

HERTFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

HNHS/84M

84th Management Committee Meeting

Monday 14 July 2025 at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans and online via Zoom conferencing

Present:, Astrid Biddle, Agneta Burton, Ian Carle, Hanna Grimsdale, Tim Hill, Chris James, Martin Ketcher, Peter Tallantire (Chair), David Utting (Secretary) and Stuart Warrington and Alex Waechter

Apologies: Apologies were received from Rupert Evershed

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 April 2025 were approved. Matters arising:

- a) Bank accounts: Peter said the Society's Santander account remained frozen pending a new mandate for signatories that would allow him to close the account altogether. This could not be submitted until a replacement HNHS treasurer had been found for Chris Ruis. Santander had delayed applying the freeze for long enough to allow a transfer of almost all the balance into the Society's Lloyds accounts, so the financial impact was negligible. Most of the money had subsequently been transferred into a 95-day notice savings account at Lloyds to maximise the interest gained.
- b) Treasurer vacancy: No replacement had yet been found, but Peter would approach an individual whose name he suggested. He would, meanwhile, prepare the accounts for 2024-25.

Action: Peter

3. 150th anniversary celebrations

- a) Exhibition: The exhibition at St Albans Museum, which ran for 15 weeks, ended on July 6. Peter had been told by museum staff that it attracted more than 17,000 visits. He congratulated David and everyone who contributed on its success.

David said he was pleased that the exhibition had met almost all the objectives set for it, including recruiting new members. He was especially pleased by the balance achieved across the two galleries between historic, present-day and forward-looking exhibits, and between scientific natural history content and activities for children and families. The only mild disappointment was that only two HNHS atlases had been sold in the museum shop. He attributed this to the museum's pricing policy and a lack of active promotion. His history lecture in May had been well-received. It took place in the old courtroom at the museum with a live audience of 30 and another ten online. Exhibits were currently being returned to donors or placed in storage. He thanked Peter for storing the featured model of the River Ver and underlying chalk strata. A decision was awaited from Affinity Water (the sponsors) on displaying it in the reception area at their headquarters in Hatfield. Hanna offered to check progress with her work colleagues.

Some photographs and a few other exhibits, would be included in the much smaller exhibition at North Hertfordshire Museum in Hitchin in December and January. St Albans Museum had kindly loaned the children's animal dressing-up costumes that volunteers had made for the exhibition.

Action: David

b) Hertfordshire Naturalist 2025: Hertfordshire Naturalist 2025: Stuart said he had emailed many members and asked for contributions about special sites, species and other County natural history highlights. A range of articles had been promised by the end of July including:

- Recording: 'heat maps' showing the distribution of species and total records per grid square across the County (Alex Waechter).
- Historic wildlife sites, notably the 'Rothschild' reserves at Aldbury Nowers and Bricket Wood Common. (SW)
- Ancient woodlands in the county (AW, SW) (e.g. Broxbourne Woods, Balls Wood, Hoddesdon Park Wood)
- The story of the HMWT Amwell Nature Reserve (Herts Bird Club, Rupert).

- The fossils of Scott's Grotto in Ware (the most extensive shell grotto in the UK) (Michael Howgate)
- Panshanger Park – Hertfordshire's most species-rich site (SW to draft).

Stuart also intended to contribute a section on traditional approaches to wildlife recording with contrasting sections on the developing use artificial intelligence and DNA barcoding in identifying species. Fellow county recorders were contributing short articles on some species or discoveries. Writers whose work had been received so far were: Andrew Wood (butterflies), Jenny Jones (mammals), Ronni Edmonds-Brown (caddisflies), David Carr (spiders), Phil Attewell (ants), Alan Outen (fungi) and Agneta Burton (bryophytes).

The main contribution to date was David's 8,000-word article on HNHS history, comparing the Society's Victorian founders and their methods with modern-day wildlife recording. The 150th anniversary issue would also include the annual report for 2024-25 and an obituary of Raymond Uffen.

Stuart was thanked for his work. In discussion, it was suggested he should contact Tom Gladwin about the possibility of publishing excerpts from his memoirs. Tom had read two short sections for a 'listening post' in the St Albans exhibition.

