



## **Berkshire Ornithological Club**

### **Minutes of Committee Meeting**

held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020

via online conference

**Present:** Rob Godden (Chair), Renton Righelato (RRi), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Jane Campbell, Sue Charnley, Marek Walford (County Recorder).

1. **Apologies for absence:** Iain Oldcorn, Ken Moore, Ray Reedman (RRe), Chris Foster.

#### **2. Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**

The minutes were approved and will be signed. It was decided to record that both the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and today's meeting were held online by video conference as it was not possible to meet in person due to the government's Coronavirus restrictions.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

**Equipment:** SW had been given a telescope and tripod by a BOC member who wanted them to go to young birders or, if not, to be used to raise funds for the Club. It had been decided to offer them to Maiden Erlegh School, but this had not yet been possible.

**Action:** RRe to find out whether Maiden Erlegh School want the equipment.

**Great Egret:** The artwork had been sold to SW, who was the only person to bid, for £300.

**Online Application Form:** RRI & JC had investigated revising the online application form to ask people why they were joining the BOC, but this was too difficult to do. Discontinued.

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

None.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated before the meeting. EP said that that all was straightforward.

**Review of subscriptions:** EP recommended that they should remain the same. MW asked why young people could not join for free, rather than paying half price. This was done by the Hants Ornithological Society (HOS) and had been quite successful. RRI said that this had been discussed when HOS started it, but the BOC had decided against it. HOS's system was funded by a donor. MW said it might attract more students. RRI pointed out that they could attend meetings and trips for free as non-members.

It was decided not to make any changes to the subscriptions.

SW suggested publicising that students had free admission. JC and RRI agreed; CF had advertised at the University with success. JC suggested informing schools, colleges and groups for young birders. RRI said that when the BOC (then ROC) started, some members came from Robert Gillmor's school, Leighton Park. It was agreed to ask RRe to investigate advertising in schools.

**Action:** CF to advertise free attendance in the University and to consider how to advertise in other places.

**Action:** RRe to investigate advertising free attendance at meetings in local schools.

#### **6. Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. RG said there were currently 275 members.

IO had suggested refunding part of subscriptions to members if it is not possible to hold indoor meetings and trips. This was discussed; RRI pointed out that most members did not take part in meetings or trips. It was decided not to refund any part of the subscriptions.

**QMR:** RRI and Peter Newbound proposed that minimum age limits should be set for permit holders. Anyone aged under 14 years old could not have a permit. Those aged 14 or 15 could have a permit, but must be accompanied by a parent or guardian, who must also have a permit. The committee agreed to these age limits.

General eligibility for permits was discussed. There had been issues with people who were not birders wanting permits. RRI said that the license was negotiated with Thames Water for birdwatching only, not for any other purposes. The BOC has a duty to issue permits only to people who are bona fide birders. Members do not have a right to have a permit. One non-birder had joined to get access to QMR; PN was currently managing the situation.

RRI suggested saying on the application form that referees may be required. SW said that this might be a problem for birders moving to the area, however it was felt that someone on the committee would know most people who applied and, if not, then the applicant could be asked for referees who were members of the Club.

**Action: RRI & PN** to establish a practicable refereeing system for permits, to be discussed with IO before circulating to the Committee.

IO had not yet been able to find a system for issuing permits electronically via a mail merge. JC said that this required a purchased app. She had used a free trial successfully.

**Action: JC** to contact IO about issuing permits electronically.

CF had suggested waiting until the programme for 2020-21 was published before posting anything on Facebook about joining the BOC.

**Action: CF** to suggest on Facebook that non-members should join the BOC, after the programme has been issued.

## 7. **Publicity and Advertising**

This covers all aspects of promoting the Club, including social media and non-BOC events.

CF had informed SW about the status of his actions, which have been updated accordingly. He had not been able to find an automatic way of getting Berksbirds to feed to the BOC's Facebook page. He had also investigated paying Facebook to improve visibility of posts, but this would require a business page. It was not worth the cost nor the inconvenience of running two pages.

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

**Action: CF** to redesign the 2020-21 programme when the contents are ready.

**Action: CF** to provide contact details to IO of the outgoing University bird club president.

**Action: CF** to put up posters advertising the BOC at the University. Suspended until people are back on campus.

## 8. **Programme Report**

**Indoor Programme:** The report was circulated before the meeting. There was one correction: the lecture by Campbell Murn will be the University lecture on 17<sup>th</sup> February. Stephen Lovell (Reserves of Lincolnshire) is booked for 20<sup>th</sup> January, the talk that should have taken place on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The programme was therefore complete.

SC said she had not yet contacted the speakers to find out how they feel about continuing as planned in the current situation nor had she put the programme online. The University had requested the usual information about the speakers. RG thanked her and said that the Club would have to find a way to work with the uncertainty.

The logistics of holding indoor meetings were discussed. RG said that decisions about whether to go ahead would need to be made much closer to the time. RRi agreed, as the situation could be very different by October. Effective communications were necessary to inform members about how each meeting was to be held. This would be straightforward for those on email, but there would need to be a system for members without email to check with the BOC before each meeting, instead of sending information repeatedly by post.

Some committee members wanted to attend if possible, whereas others did not. If meetings are held, there may only be a small audience, but they could be recorded so non-attendants could watch them later. SC doubted that people would want to do this, but RG said that the BOC should provide the recording then it was up to people whether they watched or not.

If the Club was not able to hold the meetings as usual, it would be possible to hold them on Zoom. SW, RRi and JC had all attended lectures on Zoom that had worked well. It was possible for people to ask questions, via Chat if necessary.

SC asked whether only members who came to meetings should be contacted. SW said that everyone should be informed, via the annual mailing, website, etc. RRi said that was an opportunity to reach other members, such as anyone not able to travel to meetings.

