



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 11th April 2019

11 Scotland Hill, Sandhurst, GU47 8JR

Present: Rob Godden (Chair of this meeting), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Ken Moore, Jake Bishop, Adrian Lawson, Sue Charnley, Iain Oldcorn.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Renton Righelato (RRi), John Swallow, Andy Horscroft, Chris Foster, Ray Reedman (RRe).

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24th January 2019**

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Sale of Artworks: the 2010 and 2011 artworks had been offered for sale to BOC members, but no responses had been received. It was therefore decided to try selling them online.

Action: SW to ask Ted Rogers if he would sell the two artworks online.

Constitutional Change: the Charity Commission (CC) had approved the administrative change agreed by members at the AGM, removing the optional discount for retired members.

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

The Conservation subcommittee had asked that the objectives of the conservation fund be amended to explicitly include survey and monitoring work. This was agreed.

IO asked where the aims of the conservation fund were documented.

Action: RRi to provide details of the aims of the Conservation Fund.

The response to RRi's email about this was poor. He asked that all committee members reply to emails, to prevent meeting agendas getting longer and the BOC's business slower.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report had been circulated before the meeting and was discussed. EP had now received the Gift Aid payment, which was approximately £1,100.

IO raised the issue of which fund donations go into. He asked whether EP needed more information from him, as he usually only informed EP and RRi about big donations, not small ones. EP said that overpayments and other similar donations went into the general fund, unless the payee had specified that it was a donation to the conservation fund.

Action: IO to inform EP about any donations for the conservation fund from now on and also the total amount received so far this financial year to go into the conservation fund.

RG raised the issue of people paying after May 1st, as discussed at the last committee meeting. EP said it was not possible to carry payments forward as most payments between 1st May and 30th September were made online. IO asked whether it would help to change the date of the Club's year end? SW pointed out that that would just change the dates involved. EP said that she kept a list of everyone who paid after April. This money received was therefore different to the actual subscriptions, but Phil Caunt said this was acceptable.

Reserves Policy: EP recommended separating the two different funds, which had also been suggested by RRi. The Conservation subcommittee had proposed that at least £20,000 should be held in the conservation fund for a planned project in three to five years' time. EP said that it was not necessary to set a reserve for the conservation fund as it was restricted.

However, it was important that a clear reserve was set for the general fund and she proposed changing the policy accordingly.

RG asked whether the conservation fund could have any ongoing commitments which would need a minimum amount. EP said yes, but not yet; this would be clearer once Padworth was established. IO said that a large amount would not need to be spent suddenly from the conservation fund, which should have a forward plan, covering future expenditure. KM said that this existed; it would be issued and implemented when the documents were signed by the Canal and Rivers Trust.

Phil Caunt had said that the CC might ask why the BOC has more money than in the reserves policy, but SW said the BOC did not need to inform the CC about the policy.

The number of years the reserves should cover and the amount per year were both discussed. EP recommended covering two years, at £8,000 per year (less than the current policy as it was planned to only produce one report a year). It was agreed to change the reserves policy to focus on the general fund, and to set the figure at £16,000.

Action: EP to revise the reserves policy and reissue for comment.

Asset Register: RRe now held the display stand and club noticeboard. EP said that most of the assets were not worth anything now and KM agreed. EP said that Phil Caunt had asked about it, but that the value of everything should now be shown as £0.

RRe had asked if anyone else wanted the laminator. SW suggested that CF might.

Action: SW to ask CF if he wanted to use the laminator for publicity.

RRe had reported that scope was only used occasionally, and it might be sold to a member for about £50. RG did not think it would be useful for the Berkshire Show, but JB and AL suggested keeping it, as it might be useful at other events. It was agreed to keep it and to maintain the list to record who held each asset, but that all the values should be reduced to £0, except for the scope at £50.

Action: EP to revise and reissue asset register.

Investment: both EP and IO had provided reports before the meeting. EP said that IO's proposals were excellent but more complex than she felt necessary.

