



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

Thursday 4th April 2024

via Zoom

Present: Debby Reynolds (DR, President), Sally Wearing (SW, Chair), Robert Godden (RG), Jane Campbell (JC, Secretary), Iain Oldcorn (IO), Elaine Charlson (EC), Neil Bucknell (NB), Sue Charnley (SC), Peter Driver (PD), Edwin Bruce-Gardiner (EB-G, Treasurer) and Chris Foster (CF)

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Marek Walford (MW), Anna Mortimer (AM), Robin Dryden (RD) and Bob Lyle (BL)

2. **Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 9th January 2024**

The minutes were approved and will be signed by **SW**.

3. **Matters Arising and Review of Actions not covered elsewhere**

1. Colin Wilson's offer to re-write our website will be circulated for a future discussion – **SW** will provide Colin's email for **JC** to distribute.
2. Website checking/editing responsibilities – **JC** will distribute editing/checking responsibilities to individuals, who should then check and update their pages. There are a few areas still to be assigned.
3. Google drive for contingency planning – **JC** will create shared folders for **IO**, **EB-G** and **SW**

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

1. **EB-G** has renewed the Club's insurance policy.
2. The QMR licence is renewed from March 15th 2024 for a further three years
3. Nigel Rampton has been appointed onto the BRC following ratification by BOC and NDOC.

5. **Treasurer's Report.** The report was circulated before the meeting.

EB-G reported our Gift Aid claim for 2022/2023 has been paid and a further claim for 2023/2024 will be made soon. Six members (of 21 contacted by **EB-G**) have now consented to GA being reclaimed.

Annual Review of

1. **Reserves Policy** – an updated policy was circulated before the meeting and was agreed by the committee.
2. **Asset Register** – this has been updated and when **JC** receives updates of stock held by a couple of people it will be distributed. **PD** will pass the unsold Gillmor art to **JC** for storage with the archives.
3. **Subscriptions for the new season** – **EB-G** went through the club's likely income and expenditure for 2024/25. Given no reduction in the costs of the meeting room, assuming one annual report is produced and there is no WTWBIB print run then there is likely to be a shortfall on current subscription levels of around £1,500. An increase in subscriptions of £5 for both standard and family memberships would generate around £1,300. **SW** suggested it will be hard to justify an increase whilst the club holds substantial funds. The committee agreed not to increase subscriptions for the next season. **DR** felt

that the club should inform members that it must cover its costs and that an increase will be necessary in the future. **EB-G** will produce some wording for the next newsletter informing the membership of this decision.

EB-G investigated with CAF how the club can earn interest on its funds. CAF have a partnership with Shawbrook Bank who can provide a reasonable amount of interest on funds tied up for either 60 days or one year. There was some concern about where Shawbrook would invest but it was agreed that if CAF, who provide banking services to many charities, are in partnership with Shawbrook that CAF would have ensured investments would be suitable for those charities. The committee agreed **EB-G's** proposal that £10,000 would be retained in our current account and that the remainder will be invested 50/50 in the 60 day and one-year accounts. **EB-G** will action this with the same signatories as for our other accounts.

6. Membership Secretary's Report. The report was circulated before the meeting.

QMR Access. **SW** discussed changes to the proposed access requirements with Peter Newbound. **SW** will redraft the procedure, including reducing the required number of visits per year from six to three. After circulation to the committee **SW** will discuss this with Peter. It was noted that information on the website should be in-line with the new requirements. Of 17 keys there are three available, additional keys are only available from Thames Water.

IO is frustrated by the mechanisms provided to collect funds from new and renewing members. Both **IO** and **EB-G** would prefer all members to pay by standing order. **RG** said that we could only try to persuade people to use standing orders, not force them. After discussion it was agreed that **EB-G** and **IO** will suggest how improvements can be made and that this would include asking Mike Taylor to split the renewal procedure from that for new members on the website. New members will be asked to use a standing order. **IO** will also contact current members to request they change to a standing order.

7. Programme Report. The reports were circulated before the meeting.

1. Indoor Programme

Photo Competition: Feedback from photographers was in favour of the new format with one professional judge. A wildlife photographer will be used next year and the number of entries per person reduced to three.

