



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 15th March 2018

Small Committee Room, Earley St Peter's Church Hall

Present: Renton Righelato (President) (RRi), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Sue Charnley, Ken Moore, Iain Oldcorn, Ray Reedman (RRe).

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Richard Stansfield (Chair), Adrian Lawson, John Swallow, Jake Bishop, Andy Horscroft.

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

- 2. Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 11th January 2018**

The minutes were approved and signed.

- 3. Matters Arising**

None.

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

None.

- 5. Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

EP said that more fraudulent attempts to set up standing orders or direct debits had been made. All had been logged with the bank and were being investigated. The bank had not made any suggestions about how to prevent problems; they had only asked if our details had been compromised. KM asked if it would be better to have one account for income and one for expenditure; EP said that was pretty much how the accounts were operated. The bank has now agreed not to set up any standing orders or direct debits.

Review of Reserves Policy – EP recommended that the existing reserves policy was still valid. It was decided to approve the reserves policy by those at the meeting and by email afterwards.

Action: EP to revise the reserves policy to show that it has been reviewed and agreed.

Review of Asset Register – the register was reviewed and updated.

SC informed the meeting that she would no longer be able to pay cash into the bank after April 2nd as only signatories on the account would be able to pay in from then. EP said that she would be able to pay in cash taken at meetings during the next season.

- 6. Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

EP will contact the ten members who had not paid or contacted the BOC, following the usual procedure. IO expected a few more would pay their subscriptions. RRi asked whether we asked people why they were not renewing. IO said they often told him; they were usually moving or could no longer get to meetings. Some did not want to tell him. He volunteered to analyse the reasons given.

Action: IO to analyse the reasons given for not renewing over the last few years.

RRe said that the usual slow reduction in members was usually compensated by new members but there had been a lack of publicity. IO said the numbers joining were relatively stable; most members were loyal as the average length of membership was about 14 years.

IO had drafted a procedure for handling monies taken at Indoor meetings. It had not yet been finalised. The action was therefore carried forward.

Action: IO & EP to finalise and implement the procedure for handling monies taken at Indoor Meetings.

General Data Protection Regulation – SW, EP and IO had met to discuss the effects of the GDPR. They had drafted two documents that the BOC required: a Legitimate Interests Assessment and a Privacy Notice. The report from the meeting and the draft documents had been circulated and were discussed. IO had already drafted a notice to members that he would include in the April newsletter.

RRi asked for two minor revisions to the LIA, which were agreed by those present. Following the meeting, SW revised the LIA and circulated it and the PN to the Committee for approval. Seven people approved the LIA. JS did not as he felt that the Club should follow the same approach as other organisations and obtain explicit consent. Eight people approved the PN.

Action: SW to post LIA and PN on the website.

Action: IO to inform members about the GDPR in the April Newsletter

7. Club Membership Review

RS was now working aboard and was therefore unable to report to or attend this meeting. The outstanding actions from the last meeting were reviewed.

Subscription levels – it had been decided at the last meeting to remove the reduction for retired members from 1st October 2018. After this meeting, SW realised that the Constitution includes a reduced retired member subscription rate.

Action: SW to include the retired members' subscription in the agenda for the next meeting.

Taster membership & birding site booklet – RS and JB had not yet been able to meet to discuss taster membership, so the action was carried forward.

Action: RS & JB to prepare a proposal on temporary membership to discuss at the next Committee meeting.

RRi had received a firm quote and a mock up of one page from Rob Still for the proposed birding site booklet. The booklet would have a double page spread for each of about 25 sites, based on the information in the Atlas. It would be heavily BOC branded. The printing costs were £600 for 500 copies and £750 for 1,000. RRi suggested selling them at £5 each.

Opportunities for selling it were discussed. It could be sold through local groups, such as RSPB, NDOC, FoLL, etc, as well as BBOWT. RRi said that it would be a significant expenditure, but it should not be difficult to recover the costs. The risk was small, as he expected it to remain valid for ten to twenty years.

After the meeting, full details of the quote were circulated to the Committee. It was agreed to obtain 1,000 copies by 7 votes to 1.

Action: RRi to commission Rob Still to produce 1,000 copies of birding site booklet.

