



## **Berkshire Ornithological Club**

### **Minutes of Committee Meeting**

held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
via online conference

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

This meeting was held online by video conference as it was not possible to meet in person due to the government's Coronavirus restrictions.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Ken Moore, Ray Reedman (RRe),
2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020**

IO asked for a minor correction to Item 6, as he had found systems for issuing QMR permits electronically but had been unable to use any successfully. The minutes were approved with this amendment and will be signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

**Item 3:** It was agreed to suspend the action about the donation of a telescope and tripod (see end of these minutes) as the current pandemic meant the action could not take place.

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

It had been agreed to hold the indoor meetings in the 2020-21 season online.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report, draft accounts and draft budget were all circulated before the meeting.

**Draft accounts and report to AGM:** These did not include any costs for producing an annual report. RRi thought this meant that Rob Still had not put in an invoice for the 2016 report, which was published in late 2019. EP said that the costs would have to be included in the 2020-21 accounts, so would need to be included in the budget (see below).

**Action:** RRi to contact Rob Still about invoice for 2016 annual report.

RG was aware that there may be questions at the AGM about any savings due to indoor meetings being online. EP had already provided him with this information (e.g. cost of room hire, loss of raffle income) so they would be available if necessary. RRi said that any savings would help delay increasing subscriptions.

SW asked why the costs of the newsletter were shown as a separate item in 2019-20 but not in 2018-19 and suggested that they should be included with stationery and postage. EP said that the stationery costs in the previous year were much higher because of a delay in paying expenses to officers, and she would check whether they also included the newsletter costs.

**Action:** EP to revise the accounts to include the newsletter costs in stationery and postage.

**Conservation Fund:** RRi thought that £2,000 grant made in 2017 which the BOC is holding for Fobney had been put in the general fund but he could not find any transfer to the conservation fund. EP said it was mentioned in the 2017-18 accounts and had been carried forward, but that she would check. RRi offered to send EP his figures if she needed them.

**Action:** EP to ensure £2,000 belonging to Fobney is identified in the accounts.

SW asked which documents EP distributed at the AGM, so they could be sent to members by email in advance. EP said she issued: income, expenditure, conservation fund, balance sheet and treasurer's report. It was also decided to put the accounts on the BOC website.

**Action: SW** to send accounts to members before AGM and put on the BOC website.

RG thanked EP for providing the documents, which were clear and easy to check.

IO said that the booklet had been profitable, with an income of about £1,800 to date at a cost of about £900. He asked how many had been sold. RRI said about 250, so there were still good stocks and no need to reprint. He expected sales to continue slowly.

**Reviewing the accounts:** EP said that Bill Nicoll was willing to review the accounts again next year, but not after that. He had not suggested anyone else to take over.

**Draft Budget:** EP said that adding the 2016 annual report cost would make them look unbalanced, however this had to be done. SW asked why no income was shown for selling the Where to Watch Birds booklet in 2018-19, as the draft accounts showed £1,136 income.

**Action: EP** to revise and reissue budget.

## 6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. IO said that he would not chase subscriptions until the end of October. Very few people had cancelled their standing orders, other than those who had moved away. He would normally have received more payments by other means by now and he would also like people to have had time to try the online meetings.

**Newsletter:** IO asked for contributions by the middle to end of November for the next newsletter, due to be issued on 7<sup>th</sup> December. RRI offered to provide something.

**Action: All** to provide contributions for the next newsletter, if possible.

**QMR Permits:** IO was trying to find a way of issuing these by email, to save time and costs of about £160/year. He had tried two approaches without success: sending a pdf permit (which would prevent people altering it); or as a Word document (which could be altered). EP said the permits should be pdfs, as Thames Water would expect this. There are about two months before the 2021 permits are due to be issued.

IO suggested sending permits to only the regular key holders and others that visit occasionally; he could provide permits for others on demand, but this would not be suitable for a twitch. RRI said that the Club publicises QMR permits as a benefit of membership, so should be given to everyone who requests one. Other arrangements would be used for a twitch; the person organising it would issue temporary permits for a limited period. He used to issue the permits, which took about two hours each year, however more people required them now. IO said it took him and his wife about a morning.

JC said there was an app that would allow permits to be sent as pdf attachments. She had tried it successfully but did not know how much it cost. IO said that he had seen a cost of £900 for emailing 100 people but did not know any details. RG offered to investigate this and would pursue it if the cost was reasonable. During the meeting, JC found out that the app is Mail Merge Toolkit, costing £16 for the standard edition and £66 for the pro version.

**Action: JC** to send link to Mail Merge Toolkit to IO and RG.

**Action: RG & IO** to investigate using Mail Merge Toolkit to issue QMR permits.

It was decided at the last meeting to develop a referee system for people wanting permits.