It was agreed:

- indoor meetings should go ahead as usual, but should be livestreamed and recorded so that anyone not wishing to attend could watch them live or later
- if this was not possible, the meetings should be held via Zoom, which could also be recorded for later viewing.

SC asked that if the meetings were held on Zoom, would the BOC just pay for the speakers' time, not travel. This was agreed, and it was decided that SC should continue as usual and put the programme on the BOC website.

**Action: SC** to contact speakers to find out whether they were willing to present talks in person or, if necessary, on Zoom.

**Action: SC** to put programme on BOC website, after contacting speakers, with information about how the meetings may be held.

RG said that a decision about each meeting should be made about a month in advance. Information about the BOC's plans should go in the annual mailing and on the website.

**Action: RG** to draft text to explain the BOC's plans for holding indoor meetings.

EP said that the University was paid in two parts, before and after the season. SC had contacted the University who said that, under the current circumstances, they would be flexible if meetings had to be cancelled. Any money paid could be deferred to next season. She would contact them again to find out how much notice was required if a meeting was cancelled and firm up other details.

**Action: SC** to contact University about what would happen if any meetings were cancelled.

**Outdoor Programme:** the report was circulated prior to the meeting. RRe had also sent further information saying that there had been some progress since writing the report, but he was still waiting for some replies. About 60% of the normal programme was currently in the draft plan, but he hoped to salvage a bit more.

RG said it would be easier to decide about trips, as there was no hall involved, but that a clear statement was required telling people to contact the leader if they intended going on a trip. This did not always happen, but it would make it easier to cancel trips if necessary. JC said that the Club would have to be aware of the current government guidance at the time of each planned trip. SW volunteered as she was already monitoring the guidance.

**Action: SW** to monitor government guidance to inform decisions about BOC events.

RRe was still seeking new leaders. Two of the usual leaders were not able to be involved this season. RG said that two new leaders had volunteered to lead walks.

## 9. Conservation Subcommittee report

The report was circulated before the meeting. RRI said that although they were not able to do everything they had intended, they had still been able to do a lot.

**Little Ringed Plovers:** a grant of £500 had been made as a compensation payment to a farmer for not sowing a field where LRPs were breeding. An article about this would be included in the next newsletter and on the BOC website.

**Peregrines in Newbury:** negotiations with BT for the webcam had not yet been completed, but it was hoped that it would be in place for the next season.

**TVERC:** they were asking for help on various sites, which the BOC was providing. RRI asked MW whether he had sent any data to TVERC. MW said no, but he would if they requested any.

**Action:** RRI to put TVERC in touch with MW.

## 10. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. There had been a loss of momentum due to the sad death of Richard Burness, but MW had started things moving again. The 2017 systematic list was complete and was being edited. The 2018 list would be started soon.

MW said he was asking for the 2019 records and intended to push quite hard to get them as soon as possible. He had been in touch with the Rare Breeding Birds Panel; their deadline for receiving the 2019 records was the end of November. All the 2018 records had been validated by the BRC.

**Managing Editor:** RRI had written a job description. SW suggested that it should include information on the skills or experience that the editor needed.

**Action:** RRI to revise editor job description, then to post the vacancy on the BOC website.

## 11. Annual General Meeting

The AGM should be held within two months of the end of the financial year, i.e. by the end of November. RG said that there would not be a problem if it is possible to hold the AGM as usual, providing the quorum (40) can be met. However, a contingency plan was necessary, such as holding it on Zoom, however that would prevent people without access to the internet attending. They could be invited to make comments and ask questions in advance. Also, the current membership was too many to include in one meeting. SW said that 100 was the maximum possible on Zoom on her subscription. RG suggested issuing the paperwork to members before the meeting, however MW pointed out that the BOC did not usually issue the accounts to people who did not attend the meeting.

SW showed the meeting the current advice published by the Charity Commission, which said that unincorporated charities could change the requirements in their constitution about the timing of the AGM. She pointed out that the constitution can only be changed via a general meeting. However, the CC also said that, if this was not possible, then charity trustees could decide to cancel or postpone any meeting, but they must record this decision to demonstrate good governance. JC therefore suggested postponing the meeting if it could not be held as usual, then reorganising it. SW agreed. The paperwork should be sent out as usual, and a decision made at the next committee meeting about whether to hold the AGM in November.

**Action:** SW to include AGM on the agenda for the next meeting.

## 12. Elections to Committee

RG and EP were both willing to stand again. SW said that she still wanted to find someone to take over as Secretary but would stand again if no-one else stood.

There will be two vacancies for Ordinary Elected Committee members. RRI asked MW if he was willing to stand, but he said he was already too busy. He suggested finding someone young to stand.

Ordinary Elected Committee members become Trustees, so have to be at least 18 years old. One junior BOC member was suggested, but was too young, however it was decided to ask him whether he was willing to be co-opted onto the committee.

**Action: RRI** to ask one young member if he is willing to be co-opted onto the committee.

**Action: All** to consider candidates to stand as Secretary or Ordinary Elected members.

### **13. Annual Members Mailing**

RG said that IO already had material for the newsletter, plus there would be more from this meeting. Ted Rogers usually finished the programme, but SW reminded the meeting that CF had offered to redesign the programme leaflet when the information was ready. It was agreed to send out the mailing as planned, but with information about the contingency plans for indoor meetings, outdoor walks and the AGM.

**Action: SC, RRe, IO, SW, RG, Ted Rogers and CF** to provide content and design for annual members mailing by 8<sup>th</sup> August.

### **14. Any Other Business**

None.

### **15. Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Venue to be confirmed

**Sally Wearing, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020**