

Kent Ornithological Society

Executive Committee – 15th September 2021 (via zoom)

Draft Minutes

Present: Andre Farrar (Chair), Mike Henty, Murray Orchard, Kieron Palmer, Keith Privett, Chris Roome, Brendan Ryan,

Apologies: Robin Mace, Barry Wright,

1. Key matters for decision or discussion

1.1 Storage of paper records.

KP outlined the latest position regarding the availability of storage space in their current location.

It was now imperative that action was taken to either scan the documents or find alternative storage. The Executive were previously minded to destroy the records but the Editorial and Records Committee were keen to retain them and undertook to assess the scanning requirements and make the necessary arrangements. This had been delayed by lockdown considerations.

AF reported that the RSPB had offered before lockdown, the use of a room for the sorting process to take place if required.

The feeling of the meeting was that it was for the Editorial and Records Committee to find a solution but in the meantime MO had approached a scanning company who could potentially undertake the work. A site meeting with the company was to be arranged for the next day.

There would possibly need to be some assessment of the amount of pre scanning sorting that would be required to allow the records to be retrieved in an orderly manner at some point in the future.

It was agreed that if temporary storage was required this should be arranged, possibly using the Ashford based company used to store the Breeding Atlas. However if this was required there should be a deadline of the end of February after which the records would be destroyed.

AF offered to ferry records between garage and store as an alternative to hiring a van.

Action.

MO/KP to arrange for the contractor to visit the site and assess scanning requirements.

BW to refer urgently to the Editorial and Records Committee for action to arrange storage or scanning as necessary.

1.2 Sightings database and website

BR had provided a note of the recent meetings with Chris Dee.

Chris Dee had provided BR with registration details for the new site to enable a pilot database to be run and tested. BR had not yet had the opportunity to get this up and running.

There was some discussion surrounding the registration process and how the membership status of members would be verified and how those not eligible for the full service would be notified and encouraged to join the Society.

CR was concerned about the work involved in this and questioned the desirability of a two tier system. He was also disappointed that the launch date had slipped to October.

BR would seek clarification from Chris Dee on what part of the process could be automated and suggested that occasional purges could be used to identify non members rather than more regular checks. Checks could be done by anyone given access to the membership database.

BR would provide an update for members on the website once he had set up the pilot.

Action:

BR to set up the pilot and provide an update for members on the website.

BR to seek clarification from Chris Dee on what parts of the verification process could be automated.

1.3 Membership Committee

CR set out the terms of reference and ambitions of the group and reported on the outcome of the inaugural meetings (notes and terms of reference attached)

The group had discussed a wide range of issues including various initiatives to engage with younger birders. There was some interest in what Spurn had been doing to attract younger people to join. Discussions included competitions like bird races. The name of the society had been discussed and while ornithological had been a turn off for younger people, BTO who had done some good work in the diversity field, had branded themselves around their initials, BTO rather than the full name which included ornithological. The same could be applied to the Society, branding ourselves as KOS rather than Kent Ornithological Society. The next meeting of the sub committee was due to take place in the autumn.

The idea of having KOS ambassadors on other groups was welcomed but needed action to make it happen.

61 new members had joined this year of which 14 were women. Six members had died and a further 20 had been lapsed. The net increase for the year was 35 members.

The total membership now stands at 732

CR confirmed that the conference had been cancelled and he was working on converting some of the conference talks into on line events for members.

Action:

BR to circulate the minutes and terms of reference of the Membership Committee

CR to confirm potential dates with speakers, in particular Roy Dennis and Jenny Gill

1.4 Increasing Diversity

The membership committee was considering this as part of its remit. The discussion reflected much of what had been discussed in relation to the above item.

CR flagged the icon on the BTO website that links to the BTO's position on diversity. ARF mentioned the Diversity Sustainability Initiative which may be of interest and could be something we join and thus promote a publicly visible commitment.

1.4 70th Anniversary plans

AF suggested that we seem to be losing our way with this project. Now that the conference is not taking place which was to have been the launch vehicle for the anniversary we should explore opportunities with the next newsletter and with the planned on line talks.

CR undertook to contact Jim Flegg one of the founding members to see if he would write an article for the newsletter.