IO said knowing more about the Conservation subcommittee's planned expenditure at Padworth would help plan investments. KM agreed but said that the company reinstating the area still had a lot of work to do. The Conservation subcommittee did not expect any funding to be needed for Padworth for at least two years, so agreed that up to half the current reserve could be invested for up to two years in a minimal risk instrument. EP said that this was enough time for planning investments. AL agreed, as there was enough time to arrange for funds to be available when needed. KM said that it could longer, i.e. three to four years. There would not be any demands on the general fund. EP said that there would be reserves in the general fund, so this could be used if money was needed quickly.

EP said that tonight's meeting should only make recommendations about the **conservation fund**, which she proposed should be:

- £18,000 to be invested for two years (in more than one investment)
- £7,000 to be invested for one year
- rest (approx. £10,000) to be kept as cash, possibly with some bringing in income e.g. in a '60 days' notice' account.

In this way, £17,000 would be available after one year, then all the fund would be available after two years, making the best use of the time until the money was needed. Some could be invested for three years, but that would need the Conservation subcommittee to agree.

For the **general fund**, EP proposed:

- £10,000 to be invested for two years
- £6,000 to be invested for one year

- £4,000 to be invested in a '60 days' notice' account
- £4,000 to be kept as cash (approx. six months' expenditure).

EP would monitor the amount kept as cash and transfer money when necessary. This conformed to the reserves policy. She would keep investments for each fund separate so that all transactions were transparent.

AL said that there were grants available, so questioned the need to invest its funds. The Club would need to only use low risk investments and determine an ethical policy. It would require a lot of work to have proper oversight of the investments. RG said that grants would only be available for conservation work, not for general costs. IO said that simply leaving money in the bank would mean it would be eroded by inflation; investing it would counter this. The BOC had no oversight of the banks currently holding its money. EP said she could easily investigate ethical investments (e.g. no fossil fuels, nothing in USA or China). AL asked whether it was possible to invest in an organisation like the RSPB or BTO. EP said she could investigate this. IO suggested asking the RSPB and BTO who invested in them.

Action: All to investigate possible companies to invest in.

Action: EP to draft and circulate investment proposal.

IO asked if Phil Caunt would review the BOC's accounts this year. EP said he had recommended finding someone else, as he had done it for three years. Bill Nicoll had already agreed to review the accounts this year.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. IO said that the RSPB SE Rep had now paid. The situation at QMR had not changed; Peter Newbold was doing everything he could to solve the problem, but Thames Water was not responding.

Safeguarding: the proposed revisions to the safeguarding policy and letter to family members were circulated prior to the meeting and discussed. IO was keen for young people to be able to come to events, but parents should not be able to leave unaccompanied children. He wished removing "authorised person" from the letter as anyone could say that they had been authorised. EP thought that removing authorised people would mean that grandparents would be excluded. IO said that they could be specified, but SW pointed out there were too many other possible relations to mention.

Points 1 and 2 in the policy were also discussed. EP did not like the wording as point 2 meant parents could leave young children at meetings by themselves if two members were there. There was also a discrepancy between points 1 and 2.

Action: IO to review and revise the safeguarding policy and letter.

GDPR: the legitimate interests assessment and privacy notice had been circulated before the meeting and were reviewed. Two minor alterations were agreed.

Action: SW to update the GDPR documents and put the new versions on the website.

IO asked whether the BOC website used cookies.

Action: RRI and Jane Campbell to determine whether the BOC website uses cookies and, if it does, whether the website should include a warning.

7. Publicity and Advertising

This section covers all aspects of promoting the Club, including at events and via social media. The report was circulated before the meeting and the image library was discussed. IO said that Richard Stansfield had produced posters, but it was not known where the files were. EP asked whether the BOC could use the entries to the photo competition. The rules on the website said that any entries could be used to publicise the Club and the competition.

