

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/69M

69th Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 12 July 2022 at 19.30 via internet conferencing

Present: Agneta Burton, Ian Carle, Judy England, Rupert Evershed, Jack Fearnside, Dan Fletcher (Treasurer), Chris James, Martin Ketcher, Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary) and Alex Waechter

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Chantal Helm, Tim Hill and Ronni Edmonds-Brown. Dan was thanked for hosting the online meeting on Zoom.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 May 2022 were approved with one wording amendment proposed by Alex to the summary of her HERC report. Matters arising:

- a. Update on protecting Tyttenhanger's Tree Sparrows: Rupert reported there had still been no Tree Sparrows found at the site since two individuals reported in April. It seemed increasingly likely that the birds and colony had gone, but the project would continue monitoring into the winter in case there were returning birds. The Bird Club would consider the scope for reintroductions, although this would probably be judged impracticable. Another possibility for extending the work of the Tree Sparrow Project would be to shift its focus to wintering birds in the north Herts.
- b. Long-service award: David said he had not heard from Rosemary Eaton, Ray Uffen's niece, who was hoping to find a suitable day for presenting him with his certificate.
- c. New online membership scheme: Martin said the new system had gone 'live' shortly after the previous meeting, with Alex as its first, test user. It was generally working smoothly, although some members were still choosing to renew their membership without using it. The only significant problem to arise was the system's identification of 148 members who were late with their renewals as 'expired'. It was not clear why individuals had missed e-mail reminders generated by the new system. It was agreed that they should be sent personal email reminders, outside the new system.

Action: Martin, David

David thought it possible that some members had become used to renewing later in the year, even though the renewal date was officially 1 January. Dan said that the new online payment system using Stripe and PayPal was working well. Martin added that seven new members had been recruited since the last MC meeting.

- d. Winding-up HNHS Trading Ltd.: Dan reported that HNHS Trading Ltd had been successfully wound-up in relation to both HMRC and its Companies House registration.
- e. Updating the online Transactions archive: Ian said the scanning company were willing to honour their quotation from a few months ago for scanning pages currently missing from the archive and also Trevor James's card-index beetle records. David had offered to deliver the material to the scanners in Dunstable, together with remaining issues of the *Transactions* for which there was no electronic, pdf file. Ian planned to OCR-scan the pdfs of more recent issues himself as a "winter job"

Action: David, Ian

David agreed with Agneta that it would be sensible to check how many complete, or near-complete sets of *Transactions* existed, taking account of copies stored at Bayfordbury as well as the set of reports that had been used for the original scanning (currently in the HERC office). David would continue to keep the Society's complete 'reference' set at home, but other sets might be offered to

the Hertfordshire archives, University College London library or the North Herts Museum. It was agreed that this would also be a useful job to carry out in winter.

Action: David

- f. Trustee appointment: David reported that Alex was now an HNHS trustee, formally registered with the Charity Commission.

3. Hertfordshire Naturalist 2022

The committee welcomed news from Judy that Stuart Warrington had agreed to become Editor (in Chief) of the Herts Naturalist when she moves away to Devon later in the year, and that she will continue as part of the editorial team next year. She said there had been good progress with the 2022 issue, with only one article (an obituary) still awaited and space available for a photo feature. She was expecting to hand over all the editorial content to Jack for page design later in the month.

Action: Judy, Jack

4. Updating the HNHS constitution

Peter said it had not proved possible to find a date when the constitution sub-group established at the last meeting could meet. However, he and David had exchanged emails about possible amendments and the resulting suggestions for changes had been circulated to committee members before the meeting. After discussion, it was agreed that the name of the Society (Clause 1) should be amended to 'Hertfordshire Natural History Society' deleting the additional 'and Field Club'. The full name was scarcely used outside correspondence with the Charity Commission. It was also agreed that the objects of the Society should be amended as follows:

- 1) To promote the study, recording and conservation of the flora, fauna, wildlife habitats and geological features of Hertfordshire
- 2) To advance public education in all branches of natural history, including the conservation of wildlife, habitats and geological features for the purpose of environmental protection or improvement.

Rupert noted that the human physical and mental health benefits associated with recording, monitoring and conserving wildlife could also count as charitable objectives. But he thought, on balance, that it would create unnecessary complications to adopt them formally.

Under Clause 7 'Management Committee' it was agreed that the maximum number of trustees (sub-clause 1) should be increased to 12 full members *plus* the three Honorary Officers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) instead of including them. Sub-clause 6, requiring new trustees to sign a declaration of their willingness to act in the Society's minute book, had not been observed for many years following the use of electronic minuting and could safely be deleted.

In discussions on Clause 10 'Meetings and procedures of the Management Committee' there was agreement that a requirement to hold at least three ordinary meetings a year be qualified by the addition of 'normally' (sub-clause 1). It was also suggested that a formal requirement to keep minutes should continue to apply to the Management Committee, but not its sub-groups. This would not prevent the Bird Club Committee and Recorders' Committee from continuing to keep minutes.

