

## Minutes of the Council meeting via Zoom on Saturday, 11 July 2020

Present: Anne Brenchley, Heather Crump, Mick Green, Kelvin Jones, Alison Noble, Keith Noble, Carlton Parry, Giles Pepler, Rhion Pritchard, Clare Rylands, Jez Smith, Ian Spence, Steve Stansfield (part), Steve Sutcliffe.

Apologies for absence: Iolo Williams, Neil Lambert.

20.22		<b>Minutes of the meeting on 14 March 2020</b>	
		Accepted.	
20.23		<b>Matters arising</b>	
	20.05	<b>Membership Secretary's report</b>	
		The new system for dealing with backups of the membership database is being implemented. Members only pages have been reinstated on the website.	
		<b>To investigate if we have a cloud storage facility.</b>	<b>GP</b>
	20.06	<b>Editor's report</b>	
		AB and JS both offered to act as referees for papers for <i>Birds in Wales</i> .	
		<b>To inform RP of other possible referees.</b>	<b>JS</b>
	20.11	<b>Willow Tit survey</b>	
		Lockdown because of Covid-19 has prevented any progress this spring. It is likely to continue next year.	
	20.18	<b>RSPB Cymru</b>	
		Unfortunately, no notes were received from NL to include in the minutes.	
	20.20.4	<b>Bursaries</b>	
		Not done yet. JS has tried to make contact with the Universities but there have been no responses. No progress on BTO Champions as KJ was on furlough.	
	20.20.7	<b>Honey-buzzard survey</b>	
		<b>Send information about this to GP to go on website.</b>	<b>IMS</b>
		<b>To put information on the website.</b>	<b>GP</b>
		<b>To contact Andy King about any other information for possible participants.</b>	<b>CP</b>

	20.20.9	<p><b>Events calendar on website</b></p> <p>The calendar is still on the website but lockdown has meant that no events have been happening.</p>	
		<b>When he receives information, to post on the website.</b>	CP
	20.20.5	<p><b>Greenland White-fronted Geese</b></p> <p>These are now fully protected in Wales. This is largely because of lobbying from WOS. Some information about the change was made available and posted on the website.</p>	
20.24		<p><b>Chair's report</b></p> <p>There was nothing particular to report.</p> <p>The group, Natural Justice is taking NRW to court over General Licences for shooting.</p> <p>GP thanked MG for his chairing (this is the last meeting with MG as Chair). Agreed by all.</p>	
20.25		<p><b>Treasurer's report</b></p> <p>SSu took us through the accounts. We have much money in the bank with much of that being sponsorship for the forthcoming <i>The Birds of Wales</i>. Assuming there will be no conference this year because of social distancing issues there will be a loss of income later in the year. However, there will be a lack of expenditure on various items so overall the situation may be cost neutral.</p> <p>The accounts are still to be audited.</p> <p>NRW has agreed to support The Birds of Wales with sponsorship of £4950 but no money has yet been received.</p> <p>SSu mentioned that IMS is a signatory for the Monmouth Building Society account. He expects that to pass to the new Secretary after the AGM.</p> <p>AN suggested that the sponsorship money should be ring-fenced for a specific purpose and shown as such on the accounts.</p> <p>IS proposed for this to happen. GP seconded and accepted by all.</p>	
20.26		<p><b>Membership Secretary's report</b></p> <p>Currently, WOS has 316 memberships with 354 members. There have been 14 new memberships this year, at a rate of one a week, largely because of social media attracting attention.</p> <p>Problems with PayPal are still to be sorted. There have also been issues setting up different categories of membership.</p>	

20.27	<p><b>Editor's report</b></p> <p>Three papers are in hand for the next <i>Birds in Wales</i>. A population estimate paper is in preparation.</p> <p>RP asked about potential referees for the population estimate paper. IMS suggested Ken Smith but RP wished someone who was a member of Council. JS agreed to act as referee.</p> <p>John Lawton Roberts has indicated that he does not wish to finish his paper on Buzzards. This is not helped by the recent death of his wife.</p>	
	<b>To contact JLR later in the year to ask if he could finish the paper.</b>	IMS
	The Welsh Bird Report for 2019 is now underway to being completed. There are eight section editors this year.	
20.28	<p><b><i>The Birds of Wales</i></b></p> <p>c.453 species accounts have now been written. The text (of the accounts) is split into six sections and five have already gone out for review. The last is due to go out by the end of July. We are on schedule to get the text and all other files to Liverpool University Press by the 30 November deadline.</p> <p>RP has tried to calculate the number of pages. The original contract was for a book of 448 pages. Each extra set of 32 pages costs £2,000. To have a book with enough space for c.420,000 words, tables, graphs, maps and photos is estimated to need 608 pages. This would require £32,500 as the contribution from WOS towards the costs of publication. The current sponsorship total is £24,650 and there is a need to push for more sponsorship up to the deadline of finalising the texts for the book (about the end of October).</p> <p>AN suggested that a flier about sponsorship should go out with the next <i>Birds in Wales</i>.</p>	
	<b>To contact Anthony Cond, LUP, to ask for the pre-publication price to be increased, ideally, to £30.</b>	IMS
	<b>To check if Royalties are based on the sale price (gross) of the books.</b>	IMS
	CR asked about publicising unsponsored species by using photos. There would need to be regular and frequent change of the photos. Raising sponsorship money has to be complete for any sponsors to be named in the text, prior to the end of November, when the text will be sent to LUP.	
	<b>To put a note about sponsorship from RP on the website.</b>	GP
	<b>To send an email to Affiliate Members about sponsorship.</b>	GP
	<b>To discuss with JS about the wording to be used in social media.</b>	RP, IMS, AB
	It was agreed that we should pay for 608 pages.	

