

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/70M

70th Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 6 September 2022 at 19.30 at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans AL1 4AL

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

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Ian Carle, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Judy England, Chantal Helm, Tim Hill and Chris James. David was thanked for hosting the first 'in-person' meeting since the Covid pandemic began.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 July 2022 were approved. Matters arising:

- a) Update on protecting Tyttenhanger's Tree Sparrows: Rupert said there had been no further sightings of Tree Sparrows from the site apart from a possible fly-over in the Redwell Wood Farm area. It was noted that local authorities covering Southwest Hertfordshire had that week jointly issued a draft strategic plan for consultation about planning and environment issues. David agreed to circulate the link in case there was value in HNHS responding.

Action: David

- b) Online membership scheme: Martin said the new system had been showing about 140 'expired' members who had not responded to reminders generated by Member MOJO to renew their subscriptions for 2022. Checks showed about 40 were former members who had not renewed as long ago as 2018 or 2019. A Mailchimp reminder sent by David since the last meeting had brought in some renewals, but it appeared that fewer than half the addressees had opened the message. Martin proposed sending personal emails or letters as necessary to the remainder to ascertain whether they wished to remain members. Peter and Dan noted that the situation was reflected in the 2021-22 accounts (see below) in lower subscription income during the first three months of 2021 compared with the start of 2022. There were indications that the closure of Virgin Money's charity payments scheme in autumn 2021 might be partly responsible. However, some previous standing orders had also stopped. Martin would investigate further.

Action: Martin

- c) Updating the online Transactions archive: David said he had taken additional *Transactions* volumes to the scanning company in July, together with Trevor James's card index beetle records. Ian planned to organise volunteer proof reading of the *Transaction* scans as a 'winter job'

Action: Ian

David had checked the boxes of *Transactions* being kept in the storeroom at Bayfordbury. These dated from 1890. Combined with the set currently held by Alex at HERC following the original scanning operation, it should be possible to assemble at least one more 'complete' set that could be offered to a library or archive.

- d) Trustee appointments: The committee noted with regret that Dan would be moving away to Gloucestershire for family reasons. He intended to resign as Treasurer during the winter but was willing to oversee compilation of the 2022-23 accounts if necessary while a successor was found. Dan was thanked for his hard work in the past two years and his willingness to ease the transition to a new Treasurer. It was agreed that he should seek re-election at the AGM on 1 October. It was also agreed that Stuart Warrington, who would be taking over from Judy as Editor of the Herts Naturalist, should be invited to attend future MC meetings as a co-opted member, although there was currently no vacancy for a trustee.

Action: David

3. Hertfordshire Naturalist 2022

David read a message from Judy reporting that the journal was almost ready for printing following detailed proof-reading by Agneta and David. She thanked them and especially Jack for his design work and production of multiple proofs. There had been more than enough good material to fill the 2022 edition and some articles would appear online before publication in next year's journal. Once work on the current issue was complete Judy planned to hand over to Stuart Warrington. However, she would still be on hand in Devon to answer any questions and review articles if needed (as well as submitting some of her own). Peter warmly thanked Judy and endorsed her thanks to Agneta, David and Jack. It was noted with further gratitude, that Jack was providing professional expertise and time that would otherwise cost the Society a considerable amount of money. It was agreed that he should investigate purchasing new layout software with HNHS funds that could save him time with the design and proofing process.

Action: Jack

4. Draft accounts for 2021-22

With thanks to Dan, the committee agreed that the draft accounts, circulated before the meeting, should be submitted to the AGM on 1 October for member approval. In presenting them, Dan highlighted a decline in subscription income, although this was more than covered by a reduction in expenditure on publications and website costs. There had been an exceptional donation for which gift aid still needed to be claimed. The Society's total funds 31 March 2022 stood at just over £52,000. The Society's long-term investment in the M&G Charifund was valued at £55,700.

It was agreed that the Society's strong financial situation meant that no increase in subscriptions would be necessary for 2023. It was also noted that income of £12,043 for 2021-22 was below the Charity Commission's £25,000 threshold above which accounts needed to be independently inspected. Conducting its annual review of reserves, the committee agreed that the sums held continued to align with the Society's formal policy.

5. Autumn Meeting, AGM and annual awards

David confirmed that the draft accounts would be sent – in summary – to all members, together with the calling notice for the AGM and details of the Autumn Meeting on 1 October. Members who had provided email addresses would be contacted using Mailchimp with links to download the papers; personal letters with the printed papers would be sent to a small number who did not use email.

Action: David

In response to a written request from Tim for volunteers to help on the day, Peter, Dan, Agneta, Rupert and David offered to be at Affinity Water in Hatfield for a 12.30pm set-up. Rupert would contact members of the Bird Club committee to see if they could provide additional help. It was agreed that David should buy a second point of sale reader so the entry fee of £5 could be collected as a card payment as well as raffle ticket and book sales. He would also provide name badges for committee members and the speakers. It was thought unlikely that Affinity Water would be able to provide and serve tea and cakes on this return to their conference facilities, but Tim would advise if food, tea, coffee and (re-cyclable) cups needed to be brought. Committee member agreed to consider donating raffle prizes. Rupert thought it likely that an unclaimed Bird Club competition prize of a bird box with in-built camera could be offered. David hoped that the timetable for printing the Herts Naturalist would allow copies to be distributed at the meeting, saving some of the usual postage costs. A tick list of subscribing members would be needed. It was further noted that the facilities did not currently exist to offer the Autumn Meeting as a 'hybrid' with an online feed for those unable to attend in person.

Actions: David, Rupert, Martin, All

It was agreed that the 2022 Trevor James Award for an outstanding Hertfordshire naturalist should go to Dr Jenny Jones for her work on mammals and that the 1875 Award for an outstanding contribution to natural history in Hertfordshire should go to Brenda Harold for her work teaching advanced plant identification skills, that included her nationally-recognised Identiplant training programme. David would contact them to confirm their acceptance and availability to attend the Autumn Meeting. He would check name spellings for the award crystals for forwarding to Tim and Jack.

Action: David

6. Reports

Membership: Martin said two new members had joined since the previous meeting.

7. Recording and monitoring

HERC: Alex reported that the Identiplant training scheme – devised by Brenda Harold, this year's 1875 Award winner – had been adopted by BSBI following a decision by the Field Studies Council to stop administering it. HMWT had agreed to provide the Eastern regional hub for the scheme. Recent work entering data had increased the number of records held by HERC to 3,208. She expected this would increase once 606,000 Hertfordshire records shared by the London Natural History Society via Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) had been reviewed. These were, however, likely to duplicate some existing records, especially for birds.

8. Meetings and events

David reported Tim's view that reverting to November for the Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture (organised with Welwyn Natural History Society) might come too soon after the last lecture, which was given online by Haydon Bailey in March. It was agreed that a date in February next year would work better provided it was not too close to the annual Bird Conference. A diary check suggested that Saturday 18 March 2023 might be a suitable date for the Bird Conference.

Action: Tim

8. Publications

David said stocks of *Flora* and *Moths* were down to one book of each. A stockroom check at Bayfordbury had found 12 copies of *Geology* which might be enough to last a year. There were 258 remaining copies of *Birds* in the store cupboard and 147 copies of *Butterflies*.

9. AOB: David reported conversations with Ian Denholm about the possibility of holding a Trevor James Memorial Symposium in the early autumn of 2023. It was agreed that the suggestion should be considered in more detail at a future meeting when Chris and Tim were present..

Next meeting: 7.30pm on Tuesday 15 November 2022.

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
13 September 2022