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

## 7. Publicity and Advertising

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

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. CF had focused on social media; he was hoping for input from the committee about what the Club could use social media for,

especially what else could be done to publicise the Club. He had not advertised the indoor meetings as he was not sure who was able to attend. He would send the Zoom link to the University bird club if he can find out who the contact is. IO said this might be attractive to students stuck at home.

RRi thought it was a great opportunity to reach other people; online meetings should be publicised to non-members to encourage them to join the Club. CF suggested some should only be open to members, possibly those that would be the biggest draw. RG said it would be possible to allow each non-member to attend a few meetings. SW agreed; this could be put on the website and Facebook, asking non-members who were interested to contact her; she would send them the links to a limited number of meetings.

It was decided to publicise the next two meetings to non-members, but the AGM should be restricted to members. It was also decided to advertise free access to students.

**Action: SW** to advertise next two meetings on the website and to provide text to CF to post on Facebook and send to students.

**Action: CF** to advertise indoor meetings on Facebook and to students.

Instagram was discussed, however no-one currently used it. RG said that if younger people joined the committee, as discussed in the past, this was possibly something they could do.

RG suggesting monitoring who attended the online meetings, however SW said it was difficult to identify everyone. She would ask non-members to use their correct name.

**Action: SW** to ask non-members to name themselves correctly to access meetings.

Some of the actions from the last meeting were suspended as they were currently impractical (see end of these minutes). It was decided to continue the action below; CF said he would try to find someone at the University with design flair, possibly someone with a graphics degree.

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

## 8. Programme Report

**Indoor Programme:** The report was circulated before the meeting. SC said that the first one on Zoom had gone well. The next speaker, Des Sussex, wanted to have a test meeting. Mike Henderson (4<sup>th</sup> November) wanted to reduce his talk to one hour, as he felt any longer would be too trying, although it was not clear whether that was for him or for the audience. She was waiting to hear from him. She would contact the other speakers before each talk.

She had not yet planned the Christmas social and asked for ideas.

**Action: SC** to find three speakers for the Christmas social.

SC was due to start planning the following season but was not sure how to choose the dates as she did not know how the meetings would be held. She usually avoided bank holidays then talked to the University and adjusted the dates if necessary. RRi said that the University should be open by next season as that was about a year away. SW said SC should expect to hold them at the University but with the back-up of using Zoom or St Peter's. It was decided that SC should continue as usual.

**Action: SC** to plan for the 2021-22 season as usual.

RG said that 2022 was the Club's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary; such milestones had been marked in the past. JC suggested booking a special speaker, such as Chris Packham. RG suggested Steve Backshall, who lives in Berkshire. Timing was discussed; JC thought it could be held on any suitable date during the anniversary year. RRi suggested it should probably be at the beginning of the season, e.g. October, rather than January or February. IO said it would be dictated by the speaker's diary. The possible costs were discussed.

**Action: SC** to investigate a special speaker in 2021-22 for the Club's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**Indoor meeting recordings:** SW had posted the video of the first meeting on YouTube. It could only be accessed via a link. She suggested asking any non-members watching the

video to consider joining and/or donating. She had added the introductory slides at the end; it was agreed to put them at the start, but otherwise continue as for the first recording.

**Action:** SW to put slides at the start of each recording.

How long the recordings should be available was discussed. SC had not asked the speakers about this. IO suggested recommending a period (e.g. 2 – 3 months).

**Action:** SC to ask speakers if they want recordings to be available for only a limited time.

**Outdoor Programme:** RRe had nothing to report at this stage. RG said that no-one had wanted to attend the first outdoor trip, to Titchfield Haven. No-one had contacted CF about the trip he is leading on 24<sup>th</sup> October, but he would go anyway.

RG will email tour leaders to ask for items for the newsletter and to remind them about safeguarding. SW suggested that the information RRe had sent about how to comply with the government COVID guidance should be sent out again.

**Action:** RG to contact tour leaders to ask for contributions to the newsletter and to remind them about safeguarding and complying with current government guidance.

## 9. Conservation Subcommittee report

The report was circulated before the meeting. The conservation committee were meeting online next week, for the first time since February. They still needed more people for the farm surveys, so had had to limit the number of farms. IO asked if people knew what was involved; RRe said he would write about this for the newsletter. RG asked if NDOC had been asked to help with the surveys; RRe said they had. Most of the areas to be surveyed were in the west but the surveys were mostly done by people from central and east Berks. It was decided to seek volunteers via future indoor meetings.

