



## **Berkshire Ornithological Club**

**Minutes of Committee Meeting**  
held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017  
Park House, University of Reading

**Present:** Neil Bucknell (President), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Sue Charnley, Adrian Lawson, Jake Bishop, Becky Thomas, Ray Reedman (RRe), Renton Righelato (RRi), Iain Oldcorn, Richard Burness (County Recorder).

1. **Apologies for absence:** Mike Turton (Chair), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Andy Horscroft, John Swallow, Ted Rogers.

2. **Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

The minutes were approved and signed with no amendments.

3. **Matters Arising**

**Item 6 (Honorary life membership):** It had been decided to give Honorary Life Membership to G E Wilson and T E Guyatt.

**Action: NB** to write to GE Wilson and TE Guyatt about Honorary Life Membership.

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

It had been unanimously decided to co-opt Michael Turton as Chair of the BOC Committee.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

The Committee approved that the BOC should hold £2,000 in the Conservation Fund on behalf of the Friends of Fobney, as detailed in the minutes of the Conservation Committee 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

**Changes to the committee:** the Treasurer had started the process to change signatories on the bank accounts, removing Richard Stansfield and adding Michael Turton.

**Reserves policy:** this was reviewed and approved.

**Asset register:** this register was reviewed. It was out of date; the presentation controller/slide pointer was now held by RRe, not MT, and the club notice board had been passed to Richard Stansfield.

**Action: SW** to contact RS whether he wished to pass the club notice board back to the Committee.

**Action: SW** to update the asset register.

There had been an attempt to access BOC funds via a fraudulent email. EP had reported the attempted fraud to the police. The information appears to have been gleaned from the BOC website, but Mike Taylor had advised that altering passwords would not prevent this. The procedures for both cheque and online payments were felt to be sufficiently secure.

Another scam that could affect the BOC was if emails with bank details were intercepted and altered so that funds would be sent to the wrong account. Anyone receiving bank details by email should phone the sender to confirm the details.

6. **Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

IO said that the membership will have fallen to about 290 by April. It had been drifting down for about the last three years.

NB reported that MT had proposed that a group should be set up to consider how to reverse the downward trend. MT had agreed to chair it; JB and AL volunteered to join it. The Committee agreed that it should be established with these three people.

NB suggested that the group should set its terms of reference, but that its goals should be to increase the number of members and participation in the club's activities. This could include making more use of social media, and surveying members about the club's activities.

IO said that the remit of the group should include reviewing membership fees and ways of attracting more finance. RRe commented that most local groups were finding the same problem of attracting new members and the average age of members increasing.

**Action:** MT to set up a new membership group, with JB and AL.

IO had provided a geographical analysis of membership, showing whether people attended indoor meetings, and a graph showing attendance at the University. RRe suggested we should investigate the people who never attended indoor meetings, to find out whether they were involved in other ways. RRe said that about half of the people who went on a recent walk did not do go to indoor meetings. JB asked about the large number of members in Maidenhead and Slough, who may be members in order to access QMR. RRe said that the East Berks group met in Maidenhead, but that some of their members were also in the BOC.

NB asked if the local RSPB groups were also struggling. RRe thought that they were. IO said they had lower membership fees, but members paid extra to attend meetings. JB asked whether organising car sharing for meetings might be possible, but IO said he had only had one request for this in the last 4-5 years.

RRe commented that many long term members did not come to meetings but were obviously happy; it would be useful to know why. IO thought that the BOC's business model was out of line with the type of society. He said that there were 250 members subsidising those attending indoor meetings. NB questioned why some members of the many small groups (e.g. FOLL, Theale) were not also members of the BOC.

## 7. **Publicity**

This topic had been partly covered, as it was integral to discussing how to increase membership.

British Birds had agreed to include the BOC as bird group of the month. The information they required about the club was gathered by NB.

**Action:** NB to send required information to British Birds.

SC was asked to give membership information to non-members at indoor meetings.

**Action:** SC to give a BOC brochure to all non-members who attend indoor meetings.

## 8. **Programme Sub-committee report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

**Venue for indoor meetings:** RRe had received a formal request about how satisfied we are with our current venue. Following major IT failures at two meetings, 50% of the cost of one meeting had been refunded and a further 5% discount had been given on the costs for next year. RRe said that cost was still a significant issue, as the room was about £200 per meeting. IO asked whether the university had any other suitable rooms. RRe said the issue was what they were willing to let. There were usually other reasons for the Palmer building being open, and the university would not offer other rooms at a cheaper rate. The janitor was not paid to stay late, so wanted to lock up at 10pm.

**Action:** RRe to provide feedback on university accommodation, covering IT, costs and inability to provide refreshments.

RRe said that it would be possible to provide refreshments at St Joseph's College, as there was a canteen on the ground floor. He recommended that a small group should visit St Joseph's to assess its suitability, including MT, EP, SW and RRI, as available.

**Action:** RRe to arrange visit to St Joseph's College.

**Indoor programme:** this was nearly complete. Since issuing the report, RRe had heard that it was unlikely that anyone from WWT would be available. MT had volunteered to talk on dragonflies for the Members' Magazine' evening, but more offers were needed. Kate Risley had mentioned research on red kites and it was agreed that this would be a fitting topic, which could generate a lot of local interest. RT recommended asking Mark Fellows.

**Action:** RT to send contact details for Mark Fellows to RRe.

RRI suggested it was worth organising a possible stand-in for Jan Stannard. RRe said that Andy Swash was unable to commit to being a speaker, but he had booked Mike Leach to talk on hummingbirds instead.

**Outdoor programme:** RRe was behind with this, due to illness, but would work on it when the indoor programme was finished.

