

Kent Ornithological Society

Executive Committee – 10th March 2022. (via zoom)

Minutes

Present: Andre Farrar (Chair), Mike Henty, Robin Mace, Murray Orchard, Keith Privett, Chris Roome, Brendan Ryan, Barry Wright

1. Key matters for decision or discussion

1.1 Capacity of the committee.

BR had circulated a note with the agenda suggesting that the AGM was an opportunity to strengthen the committee to provide some cover for key roles and increase our capacity to more effectively undertake all the current projects. The note also highlighted a number of roles that were not assigned to officers e.g. management and development of the website, talks programme organiser.

In a wide ranging discussion, a few names were mentioned as potential committee members but it was agreed that any recruitment should be open and all members should have the opportunity to put their names forward.

AF suggested that the composition and membership of the committee was fundamental to our aspirations for the Society going forward. As such, a meeting to map out our vision and aspirations for the Society would be helpful. AF proposed holding an away day to explore these and related issues.

Action.

BR to arrange an away day in May

BR to draft a note for the newsletter on the AGM identifying the gaps that need filling and seeking nominations to the committee

1.2 The use of KOS data

The Society frequently receives requests for data to support objections to planning applications. The Society has taken the line when responding to such requests that our role is to collect data and monitor the bird life of the county and we do not have the resources to make representation on individual development proposals. We provide data to organisations like RSPB and KWT who are better resourced to fight inappropriate developments. KOS will only become directly involved in significant developments that may have an adverse impact on the county's bird life. We recognise that our data is also of value to environmental consultants employed by developers and others. The meeting debated whether this data should be made available to third parties and at what cost? The situation was not straight forward and there were potential legal implications and liabilities to be taken in to account. It was also unclear about the status of data collected from other platforms like eBird and BirdTrack.

It was agreed that access to the Society's database (Cobra & Cobra 2) should continue to be restricted.

It was agreed that the Society needed a clear policy on the use of its data and the Surveys and Conservation committee should be tasked with developing this policy

Action:

RM to clarify the position over the use of data from BirdTrack and eBird

MO to arrange for a full discussion of the issues at the Surveys and Conservation committee and bring back a draft policy to the executive committee

1.3 Payments methods for members

CR reported that PayPal processes had become more onerous and that a number of members objected to using PayPal to renew their subscriptions. CR proposed that bank transfers should be also offered as a means to pay subscriptions. This was agreed.

The item prompted a discussion about raising subscriptions. On the one hand a substantial part of the existing subscription goes to cover the costs of the Kent Bird Report leaving limited monies to cover other operating and project costs. On the other hand the Society had reserves of around £42,000. It was unclear if the Charities Commission would find this level of reserves acceptable.

The principle that monies donated through legacies should not be used to subsidise the subscriptions of existing members had been agreed sometime ago.

It was agreed that there need to be a distinction between operating costs covered by subscriptions and another fund which could include legacies and other income that could be used to make grants and donations to projects in Kent that would support our aims. It was thought that such donations would be supported by members and would help raise the profile of the Society. These ideas could be explored further at the away day.

Sussex OS had apparently made significant donations to conservation projects around the county.

It was agreed by a majority of seven to one to increase subscriptions to £15pa in January 2023

Any change to subscriptions must be approved by a general meeting of the Society. (as per the rules)

Action:

CR to update the website to include the option for subscriptions to be paid by bank transfer.

BR to add Subscriptions as an agenda item to the AGM

1.4 Scanning of paper records

AF reported that the first test batch had been sent to the scanning company but nothing has been received back as yet.

Action:

MO to chase scanning company

1.5 Sign off of final accounts

MH reported that the independent verification had not been completed but he would circulate the final accounts to be agreed by e mail in due course.

2. Administrative matters

2.1 Arrangements for the AGM

It was agreed to re-arrange the AGM for the 4th May

Action:

BR to draft a notification for the newsletter to include nominations for committee members

BR to make arrangements as necessary for zoom AGM

2.2 Date of next meeting 25th May 2022

3. Any other business

3.1 Project priorities for Garganey consulting

Having completed the sightings database, Chris Dee asked which element of his work plan would the committee want him to tackle next. It was agreed that the picking up on the replacement of Cobra was the immediate priority, ahead of the Birds of Kent template. RM would act as principle contact with Garganey for this aspect of the project

Action

BR to contact Chris Dee

3.2 70th Anniversary arrangements

CR reported on his contact with Jim Flegg and proposed the production of a facsimile of the first KBR to mark the 70th anniversary. In addition to the Jim Flegg interview, Andrew Henderson had written an article of the 70 years of the KOS. The committee supported CR's suggestion and agreed that he should seek quotes for the production and distribution of the report.

3.3. Liaison with other bodies

AF reported that members of the C&S sub-committee had met with KWT and others to see the work being undertaken at Blean. The reports from the meeting were very positive. AF also reported that KOS had written to various partners and local authorities involved in Bird Wise, advocating an extension of the scheme beyond the winter season.