



## **Berkshire Ornithological Club**

### **Minutes of Committee Meeting**

held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019  
Park House, University of Reading

**Present:** Rob Godden (Chair of this meeting), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Ken Moore, Andy Horscroft, Sue Charnley, Iain Oldcorn, Richard Burness.

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Jake Bishop, Renton Righelato (RRi), John Swallow, Chris Foster, Ray Reedman (RRe).

The meeting was not quorate as only four elected committee members were present, therefore no significant decisions were taken, but were decided by email afterwards and, where possible, included in these minutes, or held over until the next meeting.

IO asked whether the quorum was in the constitution. SW said it was: five elected members of the committee. IO suggested that it should be lowered, however SW said it should remain at its present level, which was half of the elected members.

- 2. Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

The minutes were approved by the majority of the people present, either at the meeting or by email after the meeting, subject to including additional information from RRi to clarify how the Conservation Subcommittee obtains its ideas for conservation work (item 9): The Subcommittee's membership includes representatives of NDOC, the Theale Area Bird Conservation Group, Lavell's Wetland Trust and the BTO. Natural England's Des Sussex often attends and is in regular discussion with the committee, as are BBOWT and TVERC. The Subcommittee frequently seeks advice from others if its members are inadequately informed, and it is trying to build relationships with significant landowners.

The minutes were not signed but will be held over until the next meeting for signing.

- 3. Matters Arising**

**Sale of Artworks:** it had been decided to try to sell the 2010 and 2011 artworks online.

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

**Aims of the Conservation Fund:** IO had asked where these were documented.

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

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

None.

- 5. Treasurer's Report**

The report had been circulated before the meeting.

**Reserves Policy:** EP had revised and reissued the policy. IO asked whether reserves of £16,000 were necessary. RG said it was to ensure that the Club had at least two years running costs. IO said it was an excessive amount to keep easily accessible, but RG pointed out that the draft investment policy meant that £8,000 would be available quickly if needed. It was decided to approve the reserves policy by those at the meeting and by email afterwards.

**Investment Policy:** the draft investment policy had been circulated and was discussed. EP had investigated EIRIS (a charity specialising in responsible investment) but had not found any up-to-date detailed information. She had asked the committee to agree on ethical parameters for investments. RG had found a relevant table at YourEthicalMoney.org (an EIRIS initiative), which provided details of the policies of a number of investment funds (see

<http://www.yourethicalmoney.org/investments/>). He said it was potentially helpful, as it indicated whether funds considered specific issues when deciding which companies to invest in. These could either be positive (e.g. a good record on climate change) or negative (e.g. avoiding investing in tobacco manufacturers). RG proposed that the Club's parameters should be the environment and climate change. IO asked whether the club needed to decide which issues to avoid, such as defence. After RG had explained how the table worked, SW suggested that we should avoid companies involved in animal testing. IO pointed out that some companies, e.g. BP and Shell, may say they are environmentally friendly, but are still actively looking for new reserves. RG said that we would have to look in detail at each fund.

The members present agreed that the club should consider the following issues:

- two positive criteria: the environment and climate change
- three negative criteria: animal testing (pharma/medical), animal testing (cosmetics) and non-sustainable timber.

It was agreed to ask EP to redraft the policy including these, and to circulate it for discussion.

**Action: EP** to revise investment policy then circulate if for discussion.

EP had asked whether she could transfer some funds to a 60-day notice account immediately. This was agreed, by those at the meeting and by email after the meeting.

**Action: EP** to transfer funds to the CAF Bank deposit 60-day notice account.

**Membership of the Committee:** EP had proposed altering the constitution. It required Non-Executive Members to be members of the BOC, but this did not apply to Ordinary Elected Members. KM said that this had been discussed in the past. An alternative suggested by EP was that committee members should be exempt from paying subscriptions, which SW and IO disagreed with, especially for the Trustees as this would not be good governance. SW said that the third option suggested by EP (i.e. the committee could decide that a member was not required to pay) could be agreed without changing the constitution.

It was agreed by those present to propose changing the constitution to require all committee members to be fully paid up members of the BOC. This would need to be put to the members at the AGM, with an explanation of why the change was thought necessary.

**Action: SW** to draft the change to the constitution and to circulate for final agreement.

**Action: RG** to draft text proposing the change, to be included in the AGM notice.

**Review of Subscriptions:** EP had recommended that these should not be changed. AH agreed. IO said that income should slowly increase now new members could not pay the reduced retired rate; SW said that that had been done to try to prevent subscriptions rising.

It was agreed not to increase subscriptions, by those at the meeting and by email after the meeting.