		<b>To check with LUP about agreeing to a book of 608 pages.</b>	<b>IMS</b>
		<b>To check if the book is likely to be available by August 2021 (BirdFair)</b>	<b>IMS</b>
20.29		<p><b>BirdFair 2020</b></p> <p>MG has passed over responsibility for the arrangement for WOS to be part of a virtual BirdFair to DR. There has been no further news. (See below)</p>	
20.30		<p><b>Conference 2020</b></p> <p>KN has heard that the venue may be available but with social-distancing enforced. This raises several issues. He asked if we should continue to arrange a conference with these conditions.</p> <p>There was discussion about whether WOS should have a Zoom or Twitter conference, or use some other medium, for a virtual conference. Issues identified included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would the speakers be willing to take part in a virtual conference?</li> <li>- Concern about who has the technical expertise for such a venture.</li> <li>- Will there be sufficient time to publicise whatever is to happen?</li> <li>- Would WOS need to call on (and pay?) people from outside WOS to enable a virtual conference?</li> </ul> <p>Those who are editors of <i>The Birds of Wales</i> will not have enough time to be part of the organisation of any conference.</p> <p>JS expressed interest in organising something but he wanted to know what is required – a couple of hours, a whole day, etc. A virtual conference would be a possible link to many more people who are not currently members who may be inspired to join.</p> <p>A suggestion was for a social meeting of actual members, in person, at some time other than the day chosen for a conference.</p> <p>It was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To cancel arrangement for an actual conference in Carmarthen.</li> <li>- To investigate reaching out to people via a virtual meeting.</li> </ul>	
		<b>To consider possibilities with the three nominees for election to Council.</b>	<b>JS, HC</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To have a Zoom meeting to consider what we will do at 09.00 on 8 August 2020.</li> </ul> <p>There followed discussion about the AGM. It was agreed to deal with the business by email/post.</p> <p>The minutes of the last AGM will need to be sent to all. Reports will be needed from the Chair and Treasurer.</p> <p>For elections to Council, it was clarified and agreed: MG, KN and IMS will be leaving Council. GP and RP will stand for re-election. HC will stand down (and be eligible to be co-opted).</p>	

	<p>AB to be proposed as Chair. CR to be proposed as Secretary.</p> <p>This would leave three vacant places and there happen to be three nominees who have provided short biographies in support of their nominations. If they are elected, it seems that one may be interested in being Editor of Birds in Wales in which case RP would hand over that responsibility and take on the role of BirdTrack partnership contact.</p> <p>The new Vice Chair would be decided at the next Council meeting, after the AGM.</p>	
	<p><b>To send our reports, minutes and proposals for election in early October.</b></p>	<p><b>AN, MG, IMS</b></p>
20.31	<p><b>WOS strategy</b></p> <p>The draft strategy had been circulated to all prior to the meeting. Suggestions for amendments were invited by AB.</p> <p>IMS recommended adding about planning for an all-Wales tetrad atlas at the time of the next national atlas.</p> <p>To retain the £50 Affiliation fee for those that could pay. To develop a Memorandum of Understanding (as with Bardsey) for those organisations that could not pay.</p> <p>To add a bullet point in 3.1 about seeking to increase diversity in the membership and Council.</p> <p>There is a need to recalculate the number of members within the Affiliate organisations.</p> <p>WOS should consider a means of checking the ethnicity of members.</p> <p>To include the Charity Number in the document.</p> <p>Add the role, President, to the table of roles and responsibilities. Also, there needs to be a role to deal with press releases.</p> <p>With each change of members of Council there is a need to ensure that they all know their roles and responsibilities and ensure that all are covered.</p> <p>With these revisions, the strategy document was accepted.</p>	
	<p><b>To amend and finalise the strategy document and make it available.</b></p>	<p><b>AB</b></p>
20.32	<p><b>Fish-eating birds</b></p> <p>NRW has now established, following pressure from WOS, a Fish-eating Birds Group and WOS is a member of that group. The group recognises a range of issues that are affecting fish stocks, including water quality, climate change, etc.</p>	

