



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting
held on Thursday 29th June 2017
Park House, University of Reading

Present: Mike Turton (Chair), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Sue Charnley, Jake Bishop, John Swallow, Becky Thomas, Andy Horscroft, Renton Righelato (RRi), Iain Oldcorn,

1. **Apologies for absence:** Neil Bucknell (President), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Adrian Lawson, Ray Reedman (RRe), Ted Rogers, Richard Burness (County Recorder).

2. **Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 30th March 2017**

The minutes were approved and signed with one amendment: Item 4 should say that Michael Turton had been co-opted as Chair of the BOC, not the BOC Committee.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 6 (12.1.17): It had been decided to give Honorary Life Membership to G E Wilson and T E Guyatt. NB needs their addresses in order to write to them.

Action: IO to provide GE Wilson and TE Guyatt's addresses to **NB**, who is to write to them about Honorary Life Membership.

Item 14 (Photographic competition): improving the system for collating photographs for the competition in order to reduce the risk of accidentally excluding any.

Action: JB to investigate using a shared folder for uploading photos for the competition.

Action: RRi to liaise with Colin Wilson about how to improve the system.

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

No items had been agreed by email since the last meeting.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

RRi said it was difficult to understand the financial situation without information about income and expenditure. MT agreed and said it should also be compared to the budget. It was also agreed that the report should show how much money was in each fund (general and conservation), not just the account balances.

Action: EP to be asked to include more information in her reports to Committee Meetings in future, i.e. expenditure and income (compared to the budget), and the fund balances.

Cyberattacks: advice from the Charity Commission (CC) on how to prevent cyberattacks was circulated before the meeting and discussed. There had been another attempt to access BOC funds (£8k) via a fraudulent email, which appeared to come from MT. RRi asked what advice we had received last time. SW said that this was to check with the person concerned (as EP had done) and to change passwords but this was not relevant to this type of fraud.

MT said that the BOC had a robust system, as recommended by the CC, but we needed to be aware of what could happen. EP or whoever initiated a request for payment needed to check by phone that bank details (sort code and account number) were correct before setting up any payment.

Action: EP to update procedure for making payments to include checking bank details and complying with the CC advice, then to circulate it to the Executive Officers.

Everyone on the Committee needed to comply with the CC's key protection messages where relevant, including installing system updates and installing and updating anti-virus software, backing up regularly to a non-networked device, and not meeting any ransom demands.

Action: EP and other committee members where relevant to comply with CC's key protection messages.

IO asked whether the website was backed up. RRI said Mike Taylor did it and it was included in the job description of the Webmaster.

Asset register: SW had picked up the club notice board from Richard Stansfield. This was to go to the Publicity Officer (see item 7 below).

Action: SW to update the asset register.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. IO recommended that the subscription reminder should not be sent out by email with the annual member mailing, as it was often overlooked. Instead, he would email it in September. However, it should be posted to those who did not use email. This was discussed and agreed.

Action: IO to send out subscription reminder to all members who receive information by email in September.

Action: SW to only include the subscription reminder in the Annual Members Mailing for those members who do not use email.

The process for recording and banking the monies taken at Indoor Meetings was discussed. IO had set up a simple process to record and check how much was taken. This had been done once or twice, but had not been continued. The process had not been documented. SC said she was happy to comply with whatever process was required. She currently counted the money then gave it to EP at the end of each meeting. MT suggested that SC should continue to count the money, then to make a note of the amount in a book, which should be signed by one of the Executive Officers. EP should then complete the process.

Action: IO to draft a procedure for handling monies taken at Indoor Meetings.

7. Club Membership Review

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed. MT had met with JB and AL separately and had summarised their discussions. They were due to meet again in September to discuss the outcomes from this meeting, and further issues, including the BOC's business model.

Outreach: MT explained that this was profile raising, including working with outside bodies, representing the BOC at other events and with other organisations, plus other activities. RRI said the report made a number of good points, some of which had been raised before but which had not been implemented. MT said initially effort should be put into public relations. Liaison with schools (e.g. taking school children to hear nightingales) should be considered but not immediately, as it would need careful planning.

RRI said that the Club needed volunteers to distribute information about the BOC. MT said one possibility was the Earley Green Fair (see item 12) which BOC had had a stand at in the past, but not recently. RRe does talks for other groups, as does RRI, who had a couple scheduled for later in the year, which could be an opportunity to promote the BOC. A presentation to run on screens at events would be useful, especially as it would reduce the need to train volunteers about the Club.

Action: RRI to create a presentation about the BOC, before the end of August.

Publicity and communications: The Club needs to recruit an enthusiastic Publicity Co-ordinator, who would involve other people as needed. There are a lot of disparate tasks (e.g.

designing leaflets, talking on radio, writing articles) that required different skills, so more than one person should be involved. RRi had discussed the BOC's needs with Jan Stannard, who runs a PR agency and has done a lot of work in conservation PR. She had offered to help the working group.