Charging members to attend indoor meetings & raffle – this was discussed and the following comments and suggestions were made:

- charging members £2 as an alternative to the raffle
- other groups charge a modest amount, e.g. £3 or £4, which might be better than £2, as that could be considered too cheap
- it was reprehensible not to charge, as the people who regularly attend meetings get an additional benefit

- some people who came to meetings did not have any cash, so we would have to decide what to do, such as ask them to pay at the next meeting
- we could ask people at a meeting what they thought, which would warn them to expect the change, but a strong negative reaction would mean we could not do it
- if the Committee decided to charge members, we should do it without asking members
- whether the charge would include a raffle ticket
- if we decided to make a charge, we would need to do it from the start of the new season
- other ways of increasing income should be considered first
- some members may be annoyed by the charge
- free attendance at activities was an important part of the Club
- a few people give £2 but do not take any raffle tickets.

It was decided to ask the whole Committee two questions by email after the meeting:

- whether there should be a £2 charge for members to attend indoor meetings (which would include a raffle ticket)
- if yes, should we sound out members first at an indoor meeting and via the newsletter.

Six people voted against the first question, so a charge for members will not be brought in.

Selling Robert Gillmor's pictures – a report was circulated before the meeting and discussed. The alternatives were to auction four artworks together (2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013) or just the oldest two as in the past. SW said that only one bid for each artwork had been received in the last auction.

EP suggested asking BBOWT and local RSPB groups to publicise the sale. SW said that previous auctions had been to members only, but RRI pointed out that Robert Gillmor had given them to the Club to maximise income. IO felt that auctioning all four at once might be too many. Those present decided that two should be auctioned, in a similar way to the past (i.e. sealed bids) but not restricted to members.

After the meeting, the Committee were unable to agree what to do by email. It was therefore decided to carry over the decision until the next meeting.

Action: SW to include selling the report artworks in the agenda of the next meeting.

Encouraging legacies – RS had drafted some text about leaving money to the BOC, for the website and to put in the newsletter.

Action: SW to find draft text and to send to IO.

Action: IO to finalise text for the website, newsletters and annual reports.

Raising profile on Facebook – action to be carried forward.

Action: JB to ask Marek Walford whether “Today's Bird News” on Berksbirds could be shared with the BOC Facebook page.

Redesigning BOC membership leaflet – JB volunteered to do this. IO had recently updated membership details on the leaflet and had sent the revised version to JB.

Action: JB to redesign leaflet then circulate for comment.

Distributing leaflets – there was no current system. RRI suggested taking them to indoor meetings and asking members to distribute them. SW suggested asking where they were going to put them to be sure the leaflets were not all going to be taken to the same place. RRe used to have a list of possible places. IO said that libraries were not now much use.

Action: SW to include distributing leaflets in agenda for next meeting.

Local walks at weekends – RRI said that this could be a good way of getting new members, if the walks were advertised well. AL had volunteered to lead some walks, e.g. Fobney Meadows. The intention was to attract non-members, but more leaders were needed. RRe was keen to build these walks into the outdoor programme for 2018-19. He needed ideas and new leaders soon. Most of the local walks were better supported than the weekend walks. EP suggested advertising walks via the Greater Reading Environmental Network website. RRe said that they could be advertised via BBOWT if organised early enough.

Action: RRI to draft text for SW to send out to Committee asking them to lead local walks.

RRe would be leading an early morning bird walk for Earley Environment Group in late April and could give them BOC leaflets.

Action: IO to provide copies of leaflet to RRe for EEG walk.

Reducing costs of indoor meetings – it had been agreed not to reduce the frequency of meetings, but to try again to find a cheaper venue. RRI said that Earley St Peter's Church Hall was not suitable as it was not raked and suggested Oakwood Theatre; RRe said when he had investigated that he'd found that groups based in Woodley were given priority, so it would be too precarious. RRI thought any venue should be big enough to hold 80 to 100 people; RRe said about 60.

SW had asked the University about alternative accommodation (e.g. the Nike lecture theatre) and was waiting for a response. She would also pursue how to improve the sound.

Action: SC & SW to investigate alternative venues, and how to improve the sound levels.

