

# HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/74M

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

Tuesday 18 July 2023 at 19.30 at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans AL1 4AL and online

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

### 1. Apologies and welcome: Ian Carle, Jack Fearnside, Chantal Helm, Alex Waechter

Peter welcomed Chris Ruis to the meeting and thanked him for agreeing to take over from Dan Fletcher as Treasurer

Committee members were delighted to learn that Alex had recently given birth to a baby boy, Edward, and sent their congratulations.

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 May 2023 were approved. Matters arising:

a) Hertfordshire Naturalist: Stuart said all the articles for this year's issue had now been received and were ready to be sent to Jack for design and layout. The contents include five recorders' reports, a major update on Hertfordshire spider records, two geology articles and a report on the Herts Ancient Woodland Inventory project. He expected the length to be between 70 and 84 printed pages. He hoped in future that recorders could be encouraged to write accounts of particular Herts. species and habitats as well as reporting on records. He wanted to make the guidance for contributors more approachable.

b) 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary: Peter confirmed the intention to publish a medium and long-term strategy for the Society to coincide with the anniversary in 2025. The Trevor James Memorial Conference on 9 September would provide a first opportunity to talk to members about questions raised in his scoping document brought to the last meeting.

Martin said the Bird Club committee had raised the possibility of obtaining better demographic information about members to inform strategic planning. In discussion, it was agreed that voluntary questions about age-group and gender could usefully be added to the existing membership form. It would be worth investigating whether questions about areas of wildlife interest included on the non-electronic membership application form could be added to the online MemberMOJO forms.

*Action: Martin*

Committee members also agreed that it would be sensible to conduct an anonymised membership survey before the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary to obtain views on the Society's existing activities and its future role. Peter offered to assemble initial thoughts on subject areas and questions.

*Action: Peter*

David was asked to circulate reports received from Google Analytics about HNHS website use as these might provide useful, strategic insights.

*Action: David*

c) Peter's forthcoming nomination as HMWT Chair: No one on the committee had raised any concern about Peter being nominated since the last meeting.

### 3. Draft constitutional amendments to be submitted to the AGM for approval

The committee thanked David for circulating constitutional amendment proposals for the AGM on 7 October implementing the changes previously agreed by the trustees and approved by the Charity Commission. It was agreed he should draft an accompanying commentary, explaining their purpose, and that the resulting document be circulated to the membership and published on the website as soon as possible (well in advance of the minimum notice period for AGM proposals). 'Hard' copies would be mailed to around 25 members who do not have email addresses.

*Action: David*

#### **4. Potential re-introductions / introductions to the River Chess catchment area**

Tim said he was representing HMWT on a support group for the River Chess Smarter River Catchment Plan. The project to find better ways of caring for the chalk stream and its ecology is led by the Chilterns Conservation Board with financial support over five years to 2025 from Thames Water. The Trust was seeking funding from Thames Water for new post to lead on wildlife corridor enhancement, including potential wildlife re-introductions or introductions. Species suggested included European Beaver and the Marsh Fritillary butterfly. Slender-tufted Sedge, whose only current location in Herts. is at Braughing, was another possibility. HMWT would be applying its own, robust assessment criteria to the final list of proposed species. In discussion, Tim agreed to send Ronni more information, including a weblink to the catchment improvement plan, so the issue of species introductions could be discussed by the Records' Committee.

*Action Tim, Ronni*

Tim said an application would be made for a similar approach to be applied in the Lee / Colne catchment area if a further round of funding was made available.

#### **5. Reports**

Chair: Peter noted the need to confirm management committee nominations before the AGM on October 7. The only known change to date would be to nominate Chris R as Treasurer in place of Dan Fletcher.

Treasurer: Chris R. said that Dan was preparing the 2022-23 accounts. These would be circulated to the committee as soon as available for approval before being sent to members and presented to the AGM. He would be responsible for 2023-4.

Secretary: David said that on 23 May he and Ronni had visited Ray Uffen, former Hymenoptera recorder, in his care home at Knebworth to present his HNHS Long Service certificate. Ray's nieces, who were also present, had arranged the visit, which had been delayed for three years by the Covid outbreak. Ray has become very frail and unable to speak, but his family appreciated the recognition given to his contribution. It was planned to present a certificate to Peter Delaloye in thanks for his long contribution to the Bird Club at the AGM. Rupert would provide David with a short citation so Jack could prepare the certificate.

*Action: Rupert, David, Jack*

Nominations were needed for this year's HNHS Awards to be presented at the AGM. David would invite members to contribute via an e-newsletter and the website. He would send committee members a confidential list of potential nominees based on previous suggestions.

*Action: David*

Membership Secretary: Martin said almost 50 members had not paid their 2023 subscriptions despite the automatic reminders sent to them since New Year. The MemberMOJO system now listed them as 'expired', so he had sent out personal emails reminding them that their subscriptions were overdue and that only those who were paid-up would receive this year's *Transactions*. It was noted that although it was a nuisance to have to chase payments, the mid-year number of unpaid subs was significantly lower than before MemberMOJO was introduced.