		MG expressed gratitude for the assistance of Pat Lindley in reaching this position.	
		<b>To select a Council member to represent WOS on the Group in future.</b>	<b>All</b>
		AB suggested that maybe MG should continue as a WOS representative because of his prior expertise and experience. JS suggested that another person should attend the next meeting of the Group with MG in order to be introduced to the other Group members and ensure some continuity. This was agreed.	
20.33		<b>Forestry felling</b>  NRW is currently hiding behind the Forestry Act 1967, despite subsequent Acts that offer protection to species, so that it provides licences for felling trees without adequate surveys. This Act needs to be amended, or challenged in court, to protect birds and other wildlife. The RSPB also thinks this is an important issue. Their forestry officer has recently been on furlough so there has been no contact with him.	
		<b>To discuss with RSPB and then draft a petition to Senedd, to seek public support for change.</b>	<b>JS, AB, MG</b>
20.34		<b>Gylfinir Cymru / Curlew Cymru</b>  Money for studies into the factors affecting the decline of the Curlew is currently not available. Curlew are on top of a list of priorities from the SPA Review for Welsh Government.	
		<b>To consider another person to take responsibility for this group.</b>	<b>All</b>
20.35		<b>SPA Review</b>  AB reported that a paper is being prepared to go to the NRW board then to Welsh Government. This will report on progress with work in relation to SPAs. Pat Lindley, NRW, is pushing for more resources for conservation work.  MG thanked AB for her work with this group.	
20.36		<b>WBRC (Steve Stansfield)</b>  The renamed panel is working well and all members are happy to continue. 110 records from 2019 are to be sent to Recorders by about August and the report will be published after the BBRC report is available.  The WBRC has set up a Whats App group for reviewing records and this has been working well. It aids the speed of assessment. Two examples were given.  The Committee is currently reviewing records of Grey-headed Wagtails and <i>nivalis</i> Snow Buntings.	

	<p>Jon Green has said that the committee will need a new Secretary and Chair sometime soon. Robin Sandham has been suggested as a replacement Secretary. Both JG and SSt are willing to continue for now.</p> <p>MG thanked members of the WBRC for their efforts.</p>	
20.37	<p><b>e-Media</b></p> <p>DR recently put out an enewsletter. There is no knowledge of any analytics.</p> <p>JS reported that 3,300+ people are following the WOS Twitter account. With some tweets, there is a reach of 20,000-35,000 viewers. LUP is now following WOS.</p> <p>3,000 saw the tweet about bursaries.</p> <p>On Facebook there are just 300 followers, though 800 saw a Facebook message about <i>Birds in Wales</i>.</p>	
	<b>To send information of any useful item/ story to JS.</b>	<b>All</b>
	<b>To send out a 'Black lives matter' message from WOS.</b>	<b>JS</b>
	<p>GP reported that the website had about 300 regular users, though there had been up to 750 recently.</p> <p>JS thanked GP for the redesign of the website.</p>	
	<b>To look at and send amendments, if necessary, to GP.</b>	<b>All</b>
20.38	<p><b>BTO Cymru</b></p> <p>The team is currently locked out of the University and KJ has been on furlough for about eight weeks. Nick Moran has been involved in online training with BTO Scotland. It is not known how many people are looking at these courses of if they will continue after lockdown.</p> <p>Interviews for Andy Clements' replacement are due to conclude soon.</p> <p>Engagement with the public is on hold for now. Links with Universities will have to start again after September, or whenever new students go to the universities. It seems to be very difficult to engage with staff.</p>	
20.39	<p><b>RSPB Cymru</b></p> <p>Neil sent apologies by email that arrived during the meeting, with the following notes...</p> <p><b>Covid-19</b></p> <p>The majority of our reserve and conservation staff have been furloughed. As well as reserves being closed, this has meant that there has been very little formal monitoring this season.</p>	

Since late June we have gradually been reopening reserves and bringing some staff out of furlough to manage this and start the post breeding conservation work programme.

Most sites except Newport Wetlands have reopened to some degree but shops and cafes remain closed at this point due to WG regulations

We were unable to warden the Skerries due to Covid-19 considerations (mainly the risk of not being able to resupply staff or implement a rescue in the event of an incident). We were able to do a boat-based visit earlier in the season and discovered the terns had abandoned, presumably due to predation either by large gulls or a peregrine based on past experience.

