

MINUTES OF LINCOLNSHIRE BIRD CLUB COMMITTEE,
HEMINGBY, JUL 24, 2018

ATTENDANCE

Phil Espin (chairman): Mike Harrison, Bill Sterling, John Clarkson, Jim Wright.

APOLOGIES

John Watt, Andrew Chick and Phil Hyde, plus Ian Macalpine-Leny who has resigned from the committee.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 18 MEETING

These were approved and signed as a true record by PE

MATTERS ARISING

PE reported with regret that Ian Macalpine-Leny had resigned from the committee for health reasons.. He thanked Ian for his valuable contributions while a committee member. Similar sentiments were sounded by other members who hoped he would soon be restored to health. Ian was the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union delegate to the LBC committee, and LNU have said they will nominate a new person in due course.

PE noted that Colin Casey, who has been providing the club with IT support had resigned prior to the meeting but having spoken with PE today he had agreed to continue until suitable replacements can be found.

In response to a question from JW_r, MH confirmed that car stickers were being incorporated into the packs supplied to joining members. As yet, there has been no progress on a possible re-design of the car sticker.

UPDATE ON BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

PE reported that the club's bank, HSBC at Boston, had misinterpreted a request to **add** AC and JW_r as nominated cheque signatories. The bank had construed this as a request to **replace** existing signatories PE and JW_a. As a result a cheque (to Cupit for printing the 2016 bird report), signed by PE and JW_a, had bounced. Pending resolution of the issue, a new cheque (signed by AC and JW_r) had been paid and cleared. It is understood that, while not accepting responsibility, the bank has waived any charge on the club for the bounced cheque. PE has explained the situation to Cupit. AC has undertaken to visit the branch to ask for PE and JW_a to be reinstated as signatories along with AC and JW_r. In the event that this request is not granted, all four nominated signatories may have to attend the Boston branch to sign any required mandate/paperwork. A resolution was authorised for AC to take to the bank supporting this.

PAYMENTS MADE SINCE FEBRUARY 18

JW_r sought clarification on certain outgoings summarised in the latest financial statement. It was duly noted that, as well as the printing bill payable to Cupits, the total 2016 bird reports costs of £5,635 had included a £250 payment to Valerie Daniels for proofreading. JW_r suggested proofreading could have been done in house by a

club member to save on this expense.

The committee noted that a payment of £387 had been made in respect of expenses incurred by British Birds in supplying historic county rarity report submissions dating back to 1958 from their archive, which would have been otherwise destroyed. Some of these were typed and some handwritten. BS had begun scanning these into his computer but run into difficulties. PE suggested it might not be worth the effort of scanning given that demand to view the material was likely to be limited. It was agreed that the material would be indexed and retained in hard copy form. MH observed that any artwork might be of particular note. BS confirmed there were some interesting pencil drawings. MH said illustration of birds seen in the field had become a dying art since the advent of digital photography. Once the records have been processed and filed by BS, the index will be posted on the website for the benefit of any members who might be interested in viewing them.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ANNUAL REPORT 2017

PE acknowledged the hard work of Andrew Henderson in compiling county bird reports over the past 10 years. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the club for his “big contribution”. Since Andrew's decision to step down, PH has taken the lead on preliminary work on the 2017 publication. In a written update to the committee, PH requested an appeal be made for more articles for the report as only one has been sourced at present.

PH further states: “CC appears to have finished the mammoth task of sorting and editing LBR data in the updated Wildlife Recorder software. It remains to be seen how we organise the 2017 write-up. My suggestion would be that we have a group of 3-5 people apportioning species accounts, assuming we are soon in the position of being able to easily extract the data. I think we need to avoid the previous position whereby one person evolved a highly individualised (but extremely skilful) method of data handling which was not transferable.

We need, in my opinion, to sort out the purchase of an LBC laptop for use by interested parties for record checking and sorting as per CC's previous suggestion.

County records committee is largely an email group, but do we need to solidify the arrangements and actually meet once or twice a year.

PE confirmed that CC had been liaising with Colin and Sheila Jennings on an updated recording system using Wildlife Recorder software. This was close to being finished and represented a massive step forward. It is hoped that work can begin on compiling the individual species accounts within the next month or so.

PE and JC noted that reports on abundant species such as Woodpigeon, Dunnock, Blackbird and Blue Tit need to be less detailed than in the past - one or two lines would

be sufficient if there had been no significant variations in populations. BS suggested that judicious cutting-and-pasting from previous reports might be in order. MH cautioned that certain once-common species were now in decline and that any changing national trends needed to be identified and recorded within the county.

JWr said it would be advantageous if the 2017 report was published sooner than the reports of the previous years. He noted that the 2016 *Argyllshire Bird Report* (similar in scale and format to our own) had the words "Published in 2018" on the cover to give it topicality and enhance its appeal to potential buyers.

JC said there had been merits in the slimmer reports published in earlier years. He queried the value of including content that was unlikely to be read.

BS noted the significance of Royal Mail postage bands. Heavier reports carried a higher cost in distribution.

On PH's suggestion, it was agreed that it might be worth earmarking up to £500 from funds for a laptop for LBC record-keeping purposes, which would be purchased when required. No objections to this.

