



Welsh Ornithological Society

Minutes of the Council meeting at Plas Dolerw on Saturday, 14 December 2013

Present: Anne Brenchley, Richard Facey, Bob Haycock, Derek Moore, Carlton Parry, Ian Spence, Steph Tyler, Reg Thorpe, Alan Williams

Apologies: Mick Green, Julian Hughes, Kelvin Jones, Rhion Pritchard, Iolo Williams

Before the meeting started, the Chairman congratulated AB on behalf of Council on her award of the BTO's Tucker Medal at the recent BTO conference.

13.34 Minutes of the meeting of 6 July 2013

Accepted.

13.35 Matters arising.

None.

13.36 Draft minutes of the AGM on 2 November 2013 in Monmouth

Accepted.

13.37 Treasurer's Report

A revised financial report was circulated to the meeting. More Gift Aid has been claimed this year and it should end with about a £750 surplus (if the payment for the Welsh Bird Report falls into next year). The financial position is looking healthy and there is no need to alter the subscription rate.

We have sufficient funds to continue with the small grants scheme in 2014.

There was a discussion about non-members possibly gaining the benefits of WOS outputs cheaper than members. It was agreed that the cost of the two issues of Birds in Wales should now increase to £12 each so that members receive the outputs of the Society cheaper than non-members.

There was a short discussion about the Society's relations with Affiliate Members and this was thought to relate, at least in part, to issues around insurance for field trips. As the WOS does not arrange this it was decided that we need do nothing at present.

13.38 Conference 2013 debrief

The food at the conference had been criticised and the issues had been dealt with immediately afterwards. It was especially bad that no water was made available during the lunch.

[REDACTED] However, there had been many positive responses to the rest of the content of the conference and the venue was considered to have been satisfactory and we may return there in the future.

To ask JH to put links to AMs and Welsh MPs on the WOS website.

IMS

13.39 Conference 2014

IMS reported about four venues that have been investigated for the 2014 conference and the problems arising from trying to find venues for an ever larger conference, especially as we could, now, possibly have in excess of 130 people attending. The four venues were: Mike Whitfield Hall, Glyndwr University, Wrexham (but the food was not adequate at our price), Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Rhuthun (food okay but a bit dearer than we would like), Llysfasi College, Pentrecelyn, S of Rhuthun (lecture hall and food seemed good, but about a 300m walk in the open between the lecture hall and dining room, which itself is not very big), and Reichel Hall, Bangor University (very pleasant but expensive to hire unless a member of staff books it).

The main problem is that bigger venues are more commercial hence VAT is payable on everything. This could be offset by sponsorship but as yet we do not have any for the forthcoming conference.

There was discussion about the possibilities of finding one or more sponsors who may help on a regular basis – to support publication of the Welsh Bird Report and the conference. The payback would be advertising in the report and on the booking forms for the conferences.

To consider possible sources of such sponsorship.	All
To get contact details and make contact with a person working for Lush / The Sound Approach.	AW, DM
To book Ysgol Brynhyfryd for the conference.	IMS

There was discussion about possible speakers and three were identified to approach immediately to book them. It was considered that a theme was not necessary if the speakers and subjects were good.

To contact Nick Moran (BirdTrack) and Dawn Balmer (lessons from the Atlas related to Wales)	IMS
To contact Tim Birkhead (Evolution of birders and birds)	BH

Other speakers would be considered at the next meeting but possibles included Ellie Owen (RSPB) and Kane Brides (WWT).

13.40 **BirdTrack**

BH reported on the BT Partners meeting held in November. There were reports of further developments to BT which will be easier to use to enter data and there will be wider coverage, eventually to enable reports from anywhere in the world. There were discussions about the problems of possibly limiting recording to 1km squares or tetrads and the desirability of users drawing polygons of their recording areas. However, it was not known or covered, how these polygons would relate to areas that Bird Recorders use to store bird records.

DM reported that he has signed a partner agreement to continue the partnership for another year.

To sign an agreement to extend the coverage of BirdTrack to Europe and the world.	DM
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13.41 **Future of Council from November 2014**

There was discussion about how to handle the issue of all four officers coming to the end of their second terms of office in November 2014. As yet, there are no clear successors and all four officers are currently willing to continue. In order not to disrupt the progress the Society has been making in recent years the proposal is to:

Seek more Council members (there are currently two vacancies)
 To seek to co-opt the current officers to continue for another year
 To seek the re-election of those officers, or new nominations, at the November 2015 AGM.

It was agreed that we approach two people to see if they would be willing to be members of Council.