Next year's programme is almost complete. **NB** suggested **SC** contact the BTO's John Calladine to fill the remaining date with a lecture on Short Eared Owls. The dates for the University lecture and the photo comp will be swapped to avoid a reading week. **NB** has asked Jane Reid to speak at the University lecture, two subjects were suggested – Scottish Choughs and Shags on the NE Scottish coast. We wait for her response. Due to our normal lecture hall's unavailability, a smaller and cheaper room is booked for two lectures.

Venue for Indoor Meetings: some people felt strongly that the cost of the Palmer lecture hall is excessive. The club has invested much time researching alternative venues but has been unable to find one that meets all our tech and access requirements. Due to Palmer not being available for two lectures next season, we will be using a classroom that is £200 less than Palmer per evening, so if found suitable could be used for more lectures with a significant saving as a result. **SC** will ask if this room can be used for our Christmas event.

CF has raised the point with the relevant person that the university's green agenda within the community should allow the BOC, as a local community group, to reduced rates. Although this idea was well received it would require a policy change to allow certain groups to be charged different rates via Venue Reading. An alternative suggestion, that bookings could be made by circumventing Venue Reading would be difficult to progress quickly. **CF** will continue to try to progress this issue. He suggested we could also write to the Vice Chancellor, but it was decided this should be 'kept up our sleeve' until necessary.

2. Outdoor Programme

RG proposed we organise fewer events next season as we already have **PD's** and **NDOC's** programmes. **PD** will provide his full programme by July so it can be published in August. **BL's** **NDOC** programme is also required by July.

It was agreed the **BOC** will organise a coach trip to Slimbridge next January and that the local **RSPB** group will be invited.

The cost per person for if we hired a minibus ourselves would be £30-£40, this was discounted as too expensive.

8. Publicity and Advertising

PD has agreed to take on the Publicity Officer role. He has social media expertise and would like to build a small team to come up with ideas, **SW** and **CF** offered to help and this team will discuss the edits required to the flyer and publicity leaflet. **PD** does not have graphic design skills or software so will appeal to members for help.

It was agreed that **CF** would continue to be the link between the Club and the University.

Earley Green Fair: SC will book this (3rd August). **PD**, **EC** and **RG** may be able to help on the day. A gazebo is required.

9. Strategy and Planning

SW thanked the six people who had responded with suggestions for our five-year plan. There was not enough input to allow a long-term plan to be created, but we can concentrate on the three top issues mentioned:

1. Publicity

2. The BTO Youth Group

DR reported that a youth group event was planned and then cancelled at short notice. It is felt the link between the youth group and the **BOC** is fragile, but that another attempt will be made to progress the contact.

BOC members will be asked to donate optical equipment and suitable books to the **BTO** youth scheme. **DR** will ask Johanna and Ramen which books are required.

3. Wider advertising of the conservation fund.

It is felt that it is difficult to advertise this in the correct places, the publicity team will pick this up.

10. Conservation Sub-Committee Report: The report and **LNRS** document were circulated before the meeting.

PD will publish the **LNRS** document on our website and on social media. **SW** will attend the **LNRS** meeting in Reading. **NB** will provide **IO** with an article to be sent to members informing them that they are invited to attend.

A grant to **LWT** to refurbish and extend the Sand Martin wall at Lea Farm Lake was approved. This will include a plaque in memory of Dot Lincoln. **PD** will publish this as a news item and **NB** will provide him with information about Dot.

IO is concerned about dogs not on leads on Surrey heaths, **NB** is unsure that anything can be done about this. **DR's** view is that we should be lobbying at a high level for it to be illegal to take dogs on to nature reserves.

11. Editorial Board Report - The report was circulated before the meeting. **SW** had sent the 2020 systematic list to Rob Still.

RG spoke to Chris Heard who will hopefully provide an obituary for Peter Standley to be included in the 2021 report.

12. Annual Review

No changes are required to the **GDPR** documents, Privacy Notice and Safeguarding

policy. **JC** will update the review date and publish to the website.

13. AOB

It was agreed any news items should also be published on social media and sent to members by **IO**.

SW followed up a new member's offer of help. He is willing to make nest boxes. It was noted we have four remaining Swift boxes and that of these Liz Carr would like two. Colin Wilson will be asked if he wants the others.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Thursday July 4th 2024, at 7.30pm**, to be held online via Zoom.

Jane Campbell, 14th April 2024