**Action:** RRe to ask for volunteer surveyors via the newsletter and indoor meetings.

**Fobney:** RRe said that there was a planning proposal for a large industrial development south of Fobney Island, which would have a major impact on the area, including Nightingale territories. It was in the early stages, so they were considering it and developing a strategy.

## 10. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

**2018 Report:** MW had received most of the species accounts but was waiting for contributions from three writers. However, he could start editing now.

**2019 Report:** Derek Barker had offered to be responsible for the systematic list and for overall production, except proofing and printing. He was keen to produce a high-quality report and expected to make changes to the team of writers. RRe said that DB had done this successfully in the past; he would like DB to continue after doing 2019. MW said he did not know whether DB could find more volunteers. RG suggested that each person could cover more species; MW said it was better to do fewer, which was less daunting. RRe thought that DB might write more himself. RG had not yet discussed a deadline with DB.

**Action:** RG to accept Derek Barker's offer to take on the 2019 report.

MW said that the 2019 data would probably not be available until about the end of 2020; the BRC needed to review the records and he was waiting for some, which he was chasing. He could set a deadline for the BRC.

**2020 Report:** MW expected sightings to be in by March 2021; the writers could start in May.

**Managing Editor:** RRe said he was delighted that SW had agreed to take this role on.

## 11. Elections to Committee and AGM Preparation

The report had been circulated before the meeting. SW thanked JC for volunteering to stand for election as Secretary. Because of this, there would be three vacancies for Ordinary Committee Members, not two as stated in the AGM Notice. RG asked if anyone had contacted Finley Hutchinson about standing. SW said he was too young to be a Trustee.

RG asked for ideas for new Ordinary Members. SW and IO were both willing to stand if there were not enough volunteers. SW pointed out that the County Recorder has been a member of the committee in the past; MW said he was willing as he already attended meetings, but it would be better to find new people. He suggested one person, who unfortunately was not a member. RG asked everyone to think of new people. RRi suggested asking NDOC for ideas; NDOC officers had been on the BOC committee in the past.

**Action: ALL** to find people to stand as Ordinary Committee Members within next two weeks.

**Action: RRi** to ask NDOC for possible candidates.

**Other positions:** Replacements for both RRe (Outdoor Programme) and JC (Website) were required. RG said he could help to develop the outdoor trips, but it would not be easy for him to do the coach trips. SW suggested that he offered to share the role with RRe.

**Action: RG** to discuss sharing the Outdoor Programme role with RRe.

RG asked for ideas for someone to run the website. JC said it involved managing the email account, making payments and other administrative jobs, however it would be good if someone could take on developing the website. MW said it did not need a professional web developer. IO asked if CF had any suitable contacts at the University, but CF did not. It was agreed to put an item in the newsletter about this.

**Action: JC** to provide an article for the newsletter about the website role.

**AGM:** The Club's Constitution does not specify how to hold the AGM, only that it must be held within two months of the end of the financial year. The Charity Commission's guidance says that charities who do not have clauses in their governing documents that allow them to meet virtually may decide to hold meetings using digital solutions, as long as this decision is made in order to demonstrate good governance of the charity and the decision is recorded.

It was therefore agreed to hold the AGM online via Zoom in order to ensure good governance of the Club. SW said that, unfortunately, only people with access to the internet would be able to take part, but there were only about 30 who had not provided the Club with an email address. She would contact one of the members without email, who had asked to be informed of any changes to the programme.

The quorum for the AGM is a minimum of 40 paid-up members. EP said that if two members were together on Zoom, SW should ask them to tell her in advance. SW said that two emails would be sent out to members: one more than two weeks in advance to say that it would be held on Zoom and a second one nearer to the meeting with the Zoom invitation. RG asked whether people would be able to ask questions; SW said yes, as at the end of indoor meetings. She would set up polls in Zoom to enable people to vote.

**Action: SW** to organise the AGM on Zoom, as agreed.

## 12. Any Other Business

**Amazon Smile:** SW had received a letter about how to receive donations via Amazon. It was agreed that she should register the Club with Amazon.

**Action: SW** to register the Club for donations via Amazon.

**Fair Isle Bird Observatory:** following a fire, the Observatory is seeking donations to their Rebuild Appeal and had asked the Club to publicise this. It was decided to include this in the next newsletter and to email members. EP suggested that the BOC should donate to the appeal; SW said that she did not think this was appropriate as it was not in Berkshire.

**Action: SW** to forward FIBO email to IO for the newsletter and to forward to members.

## 13. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021, to be held online via Zoom.

**Sally Wearing, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020**

## **Suspended Actions**

**Matters arising:** 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.

**Publicity and Advertising:** the following actions will be continued when the current government restrictions are relaxed.

**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.

**Action: CF** to put up posters advertising the BOC at the University.