**New programme secretary:** RRe would be standing down after finishing the 2017/18 programme. Thanks were expressed for all Ray's work. It was decided to approach Robin Dryden to see if he would take over.

**Action:** SC to ask Robin Dryden about becoming programme secretary.

## 9. Conservation Sub-committee report

The draft minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> February were circulated before the meeting and discussed.

**Padworth Lane GP:** this was progressing slower than anticipated as the Canal and River Trust were running late in their discussions with the gravel extractor. They were not yet able to provide the letter of intent that was felt necessary for the BOC to commit resources to detailed planning and establishing a management body.

**Water rail surveys:** a team of surveyors had been established, including some people from the NDOC. Two surveys had been done, both finding water rails. IO said there were other known water rail sites. NB said that this was a 3 to 4 year project, starting this year with the Loddon and Kennet. Other sites would be covered in the future.

**Streatley Meadows:** this small site is near the Swan Hotel, and NB was due to meet the manager on 19<sup>th</sup> April. The conservation fund may need to provide some of the finances.

## 10. Editorial Board Report

Richard Burness reported that he was organising the systematic lists for the next two reports. Derek Barker was making good progress with the 2014 report, and he was correcting the 2012 and 2013 reports. He had recruited nearly all the species writers for the 2015 report. Marek Walford had provided the relevant data. Both systematic lists should be ready by spring next year, to be passed to RRI for finishing and publication.

RRI said it was cheaper to print two at the same time, if they were ready together. He asked whether it would be possible to bring the reports forward so they could be published at the start of 2018, as he wanted to shorten the existing three year lag. RB said the situation was similar to other counties, such as Oxford and Surrey, who had both just published their 2012 reports. RRI pointed out that some counties produced reports in a year or less. He also said it was great to have someone take this work on and very helpful getting Derek Barker involved.

## 11. Recording and Reporting Working Group

The notes from 2<sup>nd</sup> March were circulated before the meeting and discussed.

This project was progressing well. The group was reviewing the database and how material was collected, to improve it and to provide public access to the data online. The small team working on the database were doing well and the work should be done by about mid 2017.

They had reviewed about 5,000 sites and had assigned them to master areas, to make the data easier to analyse, and were working on validating records. RRe said that more recording of breeding status was required, as was negative reporting. Marek Walford was refining Berksbirds to capture this information. A public relations programme would be required in the second half of the year, involving talking to people about how to put in data, what to record, etc.

Marek was doing a good job; he had already set up the online database, where the last 20 years of records could be searched using a range of criteria. This will form the basis of the publically available website and will be available by the end of 2017. Some rare species will have only minimal information or will be excluded. RB will determine what information will be provided. Marek will retain ownership of the website's technology, but the BOC will own the copyright for the contents. IO noted that provision should be made for the BOC to be able to operate the site in the absence of Marek's support.

RB reported that the BRC had had a productive meeting last week. It will now meet quarterly, providing a report each time to the BOC.

## 12. Other Events

RRe said that the BOC had not been present at the Earley Green Fair (Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August) for a few years, but it was worth doing. RRe had display boards and materials, but more could be made if necessary. AL volunteered to attend if he was not working. RRe was also happy to help, and RT could help for a couple of hours, as she would be there with the mammals group. RRe asked whether it would be worth putting together a short screen presentation, includes slides and videos, for such events.

AL said that there was a tree celebration event at Caversham Court in the afternoon of 1<sup>st</sup> May. The BOC could have a stall there for no cost. He was busy that day so unable to help.

JB mentioned the East Reading Carnival; the BOC would have to pay for a stall, but it was not expensive. NB said that the BOC used to attend the Royal County of Berks show, but they had stopped inviting us. It was not good for attracting members, but had been useful for obtaining sponsorship for the Atlas. AL said that one group he is involved attends events and gets about 30 new members a year, but the membership fee is £3 a year.

It was decided that this issue should be considered by the new membership group.

**Action: MT** to include considering what events to attend in the membership group.

## 13. Reports for consideration

**Social Media Update:** RT reported that JB had advertised some walks on Facebook, which was a valuable way of advertising them. She said that they had tried putting more on twitter but it was time consuming. The BOC twitter account had 343 followers.

RRe said that news items put on the BOC website did not automatically go to the Facebook page, so it was necessary to tell JB about them. RT said that it might be possible to link the website to Facebook.

**Action: anyone** who puts news on the BOC website should also inform JB.

NB asked if it was possible to put news items on the website while TR was absent. RRe said that the issue was emailing members, but that IO was able to do this.

## 14. Any Other Business

RRe had presented a talk on birdsong to Bracknell Natural History Group, resulting in a donation of £60 for the Conservation Fund. He had also given a talk to a local church group.

Mike Kempton had raised an issue concerning the photographic competition. His photos had unfortunately been omitted by accident. It was suggested that his photos could be kept for next year. JB said that a shared folder for people to upload photos to might help. RT said it should be possible to set one up that was only visible to Colin Wilson, who ran the competition. RRe said this would give a back up system, but it would need to be secure.

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

**Action: RRi** to liaise with Colin Wilson.

**15. Dates and venue for next meetings**

MT was unable to attend on the date that had been proposed for the next meeting, so it was agreed to move it to 29<sup>th</sup> June. The next meeting will therefore be:

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June at 8 pm, venue to be agreed.**

JB had booked Park House for the original date.

**Action: JB** to change booking at Park House.

It was not possible to set the date of the following meeting, as neither MT or EP were present.

**Action: SW** to arrange date of next meeting by email.

Sally Wearing  
3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017