

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/82M

82nd Management Committee Meeting

Monday 3 February 2025, online via Zoom conferencing

Present:, Agneta Burton, Ian Carle, Hanna Grimsdale, Tim Hill, Rupert Evershed, Chris James, Martin Ketcher, Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary) Alex Waechter

1. **Apologies and committee membership:** Apologies were received from Astrid Biddle, Ronni Edmonds-Brown, Chantal Helm, Chris Ruis, and Stuart Warrington.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 December 2024 were approved. Matters arising:

- a) **Bank accounts:** Peter reported that around half the 86 members who formerly paid for their membership by standing order via Santander Bank had so far set up new mandates to pay into the HNHS Lloyds account. This was confirmed by Martin . He had been adjusting the membership expiry dates on MemberMOJO to prevent members who pay by standing order after the beginning of January being bombarded with renewal emails.
- b) **Hertfordshire Naturalist 2024:** Copies had been sent to members just before Christmas. The committee congratulated Stuart on his work as editor. David and his wife Alison were thanked for sending out the Herts Naturalist themselves cancelling the usual packing party because they were unwell.
- c) **New BlueSky Social account:** Nic Wilson had set up an account for HNHS before Christmas. She had so far succeeded in attracting 300 followers with a steady flow of posts featuring HNHS and Bird Club news and events. David as asked to pass on the committee's thanks. BTO and Herts Birding were also now using BlueSky. He noted that Nic had only offered to get the account off the ground. A longer-term arrangement would be needed, preferably with a volunteer who would manage all the Society's social media. Hanna offered to help with social media as an interim step if necessary.

Action: David, Hanna

3. 150th anniversary celebrations

David gave a 'walk-through' description of the exhibits agreed for the 150th anniversary exhibition in St Albans Museum (21 March – 6 July). The schedule of exhibits is attached.

He highlighted continuing discussions with Affinity Water over possible sponsorship for a 3-D model of the River Ver and its chalk strata which would be one of the main exhibits. It was noted that the preferred exhibit designer and model builder, Lee Wood of Ember Designs, needed a clear decision within days if the model was to be built in time for the exhibition. It was agreed that David should have delegated authority to decide how best to proceed after a meeting with Affinity on February 6.

David said work on writing the text panel to introduce the exhibits was almost complete and that University College London's rare book conservator had agreed to eight historic botany books from the HNHS collection being exhibited. Although most photographs for use in the exhibition had been decided, he invited help in filling the last gaps . This included finding an exceptional picture of a Great-crested Newt. Chris James said she has access to a large collection of photos that Trevor had taken and would be willing to look for particular items.

Action: David, Chris

David asked for help from committee members and county recorders in writing longer accounts for the website of some of the habitats and species being featured in the exhibition. These would be linked to QR codes beside the exhibits.

Action: All, Recorders' Committee

A private view for the exhibition would take place in the Assembly Rooms at the Museum on the evening of Thursday 20 March. To save on catering costs, HNHS would provide wine, soft drinks and glasses. The Society had a guest allocation of 80 and St Albans Council would invite another 40. It was agreed that David would prepare a 'priority' list to include MC members and photographers contributing to the exhibition. HNHS members would be invited to apply to for the remaining places on a first-come, first-served basis. St Albans Council would require a list of names so they could be sent formal invitations.

Action: David, Tim

There would be a further opportunity to involve members at a lecture on Wednesday 14 May that David had agreed to give at the Museum on HNHS history – more specifically a comparison between the Victorian Society and current day activities.

Roger Havard (bats), Dave Willis (reptiles), Graham White (animal poo) had agreed in principle to provide wildlife demonstrations and activities for children and families on 17 April during the Easter holidays. Agneta was thanked for offering to facilitate a session using basic microscopes and lenses to examine mosses liverworts and lichens. Tim said Chris Benton might be willing to bring along spiders and talk about them.

St Albans Council staff had asked in principle whether HNHS could contribute activities for families as part of a Spring Festival being planned for Saturday 18 May in the centre of town. David asked for the committee's help in organising any involvement. He suggested that the society might work in partnership with HMWT who had more experience of organising child-friendly activities.