#### **6. Recording and monitoring**

MARA: Chantal had emailed reporting plans to survey bats in North Herts. near Sandon on 22 and 23 July

Invertebrate Group: Ian emailed to report that HIP meetings were going well despite a slow start due to adverse weather. Two new, nationally-scarce spiders for the county had been found at Archers Green and a new nationally-scarce shieldbug near Clothall; also a second county record for a ground bug and a new county record for a weevil. The Clothall site could prove contentious as it has been allocated for housing in the North Herts Local Plan. It also holds botanical interest, including Lizard Orchid. Stuart said further HIP field meetings were planned at King's Mead and Lemsford Springs.

Recorders' Committee: Ronni said Ian had made an excellent presentation on grasshoppers to the most recent meeting. She had also reported to the committee on the Hertfordshire DNA-barcoding Hub at Bayfordbury established by amateur naturalist Adam Hillier with funding from the Darwin Tree of Life Enabling Communities Fund. A summer social event was planned for county recorders.

HERC: Tim said that during Alex's absence on maternity leave, Data Officer Ellie Smith would be willing to attend MC meetings to provide progress reports. HERC's new business manager had started work (part-time). Stuart suggested there could be value for HERC in trawling the HNHS *Transactions* for historic records – such as those for Diptera, that have never been reviewed for one of the Society's atlas projects. After checking through National Trust archives he had been able to forward more than 300 historic records to Alex.

## 6. Meetings and events

- Wildfest 2023, Cassiobury Park, Watford 2 July: Tim said the event, sponsored by Affinity Water, had attracted a few hundred people despite stormy weather. He thanked Peter and local HNHS members Ken Pearman and Steve Carter for their help with the HNHS stall.
- 'Dragonfly Hotspot' day at Panshanger Park, 29 July: The day to celebrate the park's designation as a 'hotspot' by the British Dragonfly Society would include guided walks and a quiz for families. For future outdoor events it would be good to think of offering one or more activities as part of the stall. Chris J said Herts. BNA had previously run a 'wildlife poo identification' quiz at events that was popular with children.
- Trevor James Memorial Symposium, 9 September Redbourn Parish Centre: David said around 40 members and friends had already accepted the emailed invitation to attend. He would send a reminder message with the request for Award nominations (see above).
- Autumn Meeting and 2023 AGM, 7 October, Affinity Water, Hatfield: Tim suggested invited representatives from the Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative to speak about their conservation work. A speaker on the Wilder St Albans partnership might also be of interest. David suggested a speaker on European Beaver reintroductions would be timely.

**Action: Tim**

## 7. Publications

David shared quotations for re-printing Trevor James's *Flora of Hertfordshire* (2009) and *Beetles of Hertfordshire* (2018) obtained by Helen Baker of LTD Design Consultants which he had converted into unit costs. After discussion it was agreed that a further 75 copies of the Beetles book should be printed at an estimated cost of £2,900. These might be sold at a modest profit for £45 a copy plus p&p. although the RRP would be around £60 each.

**Action: David**

David noted that re-printing estimates for *Flora* were somewhat higher (e.g. £3,046 for 75 copies) and that the atlas had been available for 14 years. After talking to Ian Denholm (co-Plant recorder) he had become increasingly convinced it would be better to offer the atlas as a searchable, online pdf in a similar way to the *Transaction* archives. Update flora records and maps could also be published online. Ian Carle – who oversaw the *Transactions* project – thought this would be feasible, but a decision was needed on whether to charge for access. In discussion, committee members favoured making the *Flora* atlas freely available online, although users might be asked for donations to HNHS. David would discuss the practicalities further with Ian and Jack and report back.

**Action: David**

Peter proposed that some copies of the *Beetles* reprint and copies of the Bird and Butterflies atlases should, in time, be presented to local libraries.

Ronni reported that Colin Plant had withdrawn his proposal for an updated *Moths of Hertfordshire* atlas and was now asking for a one-off grant of £5,680 to fund an updated Herts Moth Group website. This would include recent sightings and a page for every recorded species with up-to-date tetrad maps. This would be designed by Norfolk's moth recorder, Jim Wheeler, based on a model developed for his own county and subsequently replicated for moth groups in Cambridgeshire and other counties. The committee was sympathetic to the proposal and agreed that it offered a good, alternative way of maintaining an up-to-date,

online account of Hertfordshire's moth records. However, it lacked background information on how data would be kept safe and secure, how the website would be maintained, whether there would be annual management charges and what would happen if the developer was no longer available. Ronni agreed to obtain answers via Colin which would be circulated before a decision on whether to proceed was made.

*Action: Ronni, David*

#### **8. AOB**

None

**Next meeting (online only): 7.30pm, Tuesday 5 September 2023 to agree award nominations and approve AGM papers.**

**Next full meeting: 7.30pm Tuesday 21 November.**

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.  
3 August 2023