RG pointed out that there were many photos on the BOC's website that CF could review and pick some, then ask the photographers for specific permission to use them. He also

suggested asking Marek Walford whether the BOC could use the photos on Berksbirds. This was discussed, however JB and IO both thought that CF would not need many photographs. SW said that permission from people in photographs of the Club's events was not needed.

Action: RG to follow up using the entries to the photo competition for publicity.

CF would soon review the Club's leaflets, posters, display material, etc. He wanted to ensure that the Club's branding was consistent. IO said that the welcome pack he sent to new members also needed updating.

Action: CF to review and revise membership leaflet, posters and other publicity material, then circulate for comment.

Action: IO to send copy of welcome pack to CF to ask him to improve it.

Social media: CF was adding all programme items to Facebook a batch at a time. AL said that only a few people could see posts for free, unless the Club paid for them to be more available. RG said it might be worth paying for more open access.

Action: CF to investigate paying Facebook to ensure that posts are visible and to promote the BOC's events.

At the last meeting, RRI asked if a feed had been added from Berksbirds to the BOC Facebook page. There was already a feed to the BOC website.

Action: CF to find out if sightings on Berksbirds can be fed to the BOC's Facebook page.

RG asked how the students that came in indoor meetings found out about them. SC said that they were only interested in some types of talks, but not ones about travel. JB agreed; they were mainly biologists, so came for scientific reasons. He informed the agriculturists, but they did not attend. It was possible that CF informed the biologists.

Berkshire Show (21st & 22nd September): the organisers offered complimentary stands to suitable conservation organisations. Three people (Jane Campbell, Carol White and Rob Godden) had volunteered to help 'man' the stand; AL was also able to help. Volunteers would need to be there for a whole day. RG was completing the expression of interest, which he would need to send by 27th April, but he needed further information.

Action: RG to complete and submit the expression of interest.

8. Programme Report

Indoor Programme: the report was circulated before the meeting. It was well received.

RG and a friend would give one of the talks at the Christmas meeting and SW another. Four talks (as in 2018) were too many, so there would only be three in 2019. (NB the numbers of talks discussed at the meeting were incorrect, so have been corrected in these minutes).

SC said that Palmer 109 was not available for two dates, so she had booked a room at St Peter's Church. This was about a third of the cost, but the facilities were not as good. The University could only offer a room in Cedar's that had similar facilities as St Peter's but was more expensive. At the last indoor meeting, the computer would not work, but luckily the porter was able to move the meeting to a different room.

SC asked whether the Club should look for an alternative venue. She knew that RRI felt the University was prestigious, but she did not agree that this was necessary. It was decided to review the suitability of St Peter's after holding the two meetings there. SW said that the room was not accessible, unlike Palmer 109. Some people used the lift. RG asked whether the seating needed to be tiered or could be flat, as at St Peter's, and whether a projector was available. A screen was available at St Peter's and the BOC had its own projector.

AL asked how many people attended meetings; SC said 35 to 45. AL suggested the RISC in Reading, which was on the ground floor and held 50-60 people but only had a tiny car park.

Action: SC to investigate hall at RISC.

SW asked to include accessibility information in the programme card, even if only to say that further information was available. IO questioned whether Palmer 109 was fully accessible. SW said that there were disabled parking spaces nearby and a lift.

Action: SW to ask the University about the accessibility of Palmer 109.

Action: SC and RRe to include accessibility information in the 2019-20 programme card.

RRe had proposed to hold one talk as a joint venture with the University, which should be high quality science, to get more university people involved. SC said this was the talk on 19th February about shearwaters. RG said that this should generate interest amongst the students, but the Club also needed to attract other young people. AL said that a joint lecture was a good idea, especially if it was relevant to Berkshire.

Action: RRe, CF and SC to organise joint lecture with University.

Outdoor programme: RRe had reported that he had started on the programme but had been thwarted by his illness. He had more to do on the draft programme before circulating it to others, but a framework would be done within a month or so. There was plenty of time.

