



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 14th January 2021

via online Zoom conference

Present: Rob Godden (RG, Chair), Renton Righelato (RRi), Eleanor Pitts (EP, Treasurer), Jane Campbell (JC, Secretary), Sally Wearing (SW), Sue Charnley (SC), Iain Oldcorn (IO), Marek Walford (MW, County Recorder) and Andy Tomczynski (AT)

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

1. **Apologies for absence:** Chris Foster and Ray Reedman

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 15th October 2020**

The minutes were approved and will be signed.

3. **Matters Arising and Review of Actions**

Item 11: Mike Taylor volunteered for the web administrator role and the handover has taken place.

IO asked who is developing the website as this is not part of the admin role. RRi is unsure if there is much demand for this but agreed to ask Mike Taylor for usage stats.

Action: RRi to request website usage stats from Mike Taylor

Item 12: The Club is not yet registered for donations with Amazon.

Action: JC will investigate how this is done

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

None.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report; information about increased CAF bank charges; a comparison of CAF and Triodos banks costs; and links to bank mandate forms for Santander and CAF were circulated prior to the meeting.

EP highlighted that in the financial report to the AGM in November 2020 she had wrongly allocated the donation of £2000 that BOC is holding for Friends of Fobney to the General Fund rather than to the Conservation Fund. She has rectified this in the current report.

Bank Mandates: It was noted that changes to the committee require new bank mandates for both CAF and Santander and that amendments are needed for authorised signatories. Both CAF bank and Santander require new signatories to complete forms and in addition Santander requires that non-signatories provide details.

The committee agreed to EP's proposal that Robert Godden, Renton Righelato, Sally Wearing, Jane Campbell and Eleanor Pitts are registered as signatories. It was also noted that in the case of only three signatories being accepted that they would be Eleanor Pitts, Sally Wearing and Jane Campbell. EP stressed the importance of standardising how these

forms are filled out and that to minimise mistakes she will post the required forms with a completed example to committee members who are asked to return them promptly.

Action: EP to post the relevant bank mandate forms to all committee members with examples of completed forms as guidance.

Action: All: return the above forms promptly to EP taking note of the examples provided.

CAF Increased Charges: It was noted that the increase in charges is not very significant but when compared with Triodos CAF provides poor value and less flexibility. EP is unsure why we use CAF but understands that it is linked to enabling internet users to make donations. EP would like to transfer our accounts to Triodos and use their various accounts to generate interest. RG suggested looking further at Triodos because of its ethical values and although we cannot change now (because Triodos is not accepting new customers at present), we could be prepared to do so in future. IO warned this change may require non-trivial adjustments to our website with donation systems needing to be rebuilt.

Action: RRI and EP to research what is involved in changing banks and associated web pages.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that a member re-joining after a gap of more than a year should not be asked to pay for the intervening time and that the clause in the constitution regarding re-joining does not apply in this case.

QMR Permits: The permits were successfully distributed by email using the MapiLabs Mail Merge Toolkit at a cost of £63 (with a 20% discount for charities) for a perpetual license. RG thanked IO and JC for their work.

Action: JC and IO: JC will show IO the process she used as IO would like to do this next year.

Action carried over: RRI & Peter Newbound to establish a practicable refereeing system for permits, to be discussed with IO before circulating to the Committee.

Newsletter: IO asked for contributions by the end of March for the next newsletter, due to be issued on 7th April. He also suggested that the Society's statement on Covid-19 should be updated.

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

Action: RG to review the statement on Covid-19 and for it to be published on the website and in the next newsletter.

Members' Welcome Pack Documents: IO informed the committee that these documents have not been updated since 2014 and that although he distributes them, he does not 'own' them for review. RRI suggested that new members are given a copy of the 'Where to Watch...' booklet and are pointed to the website for other information. The committee agreed this is a sensible solution. EP has 86 booklets, all checked for completeness.

Action: IO to update the new members' covering letter to give website links to surveys and conservation activities.

Action: EP to distribute the 'Where to Watch' booklet to new members.

Colin Wilson's comments and suggestions: After the AGM Colin made suggestions and observations which were discussed. He suggested that members may request a refund because no expenses are being incurred for indoor meetings and that perhaps the cost of membership should be reduced. The committee discussed the difficulties involved in offering refunds and noted that the savings made will delay the time at which the membership subscription needs to be increased. In addition, EP explained some of the excess will be used to publish two bird reports and is also needed to fund various conservation projects. RRI has already responded to Colin in detail regarding the Conservation Fund and how it is spent, our publications and liabilities such as Padworth.

Action: RRI to write an article for the newsletter explaining the use of the Conservation and General funds.

Colin also proposed a name change from 'Club' to 'Society' which was discussed and not felt to be beneficial. The constitutional and financial complications of a name change were highlighted.

7. **Publicity and Advertising**

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

CF provided an update by email just before the meeting – his updates are here:

- **CF to advertise indoor meetings on Facebook and to students:** I have not done so well at using the Facebook group, will redouble efforts here. I did pass on to the university bird club and I believe some have attended, they have been posting links internally on their own social media groups. This term I am teaching a module called 'Birds' with 120 students on, I will certainly be encouraging them to attend BOC meetings!
- **CF to review and revise leaflets:** no change. Will aim to do this in good time for next year's programme. I do have a couple of potential students in mind to approach for help with design, one is already involved with the bird club.
- Further on publicity, we've had an offer of assistance with Instagram and possibly other media, I haven't yet followed this up so that can be a new action for me to do so.

IO believes Colin Wilson as well as a recent new member have expressed interest in helping with improving our advertising on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram.