Structure of indoor meetings – RS had made progress in improving this, e.g. by including Berksbirds in the initial part. RRI will try to develop this, for instance by including an introductory video and a more formal presentation of what's been seen.

Action: RRI to continue to improve initial section of indoor meetings.

8. Programme Sub-committee report

Indoor meetings - the report was circulated prior to the meeting and was discussed. The plans for were well received. The only gap was the AGM, and SC said that Colin Wilson or RS would be able to present a talk. She had arranged a speaker for April 10th, but the University was often busy then so she had contacted the University to discuss this.

RRI suggested getting more information from speakers in advance to improve publicity. We needed to 'talk up' meetings, via better advertising and publicity. Ted Rogers was continuing to send out emails before meetings to remind members. KM asked whether the newsletter could be used to advertise meetings, but IO pointed out it is only published three times a year. RRe suggested contacting BBOWT to ask them to include BOC meetings in their September leaflet. KM suggested contacting NDOC and FoLL.

Action: SC to obtain more information from speakers, to liaise with Ted Rogers about reminders, and to improve publicity to other groups, e.g. NDOC, local RSPB groups, etc.

Action: RRe to provide contact details for BBOWT to SC.

Action: SC to contact BBOWT to advertise meetings.

Action: RRI to ask FoLL to advertise BOC's meetings.

Christmas Social – RRe said that efforts to revamp this had not been successful. SC said that numbers had dwindled and asked whether it should continue. There was no support for continuing with it. The main Christmas social event would be the lunch.

This would leave a big gap between the AGM on November 26th and the next meeting on January 16th. RRI suggested holding another event at the University on December 12th. RRe suggested holding the meeting at Earley St Peter's Church Hall as it was cheaper than the University. Various ideas were suggested, such as Brains' Trust, with a number of experts talking on a specific topic, which would then be debated by the audience, or a question session on basic birding. EP said she loved watching birds but was not a good

birdwatcher, so would not ask questions at meetings as it was too intimidating. She suggested something on bird identification. KM asked how successful RRe's workshops were; RRe said that there were about 10 people at the last one, but they averaged about 20.

Action: SC to find a suitable topic for December 12th, preferably to be held at the University.

Photographic Competition – Colin Wilson had decided to stand down from organising this. RRe suggested revising the format; for instance, the photographers who needed the most critique did not receive any. He thought there should be more about what is right about the photos, not only what is wrong. He suggested that a small panel of members could score the photos. KM asked why the photos were allowed to be taken anywhere, why not just in Berkshire? RRe said that the categories could be changed.

RRi said the priority was to find someone to run it, then to discuss how it should be run. RRe said we should ask members for volunteers. KM suggested asking Paul Sterry.

Action: KM to ask Paul Sterry about organising the photo competition.

Outdoor programme – the report was circulated and discussed. RRe said he would be circulating the draft plan soon, but he still needed more ideas and leaders. He was looking for someone to replace him. See action under item 7 about local walks.

9. Conservation Sub-committee report

The minutes from the last meeting of the Conservation subcommittee (31st January 2018) were circulated before the meeting.

Neil Bucknell was due to provide a note on curlew surveys for the newsletter. IO said that he needed it in the next few days. RRi said he could provide something, if NB did not.

Theale planning application – Neil Bucknell had sent a submission to the appeal tribunal, as had Theale and other groups. The appeal will be held in September.

10. Editorial Board Report

RRi reported the text was ready for the 2014 report. RRi was expecting to receive the final edited version of the text for the 2015 report from the County Recorder by Easter. Robert Gillmor had provided the picture for the 2015 report and was due to provide the 2014 artwork. The reports would be published by the end of May at the earliest. SW asked RRi to review the number of reports produced as few people bought copies.

11. Other Events

None.

12. Social media

No report as JB was not present.

13. Any Other Business

RRi asked whether the BOC had a safeguarding policy for children, as he thought the Club should have one.

Action: SW to circulate any existing safeguarding policy.

14. Dates and venue for next meetings

Thursday 5th July 2018 at 8 pm.

Action: JB to book Park House.

Sally Wearing
22nd March 2018