NEWSLETTER

The delay in publication of the summer edition of the club newsletter was discussed. This had been completed in April but had not been published for reasons part-personal and part-technical. Because of pressing other commitments, AC, who is IT officer, had not had time to process publication of the newsletter as quickly as he would have wished. He had duly apologised by email to committee members.

JC and JWr reported technical issues in inputting/ processing text/pictures using the Google Docs format.

BS felt it was unfair to expect committee members/ newsletter contributors to adopt systems with which they were unfamiliar and for which they had received no training. "None of us has been instructed," he said.

PE said the issue was compounded by members' computers having different technology with varying levels of software and capability. However, he noted that the previous three newsletters had been published successfully and speedily using Google Docs.

PE said his understanding was that AC was now ready to publish the summer newsletter subject to satisfactory liaison with CC who has been providing IT support and who instigated the Google Docs system.

JWr said some of the content in the summer newsletter was now out of date and needed to be removed. It also needed refreshing with new topical material.

PE suggested the summer edition could be published in its present form, with an autumn edition very quickly thereafter.

BS did not believe the newsletter was of pressing relevance to members because there had been a long period when none was produced, JC recalled that when it was relaunched last year it was on the basis of as-and-when rather than according to a timetable/schedule. It was agreed that JWr should seek an update from AC and CC on what actions they were taking to process the summer edition and if there was a target date for publication.

UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTION ARRANGEMENTS

The committee noted that subscription/ renewal arrangements continue to operate in different ways - cheque/cash/ postal order/ direct debit and via the website

(through Paypal). This is not ideal. It would be clearer and advantageous to efficiency if the situation could be streamlined so that just one operates.

However, any major changeover could result in the loss of significant numbers of members. The club has a longstanding relationship with the LWT which assists with membership matters and (where necessary) postal distribution of the bird report. PE said that, at some point, the club would have to "grasp the nettle" but he felt the main short-term priority was to establish a single, up-to-date database of members. It was agreed that the situation should be further discussed at the next meeting with a full committee in attendance.

FREE/REDUCED MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL FOR UNDER-21s IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION

JC referred to a communication from Keith Betton (Chairman & County Recorder of Hampshire Ornithological Society) whose 2,000-member club had addressed the challenge of recruiting young members by making membership for under-21s in full-time education completely free, and by putting one of its young members in charge of youth recruitment. Wrote Mr Betton: "I share the idea simply to suggest that if you want to get young members, making it free is a good move. It won't break the bank."

PE had discussed this with CC who said it might be possible to put an Offer Code on the website for prospective young members. Another option would be for a member to provide sponsorship for a young recruit.

In a written report, PH also sought consideration to how we could get the under-35 age group more involved.

MH recalled a time when the club subsidised a young person's visit to Australia in return for a report on his experiences when he arrived home. This was part of a LBC-backed scholarship scheme.

There followed a discussion on how to attract young members which is likely to be revisited at a future meetings. PE and JC noted the challenge of recruiting young people was tougher than ever given the advent of social media and other diversions. If young people are sufficiently curious about birding, they will navigate their own way to the LBC.

REQUIRED ACTIONS UNDER GENERAL DATA PROTECTIONS

To comply with the General Data Protection Regulations, PE submitted for consideration a proposed policy statement. This aims to ensure that the club is compliant with the new legislation and that members are reassured about the integrity and safety of their personal information. It was noted that, unlike commercial organisations, the club does not target members in order to market products or services. The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, with which the club has a longstanding relationship on membership services, also complies with the legislation. The policy statement was adopted by the committee and will be posted in the Information section of the website in due course.

OFFICERS' REPORTS

a) Chairman

PE updated the committee on the programme for the next joint LBC/BTO

conference on January 26, 2019 and thanked Chris Gunn for all her hard work in putting it together. Further information will be provided shortly, either on the website, in a newsletter or both.

b) Treasurer

Points raised by JWa's written financial report had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

c) Secretary

JWr asked for consideration to be given to increasing the age/ gender diversity of the committee. This prompted a lively discussion about how this might be achieved, including the possibility of co-option (various members' names were suggested by members). No action taken, but the chairman said expressions of interest from potential committee newcomers would be welcome.

JWr also sought consideration on taking stand space at events such as the Lincolnshire Show if only to raise awareness. JC was doubtful of the merits, noting that, unlike the RSPB and wildlife trusts, LBC was unable to offer a range of benefits such access to a network of reserves as part of its membership package. MH recalled that a past initiative, which involved taking space at the Woodhall Show, had not been a conspicuous success

d) Sales secretary

BS updated members on sales of bird reports and other club literature. Sales during the first six months of 2018 were higher than for the whole of last year but only marginally. The website offer of three back numbers of the report for the discounted price of £10 plus postage had attracted about six customers, but, as yet he did not feel this initiative had been a "howling success". At present, there are no external retail outlets for club publications.

e) County recorder (north)

JC said most points had been addressed earlier in the meeting.

f) County recorder (south)

Points raised in PH's written report were discussed at various stages earlier in the meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

JWr reported that minutes of the special committee meeting held on March 20 had not yet been placed on the website. He himself had not been present at the meeting which had been held prior to the AGM to discuss banking arrangements and to confirm the revised constitution. PE confirmed that the minutes would be posted in due course.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

October 9, 7.30pm, Coach & Horses, Hemingby

There being no further business, the chairman closed the meeting at 9.50pm.