

# HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/76M

## 76<sup>th</sup> Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 21 November 2023 at 250 Sandridge Road, AL1 4AL and online via Zoom conferencing

Present: Agneta Burton, Ian Carle, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Rupert Evershed, Chantal Helm, Tim Hill, Chris James, Martin Ketcher, Chris Ruis (Treasurer), Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary) & Stuart Warrington.

1. **Apologies:** Alex Waechter

2. **Chair's welcome:** Peter reported with regret that Jack Fearnside had decided to stand down from the MC and had not sought re-election at the 2023 AGM. Jack would, however, continue making his expert contribution to the production of the *Herts Naturalist* and *Herts Bird Report*. The committee expressed warm thanks to Jack for his contribution to the committee over the past six years.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 September 2023 were approved. Matters arising:

a) Hertfordshire Naturalist 2023 and Herts Bird Report 2022: The committee welcomed publication of the two reports which had been sent out to members earlier in the month. Stuart was thanked for his work editing the *Herts Naturalist*. He thanked the editorial board and all of this year's contributors. There had been difficulties during the pdf proofing stage caused by different software versions being used, but these could be avoided next year. He would ensure a clearer protocol on how and when to submit final drafts and corrected proofs to Jack. He also planned to produce more accessible website guidance for potential contributors.

*Action: Stuart*

b) Constitutional amendments: David reported that the committee's proposed amendments had been unanimously approved by the AGM. He had notified the Charity Commission and the changes had been reported on the HNHS pages of the Commission's website. He had prepared an amended version of the Constitution and posted it on the Society's website. Complying with the amended constitution, he had also posted pdf versions of the management committee's approved minutes (since the start of 2022) on the website where members could read them. David was thanked for his work guiding the constitutional amendment process to a successful conclusion.

c) Hertfordshire Moths Group website: Colin Plant had advised Ronni that work on the new site, funded by the Society, was progressing well. David sent versions of the HNHS logo to Colin for inclusion with a front-page statement acknowledging the Society's contribution.

3. **Plans for celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025**

Martin was thanked for analysis – commissioned by the Bird Club Committee – of MemberMOJO data about the Society's membership. It encouragingly showed that most members were paying full subscriptions to receive both the *Herts Naturalist* and the *Herts Bird Report* and that the number of members had steadily increased in the past decade. It was suggested that a confidential survey of membership in the run-up to 2025 would be the best way to obtain further information about members, their interests and their views on the Society's future.

David presented a paper suggesting potential contents for a publication to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. These were:

- A history of the Society since 1875
- Pen portraits (with photographs where possible) of leading HNHS figures
- 150-year accounts of the most popular taxa (e.g. birds, plants, butterflies & moths)
- Accounts (with photos) of 150 'iconic' Hertfordshire species (in consultation with county recorders)
- Hertfordshire wildlife 'hotspot' locations (e.g. Wilstone) or habitat types (e.g. chalk streams)

- Photo feature on the HNHS's rare botany book collection (kept by University College London)
- An article explaining the purposes of HNHS and discussing its future role.

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies had expressed interest in mounting a 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition at the library in County Hall, Hertford. The possibility of exhibiting some of the Society's rare botany books might also be considered through discussions with UCL's rare books curator. Exhibitions at St Albans Museum and North Herts Museum might also be considered.

Further ideas that emerged during discussion were:

- A 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary full-day conference in the summer of 2025
- Refreshing the website, including an upgrade to make it responsive to mobile phone screens. The site could host all the articles in the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication, plus additional material.
- An HNHS oral history project based on structured interviews with distinguished Herts naturalists, including past winners of the HNHS Awards.

Peter suggested that remaining funds from legacies from Gerald Salisbury and Peggy Cunningham might be used to fund special anniversary activities. It was agreed that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication should be produced as the *2025 Hertfordshire Naturalist* and an expanded editorial team convened to support Stuart. David offered to write the history article. Ronni would invite county recorders to contribute thoughts on which Herts species and habitats might be featured. Tim would give further thought to implementing his idea for an oral history project.

*Action: Stuart, David, Ronni, Tim*

David would consult Chris Dee about how to obtain more useful information about website use from Google's revised 'Analytics' tool as well as the issue raised about mobile phones.

*Action: David*

#### **4. Reviews of HNHS policies**

The committee reviewed the Society's formal policies on financial reserves, safeguarding and privacy and agreed that all three should be renewed for another year without changes. It was also agreed that the Society should pay for David to renew his basic online training in safeguarding for children and young people and for vulnerable adults. Peter would research standard wording for a new formal policy on financial controls.