Dan and other committee members were content with proposed re-wording of Clause 11 'Receipts and expenditure' to acknowledge the mainstream use of electronic banking and money transfers, including online approvals and counter-approvals. An amendment adopting Charity Commission requirements for the preparation and presentation of the Society's annual accounts was also agreed.

The committee also discussed Clause 4 'Powers' without reaching final agreement. Power (i) enabling fund raising activities but preventing "substantial permanent trading activities" was judged appropriate without

amendment, notwithstanding the Society's book publications and sales. However, power (vi) enabling co-operation with "charities, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities" appeared outdated and in need of amendment to take account of co-operation with private as well as public sector bodies.

It was noted that existing Clause 20 'Alterations to the Constitution' required proposed amendments to the name or objects of the Society to obtain written Charity Commission approval before being put to the membership. Given an intention – agreed since the last MC meeting – to hold the 2022 Annual General Meeting on Saturday 1 October there was insufficient time left to obtain approval for changes from the Commission and then give the membership required notice before the AGM. It was regrettably decided that any final approval of proposed constitutional changes would need to be postponed until the AGM in 2023. However, David strongly advised that the proposed revisions be agreed as soon as possible and submitted to the Charity Commission for approval. It was agreed that David and Peter should confer on wording changes to Clause 4 and bring a further, amended draft of the constitution to the first MC meeting after the October AGM.

Action: Peter, David

5. Reports

- a) Treasurer: Dan said the Society's accounts were in continuing good shape. He was preparing the 2021-22 accounts for MC approval before the AGM on October 1.

6. Recording and monitoring

- a) MARA: In Chantal's absence, David reported that a series of gap analysis maps had been posted on the website showing tetrads where particular species had been recorded previous to the MARA survey but not since it started in 2015. These areas and species would provide a focus for recording effort in the remaining months of the survey.
- b) Invertebrate Group: Ian said the group had been active with online discussion of records and a series of monthly field meetings. It was hoped the national recorder for Harvestmen would hold a training session at the August meeting. If so, he would let David know so the meeting could be promoted via website.

Action: Ian, David

- c) HERC: Alex said the centre's current focus was on delivering data to its agreement holders. Work was being undertaken to update the Herts Species of Conservation Concern list after proposed amendments were suggested by some County Recorders (mainly in the plants, beetles, and damsel/dragonflies). These changes were now 'live' in the database. She was also talking to the London records centre about arrangements for accessing data submitted to the London Natural History Society, whose recording area covers a 20-mile radius from St Paul's Cathedral, including southern areas of Herts. The committee welcomed this development.

7. Meetings and events

- a) Wildlife Walk, Panshanger Park (26 June): David said the HNHS had run a bookstall at this event organised by Hertford Rotary Club in partnership with HMWT and Tarmac plc. Tim and the Bird Club had provided a bird viewing point. Attendance had been somewhat disappointing, although some books had been sold and back numbers of the Herts Naturalist and Herts Bird Report handed out as 'freebies'.
- b) St Albans Wildfest, Verulamium Park (2 July): This event, organized by HMWT and St Albans Council had been better attended and included wildlife walks and story-telling as attractions. There had been a reasonable flow of visitors to the bookstall, although it lacked the obvious pulling power of the Reptile and Amphibian Group next door, who were offering a chance to handle live Grass Snakes and Slow-worms! Agneta agreed that the event had provided useful opportunities for public engagement. David had recently acquired a 'pop-up' gazebo and portable, trestle table that were used at this event and at Panshanger. He had also purchased a 'Square' point-of-sale card reader which had been used to accept card payments.

- c) Autumn Meeting and AGM (1 October): Tim, who was unwell, sent an e-mail confirming that Affinity Water had kindly agreed to host the conference at their Hatfield offices on October 1. This would be the Society's first face-to-face conference since February 2020. Edward Darling had agreed to speak on his Redlist Revival 'Life Map' project encouraging landowners and decision makers to support biodiversity and engage in conservation work. Tim would join Howard Craft, manager of Berkamsted Golf Course, to talk about ways that golf courses can actively contribute to nature recovery. It was agreed that progress needed to be made before the next meeting in obtaining nominations for the Trevor James and 1875 Awards, so a decision could be made in time to order the award crystals. David would invite a resubmission of citations for two promising nominations received in 2021.

Action: David

8. Publications

David said stocks of *Flora, Geology and Landscape* and *Beetles* were very low following a flurry of sales, including the bookstall at recent events. He would check the stockroom at Bayfordbury before talking to Jack about re-printing the *Geology* and *Beetles* books. He had opened discussions with Ian Denholm, Alla Mashanova and Astrid Biddle about the possibility of their writing and publishing an update 'insert' for Trevor James's *Flora*, which was now 13 years old.

Action: David

9. AOB: None

Next meeting: 7.30pm on Tuesday 6 September 2022.

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
17 July 2022