AT asked if the Club uses Twitter and Instagram and was informed we have no-one who uses these tools.

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

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

Action: CF to follow up offers of help with Instagram and other media.

Recorded Indoor meetings on YouTube: In response to AT asking if we have usage data on the recorded indoor meetings SW showed analytics which were agreed to be extremely useful. Amongst much other data it was shown that there have been 399 views totalling 109 hours which implies most people do not view for long.

Action: SW to continue to collect analytics and investigate further to see if there is more useful information.

AT also asked if members only could view and was told that although the recordings are unlisted and links sent only to members anyone can watch them. AT also suggested one recording is made public and MW stated that care should be taken as some speakers did not want this. It was agreed one lecture would be made public as a trial.

Action: SW to contact Des Sussex to ask if his lecture could be made public.

IO suggested that the Chairman's introduction and slides of forthcoming events at the start of the recordings be moved elsewhere as then the main talk would be viewed first which may encourage people to watch for longer. SW responded that putting this information elsewhere would not make sense and that she did not want to do more editing.

Action: SW to document how she edits these recordings

At the AGM John Warren suggested the Club advertises itself via national charities such as the RSPB. RG is unsure how this can be achieved, IO suggested we ask John exactly what he meant.

Action: RG to contact John Warren

East Berkshire RSPB Group: Sadly, due to lack of volunteers this group is closing. RG's suggestion that we offer their members free access to our programme for the remainder of the season was agreed.

Action: IO to liaise with the RSPB group to request they send our programme to their members and for any members interested to let IO know.

8. Programme Report

Indoor Programme: The report was circulated before the meeting. SC thanked SW for organising the Zoom meetings and for editing and publishing the recordings. She is pleased that the online events are attracting a reasonable audience including people who do not attend in person. She suggested that some future meetings at the University with an audience could have a remote speaker; the university has assured her the technology is available for this. RRI agreed this is an opportunity to attract worldwide speakers. SC is continuing to book speakers and it was noted that some only want to do this via Zoom. IO said the Christmas meeting was good and this was agreed by others.

75th Anniversary speaker: SW confirmed the date of this anniversary is February 2022 and it was suggested that we organise this special event towards the end of the season to be as far away from current restrictions as possible. Steve Backshall had previously been suggested as he lives in Berkshire but was discounted because he is not a bird specialist. Chris Packham seems to be a popular choice and SC will contact him.

Action: SC to contact Chris Packham

Photographic Competition: JC posted the prize vouchers to last year's winners and is willing to run the 2021 competition which is in March and therefore needs to be advertised.

Action: IO to send an email to members

Action: SC to publicise on Facebook and to contact the LCE for prize vouchers.

Outdoor Programme: This is suspended due to Government restrictions. It is hoped that the cancelled excursions can be run next year.

9. Conservation Sub-Committee report

The minutes of a meeting held on 20th October 2020 were circulated before the meeting. RRI said last year had been disappointing because restrictions had meant not much could be done with landowners and farmers; survey work was curtailed and progress at Padworth was slow. It is hoped more can be done from April 2021. There are not many volunteer surveyors and he expects demand for farm surveys to increase with two to three West Berkshire estates asking for help. SW offered to help when fit. RG asked if we expect to be approached by Lower Farm for a grant, RRI believes the farm is off the market and that its owners are investigating alternatives for biodiversity offset which may work in our favour. IO asked who the Club is communicating with at Moor Green Lakes and RRI responded that MGLG committee members had been involved and the BOC letter was sent to their Chairman who was copied with RRI's response from Cemex.

10. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and is a summary of progress. RRI thanked RG and SW for taking over as Scientific and Managing Editors. He had met with them earlier

and SW is editing and compiling the 2017 data to be passed to Rob Still and RG managing the 2018 and 2019 systematic lists and articles.

The 2017 systematic list is ready to be edited; the 2018 systematic list is almost complete so editing can start; and the 2019 report is yet to be started. MW does not yet have all the necessary BRC responses and work may have to start without them.

RG informed the committee that the offer from Derek Baker to take on the 2019 report has been withdrawn with no explanation.

AT is now Photographic Editor. He has completed 2017 and 2018 and is now working on 2019. He highlighted issues obtaining pictures of interesting birds that are of suitable quality.

RRi asked MW about the 2018 systematic list and was told it is complete barring records from Andy Horscroft.

Action: RG to send MW guidance on how to write species accounts for 2019.

RRi had distributed hard copies of a high-quality newsletter produced by the Reading RSPB group and asked if we should think about a similar publication which may 'remain on coffee tables' and maintain interest. RRi stressed the content would be the same as our current newsletter but presented differently. It was thought this would require a lot of work and would need someone to do it as well as incur printing and postage costs.

Action: IO will change the presentation of the next newsletter for discussion at the next meeting.

11. Constitutional Changes

SW's report on possible constitutional changes was circulated prior to the meeting. It was decided that as any changes agreed would require an EGM or AGM that they be made at the next AGM. Therefore, discussion is postponed until a later meeting.

12. Any Other Business

Judges for the Photographic Competition: SC suggested we retain Colin as a judge this year but find a replacement for Ashley. Suggestions were Andy Swash and Robert Still. It was agreed to ask Robert first.

Action: RRi to ask Robert Still if he is interested in doing this.

Signed Minutes: EP requires signed minutes of this meeting.

Action: RG will post to EP as soon as he can.

13. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 15th April 2021 at 8pm, to be held online via Zoom.

Jane Campbell, 20th January 2021

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.*