



## **Berkshire Ornithological Club**

### **Minutes of Committee Meeting**

held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Park House, University of Reading

**Present:** Richard Stansfield (Chair), Renton Righelato (President), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Sue Charnley, Jake Bishop, Andy Horscroft, Ken Moore, Iain Oldcorn, Richard Burness (County Recorder).

1. **Apologies for absence:** Adrian Lawson, John Swallow, Ray Reedman (RRe).

2. **Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

**Item 14 (30.4.17): Photo competition.** Following an email problem last year, it was agreed that one member would be allowed to enter the photos they had submitted in 2017 in addition to the 2018 quota, and to ask Colin Wilson to acknowledge all entries and to use the Berksoc email address in future. SW pointed out that the information on the BOC website was different to that in the email sent to members about the competition.

**Action: SW** to update the BOC website and to contact Colin Wilson and the member.

**Item 12: EBBA.** The Atlas funds were restricted and could only be used for conservation in Berkshire. It was agreed to sponsor the Tufted Duck from general funds by donating €50.

**Action: EP** to organise sponsoring the Tufted Duck by giving €50 in the EBBA2.

**Item 16: Garden Bird Survey.** Ted Rogers was due to provide a final report but this would take some time. He has also offered to write a short item for the newsletter. EP had the data and was happy to help analyse it.

**Action: EP** to liaise with TR about final report on GBS and item for newsletter.

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

The proposal to restructure the Berkshire Records Committee (BRC) had been accepted unanimously.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

EP asked for agreement to remove Neil Bucknell and Mike Turton as signatories on the bank accounts, as they were no longer on the Committee. They would be replaced by Renton Righelato (now elected as President) and Richard Stansfield (now elected as Chair). This was agreed, but only RS would be added to the Santander account.

**Action: EP** to send in new bank mandates to Santander and CAF.

**Membership fees** - standing orders went to Santander, but some people joined online through CAF Donate. EP said that CAF had been useful in the past but the system was difficult to work with. IO said that it did not always work and there could be a two week delay before he knew about new members. EP said it would be possible to keep the CAF accounts while changing to an alternative online, but she did not want to use Paypal.

**Action: EP** to copy information from CAF Donate to IO as soon as available, and to consider ways to improve system.

Overpayment of subscriptions was discussed at the last committee meeting but no decision had been reached. EP said they had gone into the conservation fund in the past, but it had been decided to put them into general funds, so that happened last year. It was decided that this should continue, unless they had been specifically identified for conservation.

**Action: EP & IO** to ensure that all overpayments go into general funds.

## 6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed. IO said the BOC was still losing members slowly, on an annual basis.

IO had drafted a procedure for handling monies taken at Indoor meetings. It had not yet been finalised. The action was therefore carried forward.

**Action: IO & EP** to finalise and implement the procedure for handling monies taken at Indoor Meetings.

SW had investigated the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which would come into force in May 2018. The BOC would have to comply with them. The first step was to audit how the BOC currently collected, stored, processed and deleted data.

**Action: SW, IO & EP** to review how the BOC handles data and to identify whether any changes are required.

## 7. Club Membership Review

The results of the discussion at the last meeting and RS's summary of questions and actions were circulated prior to the meeting. He said that a few people had provided feedback. The questions and actions were discussed and the following decisions were made.

**Subscription levels** – EP and SC were in favour of raising these, but RRI pointed out that would mean everyone would have to change their standing orders. IO said that probably about £600-£700 would be saved if the reduction for retired members was removed, as the proportion of retired members was increasing. It would not be difficult to remove this reduction for new members. JB suggested asking all members who had the reduction to increase their subscription, if they were happy to do so.

It was agreed to keep subscriptions as they were, but to remove the reduction for retired members from 1<sup>st</sup> October for new members. All members would be notified and those paying at the reduced level would be asked to pay the full membership on a voluntary basis.

**Action: RS** to draft text explaining the changes for IO to send out.

**Part year membership** – this was too difficult to administer.

**Taster membership & birding site booklet** – taster membership was discussed, including what it would offer, the reasons for doing it and how it would work. JB said that people could sign up at a fair, and be put on a mailing list, allowing the BOC to gather people's details and to tell them what was happening. SW pointed out that this might be a problem under the new data protection requirements (see item 6). IO said it would be possible to have temporary members on the list whose data could be easily purged when necessary.

One possible benefit to potential members could be a booklet giving details of Berkshire birding sites, based on the information on the BOC website, updated. RRI had asked Rob Still about producing this. He could do it and 1,000 copies would cost from £800 to £1,200. Most of the cost would be to set it up. They could be sold (e.g. at fairs) for several pounds each, possibly £5. RRI expected them to have a 10 year 'life'. The costs and viability of the booklet were discussed. It was decided to draw up firmer proposals for both issues.