Outdoor Programme Secretary: SW reminded everyone that RRe needed a successor. RRe had already provided a description of his role. EP and KM agreed that it might be worth asking Carol White, who has done it in the past. SC and RG both said that they did not want to take over from RRe, but RG offered to help RRe this year. IO suggested that the Club could rerun this year's programme, which AL endorsed; the same places could be visited but at different times.

Action: RG to offer help to RRe with the outdoor programme for 2019-20.

9. Conservation Sub-committee report

RRe's report and the minutes from the meeting of the Conservation subcommittee on 6th February 2019 were circulated before the meeting.

EP asked if it was intended to register Padworth as a separate charity, in which case it could apply for funds currently available (e.g. landfill). KM said this had been discussed, but it had not been finalised. Everything was taking a long time, due to major changes in the CRT.

The meeting discussed how to engage younger people with the Club. RG felt it was more likely that they would want to be involved in conservation than to come to an indoor meeting. IO said that there would be opportunities at Padworth in a few years, and AL said that there were now at Fobney. KM suggested that Poor's Allotment might be suitable, which was owned by a charity that was trying to decide what to do with it. The Conservation subcommittee were already considering whether the BOC might be able to help restore it.

RG asked where the Conservation subcommittee got its ideas for conservation work from. KM said it was mainly through bumping into people.

10. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. Work had started on the 2016 report.

Where to Watch Birds in Berkshire: this had now been published. RRe had recommended selling it for £6, reduced to £5 for members. Postage would be additional. This was agreed.

Action: SW to determine how much to charge for postage.

Brian Clews had agreed to manage trade sales. This and other possible outlets were discussed, including local visitor centres and possibly via Jan Stannard. It was agreed to sell them at meetings to members, and to offer them to other local groups, e.g. RSPB, NDOC.

Copies of Past Reports: at the last meeting it was decided that AH should store the spare copies for the BRC and provide copies to anyone wanting to buy them. The Secretary would keep the most recent ones, as they were the most likely to be bought.

Action: SW and IO to give spare copies of reports to AH.

Action: AH to obtain rest of spare copies from Marek Walford.

Club Archive: this was discussed at the last meeting, when it was decided that the County Recorder should hold the report archive, i.e. one of each one that had been published.

Action: SW to find out from Peter Hutchins, the Club's archivist, what is in the archive.

Action: AH to investigate what the BRC holds.

11. Election of Officers

SW informed the meeting that four of the elected committee members (AH, AL, JB and JS) had to stand down at the next AGM, plus there was already a vacancy for Chair. Even with CF standing for election, there were therefore four vacancies. SC said that she had asked Jane Campbell, but she was not willing to stand. JB suggested asking CF to advertise the vacancies on Facebook, including information on what the roles involved.

Action: CF to advertise the committee vacancies on Facebook.

Action: All to find possible candidates to join the committee.

12. Any Other Business

KM mentioned the recent request received by SW for information about Dartford Warblers. The Club should not give out specific locations for Schedule 1 birds, especially in the breeding season. Any further emails like this should be answered by the County Recorder.

SW had also recently received a request for help from a student carrying out a survey for his PhD, who student wanted to put it on the BOC's Facebook page. He was targeting biological recorders, but he could ask to join the Facebook group then post a message.

Action: SW to suggest joining BOC's Facebook group and asking Berksbirds.

RG said that he had recently driven by himself to a field trip he was leading, which cost about £40. The other four people on the trip had shared one car. It was decided to discuss this.

Action: SW to include discussing cost of organising field trips at next Committee meeting.

13. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Thursday 18th July. JB was unable to attend.

JB said that Park House may not be available as it was graduation week, but that he would try to book it. RG said he was happy to hold the meeting at his house again.

Action: JB to book Park House, if not, **SW** to find alternative venue.

Everyone thanked RG for his hospitality. Sadly, there was no time to see the newts in his pond.

Sally Wearing
16th April 2019