

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/71M

71st Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 15 November 2022 at 19.30 at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans AL1 4AL and online

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

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Ian Carle, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Chantal Helm and Stuart Warrington.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 September 2022 were approved with one spelling correction.
Matters arising:

- a) Online membership scheme: Martin reported that the new arrangements were running well. Some members were still renewing or rejoining the Society using the old, paper methods. He noted that the Bird Club website membership links had not yet been updated to the new system. Rupert said he would remind Tom Speller to do this.

Action: Rupert

- b) Updating the online Transactions archive: David said scanning of the missing parts had been completed, including the most recent volumes for which there was no pdf version. The next stage would be proof reading before they were added to the archive. Card index beetle records created by the late Trevor James had also now been scanned.

- c) Trustee appointments: No candidate to replace Dan as Treasurer had yet been found, despite an appeal in the newsletter circulated in early October with the 2022 *Herts Naturalist*. A name was suggested and it was agreed that Rupert and Dan would approach the person concerned. Dan was thanked for his continuing goodwill in remaining Treasurer although his move to Gloucestershire was imminent.

Action: Rupert, Dan

3. Revisions to the HNHS constitution

Peter introduced a revised version of the draft constitution discussed at the July committee meeting. This dealt with items there had not been enough time to consider fully as well as incorporating the changes that had been agreed. In discussion of this latest draft, the following changes were agreed:

- Clause 3 Objects*, subsection 2: delete “for the purpose of environmental protection or improvement”
- Clause 4 Powers*, sub-clause vi: insert “and private” to list of bodies with which HNHS may co-operate and add “as permitted by law” at the end (making it clear that information exchanges will observe restrictions on personal data sharing etc.)
- Clause 5, Membership* subsection 1, sub-clause i: replace “body corporate” with “corporate body”
Subsection 4: to read “Any corporate body or member organization may appoint...”
Subsection 6: revise existing wording to read: “The Management Committee may, by a majority and for a good reason, terminate the membership of any individual, corporate or membership organisation provided that the individual concerned, or the appointed representative of the member organisation concerned shall have the right to be heard by the Management Committee, accompanied by a friend, before a final decision is made.”
- Clause 7 Management Committee*, subsection 1: to read “The Management Committee (the Trustees) shall consist of no more than 15 full members, including the honorary officers specified in Clause 6.

The committee accepted Peter's view that subsection 3, allowing the MC to appoint of up to three non-voting co-opted members implied that any co-opted members who were subsequently elected at the AGM would necessarily become trustees.

- *Clause 8 Determination of membership of the Management Committee*, current subsection 3 to be deleted.

Current subsection 4: "...but only if three members of the Management Committee will remain in office when the notice of resignation is to take effect" to be deleted.

- *Clause 9 Management Committee members not to be personally interested*. Replace title with: *Conflicts of Interest*.

New subsection 1: it was agreed that sentences (to be adapted from the constitutions of other charities) should be added reflecting the committee view that trustees be required to declare a pecuniary interest in any agenda item or proposal and take no part in any subsequent discussion or decision. It was agreed, in this context, that the current bar on remuneration of trustees was too restrictive and that it was permissible in limited circumstances allowed by the Charity Commission to compensate a trustee for their work as well as personal expenses incurred. Dan, from an online search, suggested wording to the effect that trustees should:

- declare the nature and extent of any interest, direct or indirect, in a proposed transaction or arrangement with the Society or in any transaction or arrangement entered into by the Society which has not previously been declared; and*
- absent themselves from any discussions of the charity trustees in which it is possible that a conflict of interest will arise between his or her duty to act solely in the interests of the Society and any personal interest (including but not limited to any financial interest).*

It was agreed that David and Peter should consider the suggested wording for adaptation as necessary.

Action: David, Peter

- *Clause 10 Meetings and procedures of the Management Committee*, current subsection 6: delete reference to a need for sub-committees to keep minutes.

Subsection 8: final sentence to read: "All such sub-committees shall have at least one representative from the Management Committee."

- *Clause 11, Receipts and expenditure*, subsection 2 to read: "Payments drawn on the accounts must be authorised by at least two members of the Management committee who have been previously authorised to do so by the Treasurer with the agreement of the Management Committee and recorded as such in the minutes."

- *Clause 16, Annual General Meeting*, subsection 1 to read: "There shall be an annual general meeting of the Charity which shall be held in sufficient time to enable the returns required under clauses 13 and 14 to be sent to the Charity Commission."

Subsection 4 to read: "...accounts of the Charity for the preceding year, in accord with the requirements of the Charity Commission."

- *Clause 18 Procedure at General Meetings*, subsection 2: new wording agreed to allow for online and 'hybrid' meetings as well as in-person agreed.

- *Clause 19 Notices*, changes agreed to allow electronic communication (where an e-mail address has been supplied by a member).

It was agreed that Peter and David should provide a proposed final draft of the constitution reflecting the decisions taken. The committee's preference for taking the proposals forward to the Charity Commission and the 2023 AGM was to present them as a revised constitution. This seemed appropriate given the scope and extent of the changes proposed. However, David would investigate whether this would create greater procedural complications than submitting the changes as constitutional amendments.