**Action: RS & JB** to prepare a proposal on temporary membership and site booklet to discuss at the next Committee meeting.

**Charging members to attend indoor meetings & raffle** – SW and IO agreed with making a small charge to members to attend meetings, as a contribution towards costs, as those attending meetings were subsidised by the rest of the membership. Some local

organisations (RSPB) charge members but others (e.g. Natural History, NDOC) don't. Whether this would reduce the number of people attending was discussed, as well as how it would affect the raffle, including whether people could be asked to spend £2 on the raffle to help cover the cost of the room and whether having better prizes would increase the income from the raffle. SC pointed out that some people see buying raffle tickets as donating to the BOC, but it might be possible to have a compulsory entrance fee of £2 and everyone would get four raffle tickets. However, some people definitely do not want raffle tickets.

No decision was made about charging for the raffle.

**Selling Robert Gillmor's pictures** – RRI pointed out that there had not been any recent sales of Robert Gillmor's report cover paintings; this could become an annual event.

**Action: SW** to investigate what pictures she and RRI have and how much they have sold for in the past, to be discussed at the next meeting.

**Review of membership application/renewal process** – Mike Turton had suggested using a commercial package for membership. IO said that would not solve any problems, and the current system was working well. It was decided that this was not needed.

**Encouraging legacies** – RS had drafted some text about leaving money to the BOC, for the website and to put in the newsletter. IO suggested it could also be in the annual reports.

**Action: RS & RRI** to finalise wording, for website and to send to IO for newsletter.

**Raising profile on Facebook** – JB said that the BOC had 167 members on Facebook. He suggested adding a list of local bird sightings, automatically updated weekly, with photos. RS said this was similar to the summary on Berksbirds and proposed putting a feed on Facebook to this. Sources of information were discussed, with some people preferring to use Berksbirds and others Facebook.

**Action: JB** to ask Marek Walford whether "Today's Bird News" on Berksbirds could be shared with the BOC Facebook page.

**Information on BOC website** – RS offered to put reports about indoor meetings on the BOC website, but needs access to the website to do this.

**Action: RRI** to give RS access to BOC's website, then **RS** to put on post-meeting reports.

**Redesigning BOC membership leaflet** – JB volunteered to do this.

**Action: IO** to send copy of leaflet to JB.

**Action: JB** to redesign leaflet then circulate for comment.

**Distributing leaflets** – RS had put some in hides, libraries etc. in the past and asked for ideas of where else to put them. IO said he had put leaflets in libraries but had a very poor response. RRI said that LCE had had leaflets in the past. They were also taken to events and talks; RRI would take some to the talk he was doing next week.

**Local walks at weekends** – AL was willing to develop these, as currently local walks were held mid-week. RRI said that we needed to cover the whole of Berkshire. KM had had a bad experience when leading a walk, but others had had different, more positive experiences. FOLL hold weekend walks at Lavell's Lake, which attract new members.

**Action: RS** to find out more from Mike Turton, then to talk to AL.

**Reducing costs of indoor meetings** – it was agreed not to reduce the frequency of meetings, but to try again to find a cheaper venue. IO found the current venue noisy and the audio very poor. St Joseph's, a previous possibility, would not stay open until 10pm. SC suggested St Peter's Church Hall in Earley, as it was cheaper, but it was smaller and did not have good parking. SW suggested the Nike lecture theatre at the University, which was slightly smaller, with a better layout, easy parking and vending machines outside.

**Action: SC** to investigate parking at St Peter's Church Hall.

**Action: SW** to investigate using Nike lecture theatre at the University.

**Structure of indoor meetings** – Mike Turton had suggested changes in his report to the October Committee Meeting, including making the formal part more interesting, adding a short slot on topics of local interest, then having a break with the main speaker coming on after the break. RS said that he wouldn't want to reduce the time for the main speaker, especially if they had come a long way, but RRI thought that it would be possible to extend the first part without making much impact on the speaker. Lighting levels and whether speakers welcomed questions were also discussed. IO said he found the format of the recent sightings difficult; the RSPB had a better format as all the information is presented by the Chair. This could be done by gathering the information before the meeting, possibly by RS or by SC when people sign in. RRI suggested including a few photos. It was possible to connect other laptops to the University's system and to access the internet on the University's laptop, e.g. to show photos on Berksbirds.

**Action: RS** to find out how to display bird news at indoor meetings via the projector.

SW informed the meeting about a letter from John Roberts who knew of four others that had stopped coming to meetings because they could not hear the speaker. The built in microphone was in front of the screen so speakers did not use it. John suggested buying a portable audio system, which operated with wireless microphones. RRI said that the University should be able to provide a wireless mic, which should improve the sound.

