

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/80M

80th Management Committee Meeting

Monday 23 September 2024 at 250 Sandridge Road, AL1 4AL and online via Zoom conferencing

Present: Tim Hill, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Rupert Evershed, Chantal Helm, Alex Waechter, Martin Ketcher, Chris Ruis (Treasurer), Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary) & Stuart Warrington. Hanna Grimsdale also attended

1. Apologies and committee membership: Agneta Burton Ian Carle, & Chris James.

Peter welcomed Alex back to the committee after her maternity leave. Hanna Grimsdale was also welcomed to the meeting. She was thanked for her willingness to join the committee and co-opted as (non-trustee) member.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 July 2024 were approved. Matters arising:

- a) Bank accounts: Peter said around 90 members paying subscription standing orders via the Society's Santander account would have to be asked to make new arrangements from January to pay via the Lloyds account. More immediately, the mandates for administering the Santander and Lloyds accounts needed to be aligned before progress could be made closing the former. Martin, David and Chris would need to become authorised signatories for Santander (in addition to Peter and Tim). All other trustees would have to complete a Santander form providing their name, date of birth, nationalities and contact details. He had brought forms to the meeting for those present to complete and would send the forms to other committee members. He had begun to investigate the possibility of direct debit subscription payments, by setting-up a charity account with CAF Banking or CAF Donate. He had discovered that the HMWT's Treasurer was pursuing the same option and recommended that the Society 'piggy-back' on the Trust's due diligence before reaching a decision.

Action: Peter

- b) Annual accounts 2023-24: Peter was thanked for preparing draft accounts after Chris had come under unanticipated work pressure. The headline number showed a substantial deficit for the period of over £3,000; however once exceptional items were removed, in particular the one-off grant of £5,800 to provide a new website for the Herts and Middlesex Moth Group and a one-off receipt of £1,600 from Letchworth Natural History Society following its decision to close, there was a small surplus on annual running costs of nearly £160. An apparent drop in income from subscriptions of nearly £4,000 compared to the previous year's accounts required further investigation. The Society's cash reserves in March this year were around £57,000 on deposit with a further £51,000 invested in the M&G Charity Fund.

Action: Peter

The draft accounts would be circulated to committee members for their formal endorsement out of committee. If no objections were raised by **6 October**, then the Committee's agreement would be assumed, and the accounts prepared for circulation to members in advance of the AGM. Any questions on the accounts should be sent to Peter copied to the David and Chris R.

Action: All

Peter said his niece, Sophie Tallantire, was looking to volunteer with a charity as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. She had offered to help him maintain the Society's income and expenditure records. This was gratefully accepted, including agreement to give her read-only access to the society's bank accounts.

Action: Peter

During a discussion on subscriptions, concern was raised that increased printing and postage costs for the *Herts Naturalist* and *Herts Bird Report* were edging towards a point where the current rates might cease to be viable. The 150th anniversary exhibition and planned special issue of the *Herts*

Naturalist, together with an immediate need to reprint the Beetles and Geology atlases, would significantly increase expenditure in the next two years. It was, however, agreed that the current level of reserves meant subscription rates for 2025 did not need to increase. It was also agreed, at Martin's suggestion, that the committee discuss a special subscription rate for young people at a meeting in the New Year.

Action: David

3. Celebrating the 150th anniversary in 2025

David highlighted points in a paper he had previously circulated proposing displays and activities for the anniversary exhibition in St Albans Museum, taking place from March to June next year. He had not yet succeeded in contacting the curator, Sarah Keeling, to arrange a meeting, but he anticipated this would take place in October. He would, meanwhile, arrange a meeting of the exhibition sub-group (Peter, Agneta, David, Rupert and Tim, plus others interested) to consider the proposals in more detail. He hoped that Sarah would arrange a timely visit to the museum's storage unit to inspect what remained of its natural history collection (including stuffed birds and mammals).

Action: David

Design questions would need to be resolved with Sarah, including use of the Museum's preferred external designer. However, both Chloé Harmsworth at HMWT and Jack Fearnside had generously offered to contribute their illustration and design skills. In particular, the proposal for a 3-D model illustrating three geological and wildlife sections of the River Ver required design input and action on the funding implications. David thanked Hanna for suggestions on how the model might be realised and for sharing the proposal with colleagues at Affinity Water. Haydon Bailey of the Herts Geological Society had, in parallel, talked to hydrologist contacts at Affinity who had given copyright permission for use of their cross-sectional diagrams of the Ver. Haydon recommended making a funding proposal to the Geologists' Association's Curry Fund whose next approvals round was in December. Tim had, meanwhile, contacted a manager in the Catchment and Biodiversity Team at Affinity who proposed a meeting which he and David would attend.

Action: Tim, David

In discussion, Tim noted that the list of proposals did not include a 'what Herts wildlife might look like in its future' ingredient. David suggested this could be part of a proposed exhibit illustrating 'lost' and 'gained' species, or a separate item based on climate change. It was recommended that Kate Bretherton be contacted to discover if any re-usable items remained from her successful 2022 'Remarkable World of Trees' exhibition.