*Action David, Peter*

#### **4. Reports**

Chair: Peter reported a busy period for the Society since the last MC meeting, including the Trevor James memorial conference, the Autumn Meeting and AGM, Martin's analysis of membership trends and publication of the *Hertfordshire Naturalist 2023* and *Hertfordshire Bird Report 2022*.

Treasurer: It was noted that the Society's Santander account contained significant sums accumulated through payment older Standing Order subscriptions. The Lloyds current account held enough funds to cover the remaining months until 2024 subscriptions fell due.

Membership Secretary: Martin reported a flurry of late renewals from members who realised they had not received journals this autumn. This had caused a complication with the MemberMOJO system which was treating them as new members, paying for 2024, not the current year. He had sought advice on resolving the problem.

Peter suggested the Society might make more use of its 'Honorary Member' category which currently covered a handful of individuals who had either made generous past donations or contributions, including those who were too infirm to be contacted about a subscription. He also noted that the Society needed to make a claim to HMRC for Gift Aid refunds (before it closed down in autumn 2021, Virgin Money's charity service had included automatic processing of Gift Aid claims)

*Action: Chris, Martin, Peter*

Secretary: David said Peter Delaloye had expressed his thanks to the committee for the Long-service Award presented to him in October at the AGM.

## 5. Recording and monitoring

MARA: Chantal said recent efforts to fill gaps in survey coverage had been concentrated on tetrads in the north east of the county. Small mammal trapping had produced interesting results including an increasing abundance of Yellow-necked Mice. Harvest Mice had also been located. Trapping training had been undertaken by volunteer assistants, increasing the opportunities for fieldwork during the last 14 months of the survey. She asked for help in contacting private landholders in North-east Herts to see if they would allow surveying to take place. Committee members provided a number of suggestions.

Invertebrate Group: Ian said the group would be organising a winter meeting to discuss a choice of sites for next season's fieldwork. Stuart noted that there were species experts regularly contributing records via iRecord, who had no connection with HNHS at a time when we had a number of vacancies for recorders. iRecord and other websites removed the need to send submissions via county recorders and the Society now had less visibility of naturalists active in the county. It was agreed that a conversation with HERC would prove helpful, as they received more detailed information about individuals whose records had been verified via iRecord than could be gleaned from studying the website.

*Action: Ian, Ronni*

Recorders' Committee: Ronni said the committee was due to meet the following week with an agenda to discuss changes in the way the records were reaching recorders as well as plans for the HNHS 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## 6. Meetings and events

- Trevor James Memorial Symposium, 9 September Redbourn Parish Centre: Tim said the event had been successful, with fine tributes to Trevor and well-prepared wildlife presentations. It had been well-attended by more than 50 people despite very hot weather. The Redbourn venue should be considered for future use as it was reasonably priced and had good facilities.
- Autumn Meeting and 2023 AGM, 7 October, Affinity Water, Hatfield : The attendance of 55 members and guests had been a little disappointing, but the programme had included a good mix of presentations.
- Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture, Wednesday 28 February, 2024 Welwyn Civic Centre. No speaker had yet been agreed. Tim would welcome suggestions.
- Herts. Bird Conference, Saturday 2 March 2024, Affinity Water, Tamblin Way, Hatfield. The programme was being finalised, but would include talks by Graham White on the Colne Valley wetland system and by Rupert on the bird history of the Cooper's Green gravel pits. There would also be a panel discussion. David regretted he could not manage the date, but would provide the usual materials and equipment for collecting door money, and selling raffle tickets and books.

## 7. Publications

David reported a steep increase in the price of stamps for the *Herts Naturalist* –likewise the *Herts Bird Report* – from £1.65 in 2022 to £2.70 this year. Peter and other helpers at the packing parties had saved the Society money by taking envelopes to be delivered by hand. It was agreed that a more formal arrangement for maximizing in-house distribution should be considered for 2024.

*Action: David*

## 8. AOB

Christine was about to send David the BNA Hertfordshire's winter programme of field meetings for posting on the 'Meetings' section of website. She wondered why other organisations were not doing the same. David said others, including RSPB local groups sometimes sent annual programmes, but he had not received any post-Covid. He posted details of indoor and field meetings provide they related to Hertfordshire wildlife.

**Next meeting: 7.30pm Tuesday 13 February 2024 at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans AL1 4AL (and online by request)**

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.  
30 November 2023