

Herefordshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of a Committee meeting held on Thursday 16th February 2017 at Holmer Parish Centre

Present: Gareth Morgan (Acting Chairman) President John Pullen, Vice President Tom Weale, Dave Coker, Mick Colquhoun, Mervyn Davies, Rachel Jenkins, Una Morgan, Gerald Parker, Mary Roberts, Chris Robinson, Robert Taylor, Jim Wilkinson

In attendance: Norman Fincham

1 Apologies: Gerald Wells, Susanna Grunsell, Brian Willder, Nicky Davies

The Chairman reported that Brian Willder had stood down from the committee after two years of his three year term, because of hearing problems. He still will support the work of the HOC

2 Minutes of the meeting of 19th January 2017. These were approved and signed.

Matters Arising: dealt with as agenda items

3 Burley Gate Presentation:

Robert Taylor gave an excellent brief presentation of behalf of the group (Rachel, Mervyn and Brian) He outlined the original study and the key points from the BTO considerations and reported on their meeting with the landowners. The same land is almost all now owned by two farmers who were very helpful. There are some changes but a lot is still the same. Rachel has located the detailed maps of the early work which was felt to be equivalent to an early Common Bird Census. Following discussion, the Group were congratulated on their work and it was agreed in principle that it was worth doing a pilot in 2017: the group would look at how this could be done and report back to the Committee.

Some of the discussion covered the number of survey visits recommended from 5 to 8 and the reduced numbers of competent birders compared to the time of earlier survey work (one suggestion was to pair less experienced members with the experienced one as a learning opportunity)

4 Treasurer's Report

The report had been distributed to the committee.

The Treasurer reported a reduction in the interest rate to 0.2% from the Monmouthshire Building society so he was considering moving the money.

Only 14 members had not paid their renewal subscriptions (although Treasurer expected this number to reduce) and we had six new members.

There had been some problems with the Annual Report cover production so 94 had been returned; the replacements had a different laminated finish which was agreed would be a good option for the next report, which will go out to tender as best practice.

Bodenham: The hide is now on order and will be installed in March. Some reed planting has started. Chris Robinson will contact Sophie Cowling re help with her geese query.

5 Members Survey Comments

A compilation of the replies from responsible committee members had been circulated. The President suggested a summary of all the points would be needed. Many of the comments would

guide the work of the appropriate sub committees who had meetings in the next month. Others such as indoor and outdoor meetings may need to await the filling of the vacant post. Decisions need to be made to enable Robert to report in the next newsletter in May, so it will be on the April committee agenda.

Mick had done statistics on the use of the website which was mainly being used for access to sightings. The revised home page was approved.

The Acting Chairman again congratulated Robert on such a useful membership survey. *The Chairman will be taking these into account for the revision of the Strategy document.*

6 Correspondence

Mick had received an email from Roger Hicks wanting information and help with rooks and rookeries. Mervyn offered to check what was available and let Roger know. It was suggested that Susanna may be interested as she had studied corvids. The Secretary will pass on the contact information

7 Sub Committee Business

1) Education and Publicity. May 6th event at Bodenham with HWT was discussed. Mary is looking for support from other members to promote the Club and give children an appreciation of birds. It runs from 11am – 2pm as a family fun event. Mary and Susanna are meeting on site on 30th March

2) Editorial: the annual report has been well received so congratulations to the team. Mervyn has arranged a meeting on 6th March to review the Annual Report and Newsletter. He will arrange a writers' meeting at the end of March and aims to have the next Annual Report by the end of the calendar year.

3) Records Working Group

Chris spoke to the draft report of the meeting previously circulated covering records, website and archiving. There was discussion about the website and the possible introduction of an interactive shared management system. Some expressed the view that as the numbers that use the website or submit records through it are so small, that it would not be worthwhile. Robert suggested that the website should be more important in this modern day. The Chairman had asked via email that no decisions on the web site were made at this stage.

8 AGM Business

The Secretary reminded the committee that we have two vacancies for ordinary members, meetings secretary (for both indoor and outdoor meetings) plus Publicity and Conservation Officer. The Annual Report editor, the Recorder and the HOC News editor had all been nominated and agreed to continue in post. Norman Fincham has agreed to be nominated for an ordinary member although family commitments may mean he cannot make all meetings. Chris Robinson could now come back as an Ordinary member. The committee can co-opt to cover any vacancies not appointed at the AGM. Rachel offered to do the correspondence side of the indoor meetings but will need more positive lists and guidelines than this year.

Members were asked to talk to potential candidates before the AGM

We also need an auditor as Eric Aplin is moving away.

Mick is doing the photos for John's short talk about bird ID

We will also show members' photos and there will be a Dutch supper.

9 Any Other Business

1) The latest Walk leaflet on Merbach Hill had been distributed; some minor information was updated and Mervyn was congratulated. The President suggested asking pubs for sponsorship when we "advertised" them in the walk leaflet. This was not felt appropriate.

Robert will chase up other potential walk writers and members will send suggested names with contact information to him

2) Rachel mentioned there will soon be an advertisement for the Woolhope Ornithological recorder as Beryl Harding is retiring,

3) Chris reported on the Swallow barn; the owner is negotiating with the insurers.

4) Chris attended a curlew workshop at Slimbridge and is planning to recruit more people to take on a site (where curlews have been seen within the last two years)

5) The Acting Chairman thanked the two committee members (Dave Coker and Mary Roberts) who were standing down and particularly Gerald Parker a past chairman and field meeting organiser. Gerald has left a programme of field meetings to help until his replacement is appointed.

10 Date of next meeting is the AGM on Thursday 9th March

Una Morgan 20 Feb 2017