Action: David

David added that he and Chris J had met curators at the North Hertfordshire Museum in Hitchin to discuss holding a smaller exhibition for six weeks in the autumn next year. This would make use of an area only suitable for photographs and interpretive panels.

4. Hertfordshire Naturalist 2024

Stuart said this year's report was complete apart from a few minor issues. These included the need for an up-to-date list of county recorders. Ronni agreed to provide this.

Action: Ronni

It was agreed that the journal did not need to include a specific notice about copyright, on an understanding that individual authors continued to retain copyright over their own articles. Stuart said he had emailed Jack Fearnside about the final stages of design and printing. David said he had recently spoken to Jack who was under work pressure from another project. Clifford Smout was near to completing the 2023 Herts Bird Report, so it was likely that both journals would soon require Jack's involvement

5. HNHS Awards 2024

It was agreed that the Trevor James Award for an outstanding Herts. naturalist should be made posthumously to Stephen Lings, county recorder for bees, wasps, millipedes, and centipedes, who sadly died from cancer in March, aged 67. He had lived in Redbourn for many years and was a nationally-recognised entomologist and talented wildlife artist. He was also an innovator in the world of energy efficiency, environmentally-sustainable business. David would ask Steve's partner Jane Pickering if she would be willing to receive the award at the Autumn Meeting. It agreed that a decision about the 1875 Award for an outstanding contribution to natural history in Herts should be reached by confidential email circulation once further information had been collected about two worthy nominees.

Action: David

6. Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy: update

Tim said a process to identify 'flagship' and 'bespoke' Hertfordshire species was near completion. The latter category described species that were specific to particular habitats and would not necessarily benefit from generic wildlife management policies. Examples included the European Eels and Swifts. Public consultation events on the strategy across the county had been attended by around 200 people. The strategy had to be published by the end of March. DEFRA were considering national funding from April to take plans forward. The timing was tight as Hertfordshire's 10 local authorities would also need to agree and adopt the strategy. Chris J, who sent apologies to the meeting, reported by email that she attended a consultation event where she had appealed for a review of road verge management to increase connective grassland habitat and improve on existing cutting regimes. She had warned against allowing uncut verges to be overtaken by scrub, so losing their botanical richness.

Reports

7. Membership Secretary: Martin said the Society currently had 444 memberships and 512 individual members. Of these, 80 were 'Bird Report only' and 19 'Herts Naturalist only'. There were 75 family memberships. Ten new members had joined since May.

8. Recording and monitoring

- MARA – Chantal said efforts to fill coverage gaps were continuing as the ten-year survey moved toward its conclusion in December. Some chapters of the atlas were already being drafted. It was hoped to complete a final first draft by the middle of next year. She intended to talk to David and Jack Fearnside about the editing and publication process in January.

Action: Chantal, David

- Herts Invertebrate Project – David read Ian's report noting six HIP meetings this season, with one more planned for October. Two new species had been added to the county list and the continued presence of a number of rarities had been confirmed. Attendance had been similar to previous years.
- Recorder's Committee – Ronni said a short meeting had taken place, focused on information being provided for the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy. Mike Howgate, geology recorder, would give a talk to the spring 2025 meeting.
- HERC – Alex reported that work was focussing on adding 488,000 records to the database, including a major update on moth records from Colin Plant. Since her return from maternity leave, HERC was better resourced than previously with three full-time members of staff. This was creating more time to concentrate on updating species data and collate a new Herts. inventory of ancient woodlands. She expected the number of records held by HERC would soon pass four million.

9. Meetings and events

- Autumn Meeting and 2024 AGM (Saturday 16 November 2024) Tim was thanked for providing a draft programme. The main speakers were Marc Wilcox of Hertfordshire County Council talking about the Nature Recovery Strategy and Andrew Wood to examine butterfly trends during the ten years since the last county-wide survey. Chantal would talk about Barbastelle bats in Hertfordshire and final stages of the MARA survey.

- Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture 2025 (Wednesday 22 January). Tim had invited Adrian Dutton to lecture on his recent survey of saproxylic beetles in Panshanger Park. He had agreed, subject to overnight accommodation being provided, plus travel expenses from near Nottingham. Stuart kindly offered his spare bedroom. It was agreed that Premier Inn hotel room could be booked if necessary.
- Herts Bird Conference 2025 (Saturday 8 March). Affinity Water had kindly agreed to host the conference again. Speakers would include James Heywood of the BTO talking about 30 years of the Breeding Birds Survey and Ken Smith on the long-running study of Green Sandpipers at Lemsford Springs.

Action: Tim

10. Publications

David had spoken to Jack Fearnside about reprinting *Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape* and *Beetles of Hertfordshire* who had agreed to obtain quotes.

Action: David

11. AOB

None

Next meeting: 7.30pm Tuesday 10 December at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans, AL1 4AL and online.

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
29 September 2024