Action: Stuart

4. 2025 HNHS Awards

Discussion took place on possible nominees whose names had been suggested by committee members since the last meeting. Peter reminded everyone of the criteria for the two awards, as they appear on the website. It was agreed that further biographical information should be gathered by Agneta. Chris and Tim on a selection of potential nominees and presented at the next meeting in September. Tim agreed to co-ordinate the process and consult Linda and Ken Smith to make sure significant contributors to Herts natural history had not been unintentionally overlooked. David would contact the wider membership via the website and an e-newsletter seeking nominations.

Action: Tim / David

5. Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy: update

Tim reported that a draft strategy was about to be circulated by the county council for consultation with a view to publication in late September. Alex urged committee members to read it carefully as she believed there was scope for further improvement. The closing date for submissions was 8 September.

Action: All

6. HNHS policy updates

It was agreed to defer this item until the next meeting. David said he would investigate the need for HNHS maintaining an overall 'risk reduction' policy.

Action: David

Reports

Chair / Treasurer: Peter said current funds totalled around £100,000, with £45,000 held in cash. This figure would fall during the autumn after paying publication costs for the 2025 *Transactions* – including design services. Allowing for the exhibition costs and recent re-print of *Beetles of Hertfordshire* and *Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape*, funds held at the end of 2024-25 financial year could be up to £12,000 lower than the previous year. While it was likely routine operating expenditure would significantly exceed subscription income this financial year, he did not recommend any increase in subscriptions for next year. There was no immediate need and there was a risk of alienating long-standing members who had recently transferred their standing orders to Lloyds through a further change.

Membership Secretary: Martin said 11 new members had been recruited since the last meeting. There were currently 438 active memberships and a total of 517 members, including family members. There were also 66 'expired' members who had not yet paid their 2025 subscriptions. It was agreed that David would send out a general reminder with the planned email seeking award nominations.

Action: David

7. Recording and monitoring

Herts Invertebrate Project – Ian said the group’s programme of field meetings was going well, although attendance levels remained much the same. Discoveries had included a ‘new to Herts’ spider and a number of nationally-scarce species. David, as agreed at the previous meeting, had publicised some of these on the HNHS website with social media links.

HERC – Alex reported that a new Ancient Woodlands inventory for Hertfordshire had been submitted to Natural England. It proposed a significant increase in the designated area, including many pockets of woodland that had not been recognized on previous maps. The number of records in the HERC database now stood at 3.69 million. Work adding a backlog of records submitted to iRecord had been completed. HERC was also working on ideas for making records collated from wildlife site surveys more ‘digital’ and straightforward to process.

8. Meetings and events

- Environment Day at All Saints Church, Hertford (13 September): David said that following last year’s worthwhile event, he would provide an HNHS stall.
- 150th anniversary Autumn Meeting and AGM (18 November). Tim confirmed that Nicholas Buxton, the new High Sherriff of Hertfordshire, would attend as guest of honour and present this year’s awards. He had been asked to talk about chalk stream and land restoration work on his Easenye estate in East Hertfordshire. Roy Woodward would be providing an update on the dragonfly survey and Tim would invite Tom Gladwin to read excerpts from his recently completed memoirs. It was suggested that this might be presented in an interview/conversation format. Peter asked committee members to confirm if they were willing to continue in their current roles in 2025-26 so this could be included in the AGM papers. David said he would contact those not present. Peter would lead the search for a new Treasurer.
- Gerald Salisbury Memorial Lecture (Thursday 22 January 2026). Tim reported that Ian Denholm had agreed to speak on ‘The Wild Orchids of Hertfordshire’. He was seeking confirmation from Welwyn Natural History Society that the hall in Welwyn Civic Centre had been booked.

David had received an invitation from the Herts branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) to provide an HNHS stall at their AGM and Countryside Day at Knebworth House on 11 October. It was agreed this would not be possible. Peter reported the possibility, raised by John Howie, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant responsible for environment issues, that HNHS might take a stall to the 2026 Hertfordshire Show over the May Bank Holiday. Committee members thought the three-day commitment might prove difficult,

Action: David / Peter

9. Publications

David reported that Swallowtail of Norwich, the company used to print the HNHS *Transactions*, had recently gone into liquidation. The committee considered estimates obtained by Helen Baker from three alternative printers and accepted a quotation from A.E. Simmons Ltd. of Chelmsford.

10. AOB

None

Next meeting: 7.30pm Monday 8 September at 250 Sandridge Road, St Albans and online

David Utting, HNHS Secretary.
19 July 2025