Action: David, Tim, Peter, All

David thanked Rupert, Agneta, Tim and Peter for their help and support in organising the exhibition. It was agreed that an 'open' meeting of the planning sub-group should take place at the start of March, before the exhibition was installed, to which other MC members would be invited.

Action David

4. Hertfordshire Naturalist 2025

Stuart, who was on leave overseas, was thanked for providing notes on possible content for the 150th anniversary issue (annexed). It was agreed that further discussion should take place at the next meeting on 15 April. Agneta and David proposed that the editorial board should meet soon after Stuart's return as articles would need to be commissioned before Easter (20 April).

Action: Stuart, Agneta, David

5. Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy: update

Tim said a first draft of the strategy had been published in January and HMWT had made comments. Final publication has been postponed until June. Various engagement activities on a revised draft were planned for the end of March. There were continuing concerns about whether plan implementation would be adequately funded by central government.

Reports

6. Chair / Treasurer: Peter reported that Chris Ruis had resigned as Treasurer because increased work commitments meant he could no longer give the role enough time. Chris was thanked for his contribution. Peter's proposal to prepare the 2024-25 accounts and manage the finances until a new Treasurer could be recruited was gratefully agreed.

It was agreed that the Chris Ruis be removed as a signatory to the Society's accounts with Lloyds Bank plc. It was also agreed that Martin Ketcher and Rupert Evershed be added as full signatories able to set-up and counter-approve payments online.

Peter reported that the Society's finances remained healthy.

Membership Secretary: Martin said the period around New Year had been busy as subscriptions became due. It was encouraging that in addition to renewals another 21 new members had joined since the last meeting, a majority of whom were women. A few members had asked to pay their subscriptions for

more than one year at a time. This could be accommodated by varying the expiry date on MemberMOJO. Peter suggested the committee might consider introducing a new 'life membership' rate.

Secretary: David said that he, Peter, Ronni and Tim had attended the funeral of Ray Uffen on 8 January. Representatives of HMWT and Welwyn NHS were also present. He reminded members that nominations for the 2025 HNHS Awards were needed.

Action: all

7. Recording and monitoring

- Herts Invertebrate Project – Ian said planning for the 2025 field programme was about to begin. Two members of the group – Gail Ashton and Rory Dimond - were among the co-authors of a new, national photo guide to true flies (diptera) being published in the autumn.
- HERC – Alex said the database now contained more than 3.5 million records including recently added data from iRecord. Batches of records from Roy Woodward (dragonflies) and Colin Plant (moths) were currently being added. HERC had carried out further work for the Nature Recovery Strategy and the Ancient Woodland inventory project. She had been using artificial intelligence to analyse topics listed in indexes to the HNHS Transactions.

8. Meetings and events

- Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture 2025 (Wednesday 22 January). Adrian Dutton had provided a memorable lecture on the nationally important population of saproxylic beetles in Panshanger Park. Around 50 people had attended. Tim invited ideas for next year's lecture. Chris suggested a talk linked to the new photo guide to diptera (see above). Stuart was thanked for providing Adrian with overnight accommodation.

Action: all

- Herts Bird Conference 2025 (Saturday 8 March). The programme, to take place at Affinity's Hatfield offices, would include a panel forum.
- HNHS 150th anniversary exhibition private view (Friday 20 March) See item 3 above.
- HNHS 150th anniversary Autumn Meeting and AGM. Tim proposed the theme should be 'nature through nurture'. He recommended that Nicholas Buxton, who would become High Sherriff of Hertfordshire in May, be made guest of honour and invited to speak. He was owner of the Easneye estate which was being managed sympathetically for wildlife.

9. Publications

David said new copies of *Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape* and *Beetles of Hertfordshire* had arrived. He had changed the website to show they were back in stock. Prices had increased to reflect increased printing costs.

10. AOB

None

Next meeting: 7.30pm Tuesday 15 April (online only)

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
6 February 2025