## 6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. IO said that he had no contact with the University bird club, other than hearing occasionally from their secretary when a new one took over. He therefore could not contact the members of the bird club, which may mean the Club was missing opportunities, e.g. informing them about events. RG asked whether CF had the necessary information about events, but SW pointed out that he was putting this on Facebook. She suggested that CF could be asked to provide one contact in the University bird club, who could then pass on details to its members.

**Action: CF** to provide contact details to IO for at least one person in the University bird club.

IO said that Norman Hall will have been a member for 50 years in October.

**Action: RRI** to inform Norman Hall that he will be an Honorary Life Member.

RRi had been actioned at the last meeting to determine whether the BOC websites used cookies. He had found out that it only sets essential cookies that are exempt from the legal requirement to seek permission. The Club therefore does not need an acceptance notice.

**Safeguarding:** IO had not been able to revise the draft policy since the last meeting. RG said that EP had provided an alternative approach, which IO said that was to address a peripheral issue that had not previously been considered. The original policy had been drafted by IO, SW and EP, but IO had been absent from the meeting when it was discussed and did not agree with the revisions. He felt the policy was good for protecting young people, but not the Club (e.g. against false accusations).

A 15-year-old member had asked to go on the trip to the Birdfair without his parents, who were not available. RRe felt this would be difficult as the member would need to be chaperoned. SW asked what the 15-year-old's parents thought. RG said this was irrelevant, but SW said she thought he should come, as a 15-year-old would be able to go on a day trip by himself e.g. on public transport. IO and SC said they were concerned in case something happened to him at the Birdfair, for instance if he had an accident. SW pointed out that this would be the responsibility of the Birdfair, not the BOC, and would be no different to anyone else on the trip. SC asked what would happen if he did not return to the coach at the end.

AH agreed that the BOC needed a procedure, supplying two chaperones or requiring parents to be present. RG said that permission would be required from parents for each event. IO said that that the original approach had been to try to get blanket permission from parents, but the Birdfair was different. He would redraft the policy, taking this into account.

**Action: IO** to redraft safeguarding policy and procedure, to cover all events.

**Newsletter:** IO needed more content for the next newsletter, which may only be four pages. He had some photos, an article from RRi on conservation and would probably do a quiz, but he would welcome contributions from other people.

## 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.

RG said the CF was requesting more images. IO asked what he needed them for; SW said for posters and other publicity material. KM asked RB if he could provide any photos. RB said that Jerry O'Brien had a good array of photos of birds in Berkshire.

**Action: CF** to ask Jerry O'Brien to allow the BOC to use his photos.

The following actions were retained on the minutes from the last meeting.

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

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

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

**Berkshire Show (21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> September):** RG said the BOC was now booked in, despite some difficulties, and had to pay a zero invoice by the end of the month. CF had said the existing display boards would be suitable, but that a poster showing the Club's activities and programme was required. The stall will be in an open field, requiring a gazebo or similar. SW suggested asking in the newsletter. RG said that Jane Campbell, Carol White and possibly CF and AL had offered to help.

**Action: RG** to write item for the newsletter about the Show.

**Action: SW** to provide a risk assessment for the Show.

## 8. **Programme Report**

**Indoor Programme:** SC said that the programme was complete and had not changed since the last meeting. She would put it on the website before the end of July.

IO asked who did the programme layout; SW said Ted Rogers, with input from RRe and SC. Two meetings would be held in Earley St Peter's Church Hall. Indoor meeting venues were discussed. SW questioned whether St Peter's was accessible, but the meetings will be in the hall on the ground floor, not the smaller one upstairs. SC said that the chairs would have to be put out and then put away at the end, but it was big enough and there was a kitchen. AH asked what parking there was; SC said there was a small car park, but parking was also available on the roads. AH said the screen would have to be high, as the venue was not raked. RG said the venue should be reviewed after it had been used.

**Outdoor programme:** RRe's programme was almost ready for printing. SC asked if it was on the website yet, but SW said no, as it was not quite finished.

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

**Cost of organising field trips:** RG said that one trip he had led had been expensive for him, but this was not a major issue and he could, if necessary, submit a claim for expenses.

## 9. Conservation Subcommittee report

RRI's report and the minutes from the meeting of the Conservation subcommittee on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019 were circulated before the meeting.

RG said he was impressed by how much work was done. KM gave a brief update on some of the actions in the minutes of the Conservation Subcommittee.