To contact [REDACTED]	RF
To contact [REDACTED]	DM

13.42 **Welsh Government consultations**

The Chairman expressed concern that the WOS Council does not have the capacity to respond to all the consultations that arise during the years. He suggested it may be better to support the responses of other organisations, eg RSPB Cymru. There followed some discussion about the merits of responding to consultations when the track record of the Welsh Government suggests that no changes are ever made following consultation.

It was agreed that we are unable to respond to consultations about the Environment Bill or NRW.

It was agreed that we would continue our involvement with the Greenland White-fronted Goose issue and that we would respond to a paper received from Tim Russell of BASC.

To draft a response to Tim Russell's paper to point out that we will work together with others but that we wish statutory protection of GWfG and will continue to exercise our right to do so.	DM
To communicate with Aaron Davies that we support his petition but will not be present when it is given to the Welsh Government.	DM, JH
To consider issues for which we need 'position papers' to clarify the stance that the WOS takes about relevant concerns. To email ideas around Council members.	All

IMS reported a related issue – that of the proposal on behalf of the Welsh Raptor Study Group to be sent to NRW for possible consideration to receive some of the £6M for 'Natural Resource Management'. This had been drafted by MG.

To email the proposal to the Welsh Government.	IMS
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13.43 Licences to cull fish-eating birds

It was not known what data were being used by NRW as the basis for providing licences for the culling of some Cormorants and Goosanders on rivers in South Wales.

To draft a position paper about this issue.	ST
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13.44 WOS led bird surveys and population estimates

AB spoke to her paper about the idea that WOS should be more proactive and coordinate both all-Wales and regional surveys to provide information for the conservation of birds in Wales. This led to discussion about the issues and to general agreement to proceed.

The discussion extended to the issue of having an extra Council meeting each year that was focussed on bird issues, rather than the business of running a charity. It was suggested that such a meeting should be held in a different area of Wales each year and to invite representatives from the local Affiliate Members to join the discussions. It was agreed to hold the first in the South-West.

To arrange an agenda for an initial meeting just for this topic to be held after the BTO RRs meeting at the Elan Valley Hotel on 2 February 2014.	AB
To book a room at the Cilgerran Wildlife Centre on 29 March 2014.	BH
To make suggestions for possible student projects that might involve surveys or other such work and email to all.	All

13.45 BTO Cymru

In the absence of KJ, AB reported that 2013 had been the most successful year so far for BBS in Wales with about 360 squares returning counts.

13.46 Student Awards

RF talked through the issues that arose from the first year of making this award available. It was disappointing that there was an apparent lack of interest from some students. It was agreed to make the award more attractive by doubling it to £200.

To bring attention of the award to more students and lecturers by using different social media.	RF
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13.47 Lifetime Achievement Awards

All were asked to think about possible recipients of this award and to seek people to send in nominations.

13.48 Welsh Records Panel

The WRP is now using a Google account to send round the papers for consideration.

Chris Jones will soon be retiring as Recorder for Gwent.

13.49 Welsh Raptor Study Group

At a raptor forum meeting in August it was agreed that the previous name for the group was too clumsy and there had been no desire from anyone studying non-raptors to be part of the group. Therefore the name was changed to one that is much easier to remember. IS was elected to take over as Chair.

13.50 WOS e-media

A report and email from JH were considered. It was hoped that we could co-opt a new member of Council who may be willing to take on the PR brief and relieve JH of some work.

It was agreed that if JH receives any contacts from people about issues that cause a conflict of interest for him then he should pass on the contacts to the Chairman or Secretary.

RF pointed out the large number of Twitter followers (now c970) which are many more than our actual membership. He suggested that WOS make a special offer to these people to join using PayPal so that there is a good chance they will be retained as members.

To arrange for a time-limited offer for Twitter followers to join WOS at half price, ie £7.50 for their first year.	AW
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13.51 Calendar of bird events for WOS website

There was some discussion of the necessity for this facility but nobody present knew the technical requirements of the format in which the information would have to be prepared.

To arrange a meeting with JH to discuss the issues.	CP
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13.52 Any other business

13.52.1 State of Birds in Wales

RT reported that the latest edition will be published in 2014.

13.52.2 Atlas results

RT reported that RSPB Cymru is seeking a report, based on Atlas results, about how populations in Wales are faring.

13.52.3 Papers for Birds in Wales

RT reported there should be two papers, on Twite and Ring Ouzel, for publication later in the year.

13.52.4 Wales level Atlas data

RT wished to know how to get Wales level Atlas data from the BTO.

Ian M Spence
15 December 2013