

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/79M

79th Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 250 Sandridge Road, AL1 4AL and online via Zoom conferencing

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

1. **Apologies and committee membership:** Ian Carle, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Rupert Evershed, Chantal Helm, & Alex Waechter

Hanna Grimsdale apologised that she was unable to join the meeting due to a regular Tuesday volunteering commitment. She had asked whether some meetings could be held on a day other than Tuesday. It was agreed to consider this at the end of the meeting. Peter welcomed Stuart back to the committee following illness.

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

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 May 2024 were approved, subject to the use of full names of MC members in the minute concerning bank accounts. Peter explained that Santander would require to see the minutes before agreeing to the agreed mandate changes (or account closure). Matters arising:

- a) Bank accounts: Peter reported that the mandated signatories for the Lloyds Bank accounts had been updated as agreed. Santander planned to give 60 days' notice to members still paying subscriptions to the former Alliance and Leicester account requiring them to re-direct standing orders to a different collection account. This underlined the sense behind the committee's decision in May to close the Santander account and ask members to pay their standing orders into the main, Lloyds account. He was continuing to investigate options and costs for offering direct debit subscription payments, including the possibility of setting-up a charity account with CAF Banking or CAF Donate.
- b) 'Join us' website page: David said he had implemented Rupert's proposal for a simpler page, including a large 'Join us / Renew' button linked to the Society's MemberMOJO home page. This contained full information about membership and subscription rates. Tom Speller had done the same for the Bird Club website.
- c) HNHS Awards 2024: No nominations had yet been received in response to a website request to members. David would circulate a confidential list of possible nominees so decisions could be reached at the next meeting.

3. **Celebrating the 150th anniversary in 2025**

David reported on a recent visit that he, Peter, Agneta and Rupert paid to St Albans Museum where they met the curator, Sarah Keeling, inspected the Keeper's Gallery and discussed aims and ideas for the 150th anniversary exhibition. Discussion followed, based on a paper circulated before the meeting.

It was agreed that main aims for the exhibition should be to:

- Raise awareness of HNHS / Herts Bird Club
- Interest children and young people in wildlife and natural history
- Raise awareness of Hertfordshire's natural history
- Celebrate 150 years of HNHS by looking back to 1875 and looking forward to the future
- Engage HNHS / Bird club members in the celebration and encourage greater participation.

Peter noted that the gallery attracted an average of 1,500 visitors a week, including tourists, with market days (Wednesday and Saturday) and school holidays especially busy. The exhibition period, from March to June, would include the annual St Albans Pilgrimage weekend. Tim said it would be important to evaluate the exhibition's impact against its intended aims. There was some discussion on how this might be done, including a brief electronic survey for visitors at the gallery exit.

David and Peter reported on conversations with Haydon Bailey of the Herts Geological Society and John Pritchard of the Ver Valley Society who were supportive of the suggestion that a 3-D model of the River Ver should be a main feature of the exhibition. This would show the underlying chalk strata and most important wildlife features. In addition to design thoughts, Haydon had suggested sources of funding and sponsorship. Further encouraging offers of help and suggestions had come from Chloé Harmsworth at HERC, who had created artwork and children's colouring sheets for Kate Bretherton's 'Notable Trees' exhibition in the same gallery, and from Hanna at Affinity Water.

David said that one of the chief contributors to the exhibition aims should be wall display illustrating the Society's role. This would show the journey of a wildlife record via verification, collation, and mapping to provide valuable information for conservation and benefit the general public. It was agreed that full use should be made of excellent wildlife photographs captioned with simple, captivating facts. Firm decisions about exhibits would need to be taken in the autumn, but all further ideas and suggestions were currently welcome.

4. Hertfordshire Naturalist 2024

Stuart reported that recorder reports had been received from David Carr (spiders), Ian Carle (orthoptera) and himself (water bugs and water beetles). He was expecting a Flora report from Ian Denholm. The issue would include obituaries for Doug Marriott and Stephen Lings.

Papers had been received from Alla Mashanova, Agneta Burton and Ian Denholm (Flora diversity of Heartwood's ancient woodland), Martin Ketcher (Water Voles in the Lea Valley) and Erika Delbecque and David Utting (the HNHS rare botany books). He and others were still working on a paper about the Beetles of Panshanger Park. Papers promised, but not yet delivered included Adam Hillier on bat diets (based on DNA analysis) Nick Pierrepoint on the Bourne Gutter and Robin Cole on Tewin riverflies. David said the HNHS Annual Report was nearly complete, still awaiting a couple of contributions. Stuart expected to start talking to Jack Fearnside about design and printing during the month ahead.

Action: Stuart, editorial board

5. Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy: update

Tim said progress had been made including a task group report on priority species and habitats, compiled in consultation with County Recorders. Key locations for nature recovery were being mapped and a public consultation was taking place to identify local sites. Gascoyne-Cecil Estates had hosted a workshop for landholders at Hatfield House. Hertfordshire County Council had published an engagement plan for the project on its website and engaged consultants to consider evaluation issues. He continued to be concerned by a lack of earmarked Government funding to carry forward county strategies – due to be completed by March 2025.

6. Reports

Treasurer: In Chris R reported that the Society's finances were in continuing good health. He expected to start work on compiling the financial report for 2023-24 in the next few weeks.

Action: Chris

Secretary: David said he had learned with sadness of the death in March of Steve Lings, the County Recorder for Hymenoptera. He hoped to produce an obituary for the 2024 Herts Naturalist. He reported that Google had recently upgraded their website analytics software. Unfortunately, this could not be used unless the HNHS and Bird Club websites were upgraded to the most recent version of Drupal software. Chris Dee had already indicated that he intended to reduce his workload in retirement and did not wish to be part of the proposal to upgrade and improve the website that the committee was considering for 2026.

Membership Secretary: Martin said four new members had joined since the last meeting. MemberMOJO records currently showed 503 members (including all family members) and 51 members who had yet to pay for 2024 (marked as 'expired'). He expected some of these would renew in the coming months, while others would need to be chased.

Action: Martin

d) Recording and monitoring

Invertebrate Group: Stuart said three monthly field meetings had taken place so far this season, each attracting around 10 people.

6. Meetings and events

- Wildfest 2024, Cassiobury Park, Watford, Saturday 13 July. Tim and David would be running an HNHS stall with help from two local members who had volunteered.
- Autumn Meeting and 2024 AGM. Tim had spoken to Alister Leggatt at Affinity Water to obtain possible dates. It was agreed to propose 16 November (with 23 November as an alternative)
- Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture 2025. It was agreed that Tim should approach Welwyn Natural History Society to propose Wednesday 22 January for the next lecture.
- Herts. Bird Conference 2025 It was agreed that Tim should request use of Affinity Water's conference centre for Saturday 8 March.

It was noted that the Lecture and Bird Conference would both be 150th anniversary events.

Action: Tim

7. Publications

David said stocks of Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape were running low and that a further re-print was needed. It was agreed that he should ask Jack Fearnside to obtain quotes.

Action: David

8. AOB

Requests had been received for help with proposed 'bioblitzes' at Hertford Castle on 9 September and Waterford Marsh on 12 October. Ronni was circulating details to Recorders and David would circulate the details to members.

Action: Ronni, David

Next meeting: 7.30pm Monday 23 September at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans, AL1 4AL and online.

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
9 July 2024