## 10. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting.

RB said that the 2016 was progressing at the usual tortuous pace. He now had enough species account writers and the systematic list was complete and being edited. He had 14 articles to include, so it might be possible to put one in the newsletter instead. It should go to the printers by the end of August and be published in September or October.

He said that the Editorial Board needed to meet to find faster ways of preparing the reports. This had been discussed at the country recorders' forum; some counties imposed tight deadlines for submitting records and publishing reports. RG asked if, once the species accounts were written, was the rest mainly up to RB to do? RB said yes, but that some other counties had four or five editors dealing with separate sections. RG asked if the database had helped, but RB said no, as it was only one source. About 60% of the records came from BirdTrack. There were about 62,000 records each year.

## 11. Election of Officers

The report had been circulated before the meeting. SW said that she was reluctant to stand for re-election but would if no-one else was available. Four of the elected committee members (AH, AL, JB and JS) had to stand down at the AGM, plus there was already a vacancy for Chair. CF was willing to stand for election. AH said he would be happy to attend meetings after he stood down, but SW said that unfortunately this would not help committee meetings be quorate.

**Action: SW** to write article for newsletter to seek volunteers for the Committee.

AH, KM and IO suggested some people who might be willing to stand, including some who had been on the committee in the past. RG said he was willing to stand as Chair, if wanted. SW welcomed this but said that would leave another vacancy on the committee for an Ordinary Member. IO mentioned that two new members had said that they were interested in helping run club activities. SC suggested asking people as they came into indoor meetings whether they were willing to be on the committee.

**Action: AH, KM & all** to approach possible candidates to stand for the committee.

**Action: IO** to ask the two new members how they are willing to help.

**Action: SC** to ask members on the door at indoor meetings whether they were willing to be on the committee.

## 12. Annual Members' Mailing

The report had been circulated before the meeting. SW said she would include the change to the Constitution (see item 5) in the AGM notice if it was approved by the committee. The membership renewal form would only go out in the post, as IO would email other members later, as last year. He would supply printed labels for posting, as usual. All the paperwork, including the finished programme, should be ready by 10<sup>th</sup> August, so that it could be printed and posted by 16<sup>th</sup> August.

**Action:** IO, SC, RRe & SW to provide contents by 10<sup>th</sup> August.

## 13. Any Other Business

**SE Region RSPB:** IO mentioned that they had paid their subscription, but he did not have a contact for them. They paid as a family member.

**Photo Competition:** IO said that the last one had gone well, except for a technical problem towards the end, where the picture on the screen was not as good as on the judges' laptop. AH said that it should not be a problem as the judges' view was OK, but IO pointed out that the audience voted at the end for the overall winner. SC asked if there had been problems in the past and SW said that the BOC projector had been used as the University's had not been good enough. SC said that all the equipment had been upgraded in Palmer 109.

**Action:** SC to talk to Jane Campbell first, then to contact the University if necessary.

**QMR Permits:** There was currently limited access, i.e. only when Datchet Water Sailing Club (DWSC) is open. A replacement lock was required, costing £500 (with only 20 keys), although Thames Water (TW) was believed to favour an alternative costing about £5,000. About 125 permits were issued, but only five permit holders regularly visited, with 15 others visiting occasionally. Permits were free to members but cost about £2 each to issue. IO suggested that the BOC should pay £500 for the new lock, if TW would accept that; £5,000 was clearly too much.

Peter Newbold had created a separate scheme where members paid £5 for an annual pass from DWSC. AH and KM thought that members would not object to paying extra for the permit. KM said that members may be put off by the poor access. IO did not understand why TW had not fixed the problem as their only access to QMR was via the BOC's side gate.

AH proposed that the BOC should charge members £5 for permits, which would help pay for the new lock. How many people would pay and why people paid extra for the DWSC pass were discussed. IO suggested that the BOC should include the swipe card with the permit and charge £10 for both, and that the Club should pay £500 for the lock, but no more.

**Action:** IO to prepare and circulate a proposal re QMR permits.

**NB** after the meeting, TW fitted a new lock and gave a number of keys to the BOC, five of which had been issued to the regular visitors; Peter Newbound will retain the other keys.

**Raptor Retreats:** SW mentioned that the Club had been asked to allow a not-for-profit holiday company to post an advert on the Club's Facebook page. The company was offering a discount to members. KM said that no-one had heard of the company or the person who had asked, and he did not think the Club should advertise unknown companies. RG said that the Club could make it clear that it was not endorsing him.

**Bracknell Forest Council:** SW said they listed the BOC in their online directory of community groups, but they needed an address so they could geolocate the Club. This would be the University.

## 14. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October.

**Action:** JB to book Park House.