1.5 Management of reserves in Kent

This had previously been raised by BW and AF in an e mail exchange and it had been agreed to be added to the agenda. AF set the background in which organisations like RSPB and KWT were being subjected to sustained criticism for the way in which some high profile reserves in Kent were being managed. AF had talked to the RSPB about the possible reputational damage and the possibility of this being part of an orchestrated campaign against the organisation.

KOS has the opportunity to engage constructively with RSPB at Dungeness (and beyond) this will be followed up.

There was a feeling that these organisations with their conservation focus were failing to account for the needs of birders or consulting the birding community about their plans. As well as recognising the specific needs of birders – there is a wealth of knowledge available better to design facilities – the shortcomings of the new viewpoints at Dungeness and siting of hides at Stodmarsh were just two examples where constructive dialogue on design could have improved the overall visitor experience. It was also suggested that the communication of why certain actions had or had not been taken was poor.

KOS needed a constructive dialogue with these organisations so that birders views were represented in their planning process. KOS would want to remain supportive of these conservation partners in the county.

AF observed that although there is considerable (and welcome) progress on new reserves and conservation management – this is largely invisible, and it was generally seen not to be backed by any (obvious) plans for visitor access. There is a growing sense of frustration that the Kent NGOS and NE lack the vision to provide the spectacles and top-class visitor experience now seen in other counties.

Action: AF to continue dialogue with RSPB and explore opportunities to develop input when new staff start at Dungeness.

MO to continue to raise this at C&S Committee especially in the context of organising site visits to learn more about site-specific plans and overall strategies from partner organisations.

2. Updates

2.1 Treasurer's Report

MH reported that the KBR had come in within £9 of the allocated budget. Each copy of the KBR cost £7.89 including postage. There was a need to improve the quality of envelopes used to dispatch the KBR in the future. 890 reports were printed.

2.2 Kent Bird Report

KP reported that records should be dispatched to writers for the 2020 KBR within the next couple of weeks.

KP was congratulated by the meeting for the quality of the 2019 report. KP in return thanks the team which had contributed.

The size of the report was discussed and whether articles should appear in the report on in the newsletters/website. No conclusion or consensus was reached.

2.4 Surveys and Conservation committee

MO outlined the state of play with the ongoing surveys taking part in the county.

There was a brief discussion on major development threats including Swanscombe and Old Wives Lees solar farm.

3. Administrative matters

3.1 Minutes of previous meeting (18th May 2021)

Approved

3.2 Proposed meeting dates for 2022

12th January, 25th May, 14th September,

AGM 28th April

3.3 Next meeting 12th January 2022 7.00pm (via zoom)

Membership Secretary's Report 15th September 2021

- 2021 has been a record year for recruitment. To date we have 61 members who have joined this year. 14 - close to 25% - a good increase over past years.
- Several members have left for a variety of reasons – including age and immobility. Six members have died in 2021 and 20 have been lapsed by the membership sec due to non payment of subs. Overall therefore, the membership has a net increase of 35 so far. Membership stands at 732 – still a bit shy of 1000
- Mem Sec reported at the last meeting on the process of welcoming new members.
- **Thanks for the regular reminder re address changes now in the Newsletter.**
- Since the last exec meeting a Membership Sub Committee has been established. Its Terms of Reference are:-
 - 1 Increase membership to at least 1000.(Target date?)
 - 2 Increase diversity of membership.
 3. Make membership worthwhile.
 4. Website maintenance - a key means of promoting membership.
 5. Make KOS a more dynamic conservation organisation.
 6. Increase and manage more interactive methods of communication.
- The committee held its first meeting via Zoom on July 22nd. The meeting was Chaired by CR, with Kieron Palmer from the exec, James King, Jack Farrar and Nicole Khan representing the wider membership participating.
- Very useful meeting which sketched out some ideas for the website and for better recruitment – especially in linking up with younger birders.

We intend to meet up again this Autumn.

Conference cancelled – still trying to agree a date with Roy Dennis for an online talk. Jenny Gill also agreeable for an online talk.

A programme of online talks throughout the winter would be a good development.

Limited progress on 70th Anniversary. Mem Sec has identified some original members but has not contacted any of them as yet.

Gift list for all birders in development stages still.