Action: MT to contact Jan Stannard to ask for advice on publicity.

MT asked if anyone was keen to take on the role as Publicity Co-ordinator. If no-one else was, he was willing to co-ordinate the work in the short term to start it off.

Action: MT to act as Publicity Co-ordinator in the short term.

JS said that one issue was what the BOC was offering to members. The BOC had an excellent website, but he was not sure what attracted people to join it. MT asked what the Club's unique selling point was. In the past, the BOC was the only club offering meetings and walks, however there were now alternatives. He was not sure whether asking members would produce answers to these questions, but RRi felt it was worth asking members who did not participate why they supported the club. MT said that the Club's conservation work and publications differentiated it from other groups.

The survey in 2006 showed a very positive response to the newsletter, as did the 2011 survey. The newsletter should be published four times a year, but TR struggled to get enough input. He had published it for about 20 years and felt it was time someone else took it over. MT said there should be more reports on BOC events in the newsletter. IO volunteered to edit the newsletter, but would need help in getting people to provide material for it. He was happy to receive copy in any state. JS suggested a short monthly newsletter informing members about events; IO said that TR sent out reminders about events and other items when relevant, in addition to the newsletter.

Action: MT to discuss handover with TR (see also item 14).

Action: IO to take over editing newsletter from TR and to send out information on events monthly.

RRi asked JS to provide input from NDOC to the newsletter every quarter, to be swapped with something from the BOC.

Action: JS to provide input to the BOC's newsletter, and **MT & RRi** to provide input to NDOC's.

The system for sending out emails was discussed. IO had a satisfactory system, which TR's was based on, and EP had a duplicate version. MT said that if several people needed to send out information, it may be necessary to use MailChimp. RRi reported that FOLL had set this up but had not used it as it was too complicated. MT said there was no point in changing if the existing system worked well.

Action: MT to investigate MailChimp and to discuss with IO.

Volunteer support: MT pointed out that there was a problem with recruiting people. JB said that what people were expected to do had to be clearly defined, plus how long for and how often. MT said that training needed to be given to people helping at outside events; a set of FAQs would help.

RRi said that the structure of the indoor meetings meant that there was no social mixing. The general opinion was that the layout of the venue encouraged a 'them and us' situation. MT suggested only turning the lights down half to encourage interaction. JB mentioned teaching courses about how to improve interaction, e.g. by playing music while people are arriving (or bird song). This issue had been discussed by the working group, and would be brought up at the next Committee meeting.

Job description for Publicity Co-ordinator: this was circulated before the meeting and discussed. IO thought it should be more explicit about publicity leaflets, i.e. it should include preparing and distributing them. MT said that this was part of developing publicity material. The job description was a draft which he expected to change following discussion.

Social media: RT reported that this was ticking over; people were posting things, such as the tweet today about the Theale planning decision. There were 146 members on Facebook; the only to find out whether they were BOC members would be to check manually. Facebook was more active than twitter, including people posting photographs, news, etc.

8. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting. The trip to the Birdfair in August was not yet full enough to run. TR will advertise it to members, and RRe will remind the RSPB groups.

MT is due to speak on dragonflies at the members' magazine evening on 15th November. He suggested that there should be more detailed information on conservation work, e.g. at Fobney, or the BTO surveys. RRi agreed and said there should be a lot of audience participation.

Action: RRi to coordinate with RRe about including conservation in Members' Magazine Evening.

Successor for Programme Secretary: SC had asked Robin Dryden, but he was too busy. MT asked for ideas for other people as this was urgent. IO suggested Jane Campbell, who organises programmes for other groups. SC had discussed it with her, and agreed to ask her again; she was happy to work with her on this. A team would be better than one person.

Action: SC to ask Jane Campbell if she would become the Programme Secretary.

Venue for indoor meetings: RRe had proposed that the visit to St Joseph's College by a small group of the committee (e.g. MT, EP, SW and RRi as available) to review its suitability for indoor meetings should be made in the autumn, when MT had had time to consider the requirements for an indoor meeting venue.

Action: RRe to arrange visit to St Joseph's College in the autumn.

9. Conservation Sub-committee report

A report had not been circulated before the meeting as the conservation sub-committee was due to meet on 3rd July. RRi therefore gave a verbal report.

Padworth Lane GP: this was still on hold, as the Canal and River Trust had not settled the details of the restoration, so were not yet able to make a formal commitment.

Water rail surveys: these had been successful, covering about a third of the suitable habitat. About 12 people had been involved, finding about 20 probable pairs, with three confirmed breeding records. This was substantially more than was found in the Atlas work. A report would be issued soon. It was planned to do more next year, including the Kennet and Blackwater valleys, Windsor Great Park, and Wraysbury. There should be a newsletter article on this, and it should be included in the Members' Magazine. RRi agreed.

Burghfield Planning Application: this had been refused. The nightingales were one of the six reasons cited. It is expected to go to appeal, possibly in six months to a year. RRi thanked everyone who put in objections, including the RSPB and BBOWT.

