29th June, were circulated and discussed.

Burghfield Park housing development: the Club, BBOWT and RSPB have all objected; there have been a lot of objections from individuals, as well as a petition. The planning committee will consider it at one of their two meetings in August; the date will be announced on the WBC website. It may be worth someone attending to see what happens. Thanks were expressed to everyone who had objected, especially to EP for organising the petition.

Farm Surveys: these had been successful, but the number of farms involved was limited due to a lack of surveyors. Farmers were keen and more were asking for surveys. Another 3 or 4 more surveyors are needed to make a few early morning visits each year. It was decided to ask members to volunteer.

Action: RRi to seek volunteers via the website, newsletter, at the start of an indoor meeting and, if necessary, at the AGM.

Action: TR to include this in next newsletter, to go out with annual mailing.

Water rail surveys: these had been successful and were to be extended next year.

Streatley Meadows: NB reported on this site, which is owned partly by one of his neighbours and partly by the Swan Hotel. He was in discussions with the owners to enable the whole site to be managed for wildlife.

Geoffrey Field School: has requested help for project to engage children with wildlife. RRi was arranging to visit. RD volunteered to help and suggested contacting neighbouring school. RRe said that Sarah White was involved with a school in her area so it might be worth liaising with her.

Padworth Lane Gravel Pit: RRi gave a presentation on the 40 hectare site and the plans to create a nature reserve. It is owned by the Canals and River Trust (CRT) and is part of a series of areas along the Kennet. It has a range of habitats, including a gravel pit lake and flooded woodland, and supports about 70 breeding and 80 wintering species of birds.

It is proposed to set up a charitable trust to protect and manage the key habitats, and to provide controlled access. Harleyfords, the gravel extractor, is obliged to fund restoration of

the land, however the existing plan would fill in the lake to create agricultural land. Some restoration has to be carried out in order to generate funds. The first stage would be partial infilling of the lake, in two stages, to create shallow areas, islands, beaches, reedbeds, etc. Further work would be needed to put in bunds, fencing, a car park and a circular footpath.

Professional support is required to create a business plan. Lease terms need to be agreed with CRT. A management trust will need to be established, with governing trustees and an executive management committee. Harleyfords, the gravel extractor, is considering the plans and is expected to respond in late autumn.

Thanks were expressed to RRI and Ken Moore, who has been instrumental in the project.

EP had been involved in the restoration of Brandon Marsh, a similar area near Coventry, and offered to put RRI in touch with the people involved.

Action: EP to provide RRI with contacts involved at Brandon Marsh.

9. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated before the meeting and discussed. The 2013 systematic list was ready for its second edit, however RRI had not yet received the BRC report. This was expected within the next few weeks and the species requiring validation would then need re-editing. Robert Gillmor was working on the cover painting. RD agreed to do the next edit of the list.

RRI anticipated that it would be published in mid-September, before the start of the next indoor season.

The following actions were retained from the last minutes as they both required a new County Recorder to be appointed before they could be implemented.

Action: RRI to organise the working group to review collecting and managing records.

Action: RRI to organise a meeting of the editorial board and to ask Richard Burness to join.

10. County Recorder

Chris Heard had stood down as County Recorder. A draft notice announcing this and calling for a new Recorder had been agreed with the NDOC. This and the duties of the CR had been circulated before the meeting and were discussed.

EP said that the CR's duties did not include sufficient provisions to deal with problems in the future, nor was it clear who the CR reported to. She suggested include a probationary period, an annual review and clear objectives. IO agreed. RRI pointed out that everyone involved was a volunteer and a corporate management approach would not be appropriate. There was already provision for the Review Panel to review the Recorder at any time if there were concerns. RRe said that RRI had improved the previous position. Concerns over the records currently awaiting adjudication were raised. IO said that references to the Clubs in the duties should specify the BOC and NDOC.

Action: RRI to revise CR's duties, then to issue the announcement on BOC website and via Berksbirds.

Action: NB & RRI to discuss including a probationary period with the review panel.

11. Other Events

RRe suggested that we should hold an event to mark the 70th anniversary in 2017, such as having a keynote speaker in the 2017-18 programme. The 60th anniversary had been celebrated with a dinner, with the BTO chair as the guest speaker.

TR proposed that we should celebrate the 75th anniversary instead. NB said that celebrations had been carried out at 10 year intervals, but 75 was more significant than 70. The committee agreed to celebrate the 75th anniversary, not the 70th.

RRe said that he had not booked any well-known speaker for the 2016-17 programme. NB recommended Iolo Williams, who he had heard speak recently. RRe said that he might have the same agent as Chris Packham, who was impossible to deal with.

Action: NB to find out who booked Iolo Williams and inform RRe.

12. Elections to Committee

The report was circulated before the meeting and was discussed. RS was willing to stand as Chair, however he may still be sent abroad for work so may not be able to continue. The committee agreed to nominate RS as chair.

AH was willing to stand as an Ordinary Committee member. If RS is elected as Chair, there will be three vacancies for Ordinary Members, as RD and CF have to stand down at the AGM. The requirements of the constitution were discussed (i.e. three year terms and at least one year before being eligible to stand again), but no changes were proposed.

RRe pointed out that we also need someone to be the Publicity Officer.

Various possibilities were discussed for finding new people to stand for election, including from West Berks, the university, NDOC, observers submitting records, local RSPB groups, etc. RRe reminded the committee that the current non-executive officers could stand for election to maintain the current voting position, however it was agreed that it would be preferable to find new people.

A number of suggestions were made for people who may be willing to stand for election and it was agreed to approach them, and to advertise for new committee members through the website and the newsletter.

Action: TR & SW to publicise vacancies on the website and in the newsletter.

Action: NB, AH, RRe & RRe to approach specific people to see if they are willing to stand.

Action: All to identify other people who may be willing to stand for the committee.

13. Annual Members Mailing

The list of contents was circulated before the meeting and was agreed.

SW said that if we did the same as the last two years, most people would not receive a printed programme card. RRe & TR both agreed that having a hard copy of the programme encourages people to come to meetings. IO said that he did get asked for copies of some documents sent out by email.

SW questioned whether we should return to posting the mailing to everyone. It was not practical to distribute it in the same way as reports, i.e. via indoor meetings and hand delivery. It was decided to continue emailing it to everyone with an email address.

TR said we could offer hard copies of the programme card when emailing it, and have copies at indoor meetings. RRe suggested putting the card in with the 2013 report, which was due to be issued in September.

Action: SW to include programme card when distributing 2013 report.

RRe said that the proposed deadline of 7th August would be difficult, but SW said this could be delayed if necessary for RRe to finalise the programme.

TR asked people to provide input to the newsletter; even a paragraph would be welcome. RRe would put in a summary of the programme, including emphasising the speaker after the AGM. TR praised RRe's crosswords.

14. Reports for consideration

Social Media Update

There was little to report. There had been a lot of activity about the proposed housing development at Theale. The BOC Facebook page was being used by photographers.

RRe asked RT and CF to publicise the trip to the Bird Fair. CF asked people to tell him about anything else that should be posted.

15. Any Other Business

RD reported that the peregrines sadly had not used the box on his company's building in Bracknell.

16. Dates and venue for next meetings

The dates for the next two meetings are:

Thursday 13th October at 8 pm, Park House, University of Reading. NB gave his apologies.

Thursday 12th January at 8pm, Park House, University of Reading.

Action: CF/BT to book Park House for January meeting.

Sally Wearing
12th July 2016