Action: David, Peter

4. Reports

Chair: Peter, with thanks to all involved, welcomed the publication and distribution of the *Herts Naturalist 2022* and the *Herts Bird Report 2021*. He also looked back to successful Autumn Meeting and AGM, meeting ‘face-to-face’ for the first time since Covid restrictions were lifted.

Treasurer: Dan said the Society’s financial position remained strong, although turbulence in the stock market would affect the valuation of its investments through M&G Charities Fund. He hoped he would be leaving things in good shape when he ceased being Treasurer.

Membership: Martin said total membership was around 500. Four new members had joined since the previous meeting. A few members did not use email and were not, therefore, receiving the subscription reminders generated by MemberMOJO.

Secretary: David said he had submitted the annual Charity Commission return following the AGM. He had presented Brenda Harold with her 1875 Award for an outstanding contribution to Hertfordshire natural history after she had recovered from the Covid that prevented her attending the Autumn Meeting. He had responded to renewed concern over Avian Flu by including advice for wildlife watchers in the newsletter circulated with the 2021 Bird Report.

5. Recording and monitoring

Recorders Committee: In Ronni’s absence, Alex and Chris reported that Dave Willis had taken over as Herts amphibian and reptile recorder and been replaced as spider recorder by David Carr. Dan Asaw, one of the county’s beetles specialists, was moving away to Kent, but with hopes that he would continue to help with field activities and records verification. Peter said the Society could assist with travel expenses if it made it easier for Dan Asaw to participate in Herts fieldwork. Agneta said there was a view, shared by Stuart Warrington that no one, following Trevor’s death, could reasonably be expected to cover the whole of beetle recording and that it needed to be sub-divided among smaller groups.

HERC: Alex said recent data imports – especially amphibian and reptile records from iRecord – had increased the total number of HERC records held by to 3.22 million. She was pleased that Natural England had requested help mapping Great Crested Newt populations for the first time in three years. She was continuing to work with GiGL, the records centre for Greater London, on securing access to London Natural History Society records collected in Hertfordshire. Progress was slow but hopeful. Work also continued on an ancient woodlands inventory, with priority given to those that were potentially vulnerable to development proposals. Data Officer Ellie Smith was co-leading the Mammal Society’s latest Harvest Mouse survey.

6. Meetings and events

- Reflections on the Autumn Meeting and AGM (1 October 2022): Tim said 45 people had attended the event at Affinity Water’s offices in Hatfield –the same attendance as the previous AGM held online. Arrangements had changed somewhat since before the Covid lockdown, so the Society had to provide its own refreshments. The keynote presentations on managing golf courses for wildlife and on encouraging farmers and other landholders to do the same had proved a good mix. Alister Leggatt of Affinity Water thought that it should be possible to facilitate ‘hybrid’ online coverage of future conferences.
- Gerald Salisbury Lecture, Welwyn Civic Centre, Wednesday 22 February 2023: Prof Brian Legg and members of the Heartwood Monitoring Group had agreed to talk about the results from 13 years of wildlife monitoring at the ‘new’ forest outside St Albans.
- Bird Club – BTO conference: Subject to confirmation from Affinity the conference would take place at Hatfield on Saturday 25 March 2023.
- Trevor James Memorial Symposium (Autumn 2023): David said the county plant recorders, Ian Denholm, Alla Mashanova and Astrid Biddle, remained keen to contribute to an event in Trevor’s memory. It had been suggested this might mix presentations on plants, beetles, birds and wildlife recording with personal reminiscences concerning Trevor. An additional possibility would be a field day. The Bayfordbury conference centre, which had housed the geology symposium in memory of John Catt, was no longer available. Chris agreed that an event ought to have a strong ‘insect’ component but also reflect Trevor’s all-round strengths as a natural historian and educator. Tim suggested that an outdoor-indoor event might be possible, using the stable blocks in Panshanger Park as a base for guided walks.

He wondered if the botanists might be persuaded to agree to a summer rather than autumn event. It was agreed that David, Tim and Chris should liaise with Ian, Alla and Astrid to produce a more detailed proposal.

Action: David, Tim, Chris

7 Publications

Jack said that although the latest *Transactions* had been well-received, he was concerned about a lack of consistency in the way graphs and charts were supplied for reproduction. He suggested the editorial guidelines for authors should be expanded to include advice on what was needed. Alex said she would be willing to help authors to compile graphs in the preferred formats. David suggested that the guidelines be sent pro-actively to all potential contributors, rather than just making them available on the website. It was agreed that David and Jack should talk to Stuart and Clifford Smout about this.

Action: David, Jack

8. **AOB** David said Graham Knight had recently forwarded the link to a Parliamentary petition urging legislation to make it compulsory for new buildings to include a Swift box. He was asking whether the Bird Club and HNHS websites would publicise the petition. Committee members thought it was more appropriately a matter for HMWT and Matt Dodds, Planning and Diversity Officer[], who was working to increase the number of Swift boxes in Herts through agreements with local authorities.

Next meeting: 7.30pm on Tuesday 7 February 2023.

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
21 November 2022