Minerals and Waste Management Extraction: The consultation was due to close the next day, but NB had put in a response, mainly concerning restoration and mitigation, plus opportunities for enhancing biodiversity. It was hoped that the default position would be that gravel pits would become nature reserves.

Other surveys: MT asked if there were any surveys coming up that could involve members. RRi said that there would be, but this had not yet been decided. Surveying hobbies had been discussed but they were not easy to find, but it was a possibility for 2018 or 2019. He asked that any ideas should be sent to the Conservation Committee. MT had has a request from Ascot Priory Nursing Home for a survey, which TR was organising.

10. Editorial Board Report

RRi reported that the 2014 report was being prepared by Derek Barber and was progressing well. The 2015 report was also being prepared; about six species account writers were working on it. He hoped the reports would be published at the same time, early in 2018.

He said that the Editorial Board had not met for at least two years, but that now there was a new County Recorder, it was time to re-establish the board. He was also looking for a volunteer to get advertising; this used to bring in a reasonable amount (about £300 a year).

11. Recording and Reporting Working Group

A report had not been circulated before the meeting as the group were due to meet in July. RRi therefore gave a verbal report. The county database was now online, although it was not yet accessible to everyone. Marek Walford had created a search function, allowing it to be searched by site, topographical areas, time and species. RRi had incorporated it into the website and will circulate access information.

Action: RRi to issue access details for database to BOC Committee and BRC.

He asked the committee whether it should be open access or only available to members. The working group thought it should be open access. IO agreed. MT asked whether the BOC would lose any income from selling data. RRi said no, as it was not searchable in the way a developer would need, so it might increase revenue. Information on sensitive breeding species will be withheld or only provided at a very low resolution (e.g. east, west or mid Berks). The relevant species were listed on the site and could be edited by the County Recorder. AH was concerned that some data could slip out, but RRi assured him that this would be properly controlled.

The Committee agreed that it should be open access.

RRi said that future annual reports would not need to include the records list, but could provide more analysis.

12. Other Events

Earley Green Fair: Saturday 5th August. RRe was prepared to be there, but would need support in order to do it. AL had agreed to help. BT said she would be there with the mammals groups but could help with the BOC stand. MT was unable to help as he would fully occupied on the dragonflies stand, but he asked for more volunteers. JB agreed to help if he was in the country. It was agreed to commit to have a stand there.

Action: RRe to book a stand at the Earley Green Fair, and to co-ordinate the volunteers.

TVERC Recorder Conference: this will be in October. MT felt it is a good opportunity to network with other recorders, so it was worth attending.

Action: RRi to decide with RB what the BOC can do, e.g. stand, short talk, showing online database, etc.

MT asked if there were any other suitable events. SC suggested East Reading at Palmer Park, but BT said there were no wildlife stalls. MT mentioned the open day at Reading Old Cemetery, where someone had done some bird surveys, which might be worth attending if it happened again. BT mentioned that the Caversham Waterfest had been held in June, with the RSPB and BBOWT both present.

Action: All to inform MT of any potential events.

13. Officers

Elections to Committee: the report was circulated before the meeting. Becky Thomas had to stand down, so there was one vacancy on the Committee.

President: NB has decided not to stand again when his term of office ends in January. MT asked everyone to consider suitable people, for discussion at the next Committee meeting.

Action: All to send suggestions for candidates for President to MT prior to the next committee meeting.

Action: SW to include President's post in agenda for next meeting.

Webmaster: Mike Taylor had decided to stand down. RRI said it was not an onerous job, as content was provided by the officers. The job description was circulated before the meeting. JS asked if it had to be a member, RRI and MT said it didn't but it did require the right skills, which someone in the club was likely to have. AH suggested asking Marek Walford. Another possibility was Jane Campbell.

Action: RRI to ask Marek Walford whether he would become the Webmaster.

14. Annual Members Mailing

The report was circulated before the meeting and discussed. It had already been decided to omit the membership renewal form when emailing, but to still include it in the printed mailing.

IO asked what happened to completed garden bird surveys. RRI said he would discuss this with TR, and asked whether people enjoyed filling it in. A number of committee members said they did.

IO also asked whether TR would be doing this mailing. MT said he would discuss this with TR when liaising with him about handing over the newsletter to IO.

Action: MT to discuss annual mailing with TR.

15. Any Other Business

BT informed the meeting about a University research project concerning bees, who had honey to sell. They were unable to sell it on campus., so they were offering it to local groups to sell at £6 a jar, on a sale or return basis. £2 would be kept by the group and £4 returned to the project. The mammal group was selling it.

It was agreed that the honey could be sold at indoor meetings.

Action: BT to organise selling honey through the BOC, including providing a poster.

16. Dates and venue for next meetings

Thursday 19th October at 8 pm.

Action: JB to book Park House.

Sally Wearing
9th July 2017