We have been able to recommence wardening activities at Ynys Feurig and this along with NWWT wardening at Cemlyn indicates at least some of the birds have relocated to sites around Anglesey:

The Skerries

2019 – 301 prs common tern, 2814 prs Arctic tern

Ynys Feurig

2019 – 191 prs common tern, 382 prs Arctic tern

2020 – 175 prs common tern (minimum), 601 prs Arctic tern (max)

NB 2019 and 2020 not directly comparable count methodologies due to Covid restrictions

1. Not possible to determine how much of the increase at Ynys Feurig due to good breeding season in 2018 (offspring returning) and how much due to Skerries birds relocating

Cemlyn

From NWWT “Last year we had just 25 pairs of Arctic and 10 pairs of common terns breeding at Cemlyn. This year the current figures are over 750 pairs of Arctic and at least 250 pairs of common terns. All this alongside what we think is now in excess of 2,000 Sandwich tern nests!”

So likely good proportion of common terns have relocated, possible up to a third of Arctic terns may have relocated to Cemlyn and Ynys Feurig (but note on caution about count figures and the influence of past successful productivity).

#### **Hen Harrier**

RSPB has been able to continue with the investigation officer and tagging project under special dispensation in liaison with the Welsh police and BTO.

Well publicised increase in bird crime reported during lockdown.

Some tags have now been deployed to HH chicks but has generally been poor year for nest survival due to suspected predation and more recently chick deaths with the poor weather in late June/early July.

NRW has just confirmed funding to carry out further satellite tagging in 2021.

#### **Curlew**

We initially received bad news about the LIFE bid – whilst meeting the criteria for funding, stiff competition meant we missed out and the project went onto the LIFE “reserve list”. We are resubmitting a revised bid EoI with more

	<p>funding for work in Scotland and England with a view to submitting a new bid in Feb 2021.</p> <p>Last week, we received more positive news. The project has moved to the review stage which means it is actively being considered for funding starting later this year if we can address any concerns LIFE has. This would trigger just under £1 million of funding for curlew in N Wales.</p> <p><b>RSPB Shooting Review</b></p> <p>All the surveys across the stakeholder groups have been compiled and the evidence review is nearly complete. Some of the findings will be made public soon with the project still on track to publish the RSPB's position on intensive wild gamebird shooting and released gamebirds by the AGM in October</p> <p><b>NRW Killing of Birds review</b></p> <p><b>Plan for 4 strands</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General and specific licences</li> <li>• Fish eating birds</li> <li>• Impact of shooting on waterfowl of conservation concern</li> <li>• Review of Larsen traps</li> </ul> <p>The project has been partly delayed as Wild Justice were successful in their application for a judicial review. This will mean item 1 will not continue until this is concluded.</p> <p>The Fish-eating bird project involves field work in excess of £100k so will have to go through specific WG tendering processes but NRW hoping work can take place this year.</p> <p><b>SPA review</b></p> <p>The project is on track.</p> <p>A draft paper identifies the priorities for SPAs in Wales, how they might be achieved and an indication of the time and cost to do surveys where there are gaps in knowledge.</p> <p>The final paper will be considered by NRW's BREG board on 6 August and then its Exec Board in September, before going to WG for endorsement.</p> <p><b>Summit to Sea</b></p> <p>The delivery project ended at the end of May with RSPB taking over as the host partner with the funder from 1 June. The project is entering a new planning phase to ensure an inclusive co-creation process with local stakeholders. This could last up to two years if required due to Covid-19 restrictions and awaiting the outcome of the WG Sustainable Farming review but we hope it can be completed sooner to allow a new delivery phase of the project to start.</p> <p>The remaining partners will continue to work with RSPB as we work through the process and agree how the project should move forward including any new governance structures.</p> <p>To date, media coverage has been balanced and Grwp Copa have welcomed the approach, making such statements in the media.</p>	
20.29.1	<b>BirdFair (resumed)</b>	

		DR has not come to the meeting and we have no information about where we are with arrangements.	
		<b>To write to DR to find out what is happening.</b>	<b>MG</b>
20.40		<p><b>Venue for meetings</b></p> <p>After a brief discussion it was decided to use three 'places' next year with suggested dates:</p> <p>21 November 2020, Zoom  13 March 2021, Oriel Davies Gallery  10 July 2021, Plas Dolerw</p> <p>When the current Zoom subscription comes for renewal it will be transferred to CR.</p>	
		<b>To consider making more use of Zoom by having extra Council meetings. To be discussed at the next Council meeting.</b>	<b>All</b>
		MG thanked IMS for being Secretary. IMS thanked MG for being Chair.	
		Ian M Spence	
		15 July 2020	