**Action: RS** to ask RRe about sound, then to approach the university.

## 8. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. RRe had sent praise for SC's plans for the 2018/19 programme. SC said that she had found it difficult to start with, but plans were now mostly complete.

RRI said that the local RSPB groups should be invited to the talk by Kevin Cox (RSPB Chair). About 200 people had attended when Graham Wynne (then RSPB's CEO) had spoken, but RRI did not expect that many this time.

**Christmas Social** – SC said that the turn out had been poor: only about 20 people attended. It was a lot of effort, with disappointing results. She suggested a number of alternatives: replacing it with another indoor meeting, reducing the number of meetings, or holding it in the new year. AH said it used to be popular, especially the identification quiz. In 2017, there had been a quiz and Ray gave a talk on bird nests. EP pointed out that if there was a social aspect to indoor meetings, people might be more likely to come to a social event.

The social aspects of meetings, purpose of the Christmas Social, and alternative ideas and dates were discussed. RS said that NDOC had a barbeque in the summer, which about 12 people attended. RRI had held a BOC garden party in the past at his house; about 30 people came. He was happy to do that again, but there was no parking nearby and it was weather dependent. RS suggested replacing the Christmas event with one in June. RRI said NDOC held an event on a Saturday afternoon, with short talks.

**Action: SC** to consider options for Christmas Social, for decision at next committee meeting.

## 9. Conservation Sub-committee report

The minutes from the last meeting of the Conservation subcommittee (8<sup>th</sup> November 2017) were circulated before the meeting.

RRI said that a member of FOLL was trying to buy Lea Farm to set it up as nature reserve, run by FOLL. The housing development at Theale was going to appeal, so there would be a tribunal during the year. He would try to get RSPB and BTO involved again. Neil Bucknell was advising on this. AL had taken over as chair of the Friends of Fobney Island from RRI.

RRI wanted to promote the grebe survey to all members, as it was easy to be involved. This had worked well in the past. He will develop the methodology. RS said it should be promoted at the next meeting and on the website.

IO asked about the swift box installation service. Colin Wilson had been doing something similar in his area. RRI said a volunteer was needed to organise the boxes and run the installation team, including setting up the service and offering it to all members. All councils should be involved, but most had lost their biodiversity officers. IO said that Bracknell now had one again.

**Action:** IO to find out name of Bracknell biodiversity officer and to pass to RRI.

**Action:** RRI & IO to seek volunteers, including at meetings and in the newsletter.

## 10. Editorial Board Report

RRI reported that the contents of the 2014 report were nearly complete. RB said that he had not yet got all the species accounts for the 2015, but he had started the editing process. He was currently updating the format and hoped to complete the systematic list in about six weeks, if possible. RRI said that getting the cover paintings from Robert Gillmor in time might therefore be the limiting factor. He was determined to keep doing the covers, and had started on the 2014 cover. RRI expected to have the two reports ready by about Easter.

## 11. Other Events

Lambourn Silver Circle had asked for a speaker on local wildlife; RRe had volunteered.

RS asked whether the BOC had any presentation materials as he might be willing to give talks. RRI has some.

**Action:** RS & RRI to discuss presentation materials.

## 12. Social media

See earlier discussions in item 7 about Facebook.

JB said he is notified about people wanting to join the Facebook group. Some are rather unusual, so he wanted to know that it was OK to accept anyone who asks to join. RS was not sure, however EP pointing out that if anyone posted anything inappropriate, JB could remove it. Becky Thomas used to approve most people, so it was decided to continue in the same way unless any problems arose.

## 13. Any Other Business

**County Recorder** – RS said it was good to have RB there and he was keen to hear how he was getting on. RB gave an overview of his role. This includes not only getting data and validating it, but also producing outputs such as the systematic list for the annual report. The individual species accounts are written by a number of writers; RB then collates them. Validating records takes a lot of time. He recently issued a letter asking people reporting sightings to include sufficient data to justify the reports. He also produces a newsletter every two months. Part of his role is to promote bird recording. The restructured BRC met for the first time on 10<sup>th</sup> January; RB will provide the minutes to the BOC Committee and to NDOC.

RRI said he welcomed the changes, especially the increase in openness.

IO had received a request to send out a quiz designed by a research student at Imperial College. He and SW had already completed it. It was agreed that IO should forward it to members.

**Action:** IO to circulate University research quiz to members on email.

## 14. Dates and venue for next meetings

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 8 pm.

**NB JB was unable to book Park House.**

**Action:** SW to arrange a venue.

Sally Wearing  
17<sup>th</sup> January 2018