

Chichester Natural History Society

Minutes from the 61st Annual General Meeting held on 1 November 2023 at The Pallant Suite, Chichester

Committee members present: Christian Hance (Chairman), David Hart (Treasurer), Claire Locke (Secretary), Helen Dignum (Webmaster), Viv Goodridge (Membership Secretary), Linda Smith (Indoor Meetings) and Gillian Hance (Outdoor Meetings)

There were 22 members present.

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM. Apologies for absence were received from: Jenny Ettienne, Julia McFarlane, Nick & Elizabeth Sturt, David & Karen Park, Jill Sutcliffe, Dee Bowerman, Malcolm Walford, Sylvia Gill, Jim Bagley, Brian Hopkins, Peter Etheridge and John & Philippa Arnott.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 2 November 2022.

No requests for amendments were received, so Ken Smith proposed, and Maria Wildman seconded, that the 2022 AGM Minutes should be approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Annual Report.

I am very pleased to present this report on the Society's 2023 activities, our 60th year! Over the past year, our Society has continued to be active and successful in observing and recording wildlife in our local area. I would like to thank all those members who have contributed their time and efforts in support of the Society. Whilst everyone who has helped is worthy of praise, in particular I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the field outing leaders and Sylvia and her team who provide the refreshments at our evening meetings.

During the year our Evening lectures have been varied, interesting and well attended. They have covered a wide variety of topics from Namibian wildlife to our local geology. We were also very lucky to enjoy a talk on Flies by Dr Erica McAllister from the Natural History Museum. Linda Smith has proved expert at arranging this wide scope of lectures and I would like to thank her on the Society's behalf.

I feel that observing wildlife in the company of the Society's experts is one of my great pleasures as a member. You see so much more on our field outings than when walking alone. I always enjoy observing the migratory birds on the coast and the fauna and flora at some of the inland sites we visit e.g. Burton Mill Pond and Thursley. We are also very grateful to those external experts who led some of our events. For me, one of the most magical trips this last year was to Lavington Common, on a surprisingly chilly summer evening, to observe and listen to Nightjars. I would like to thank all the members who led these outings and to Gill Hance for cajoling people to lead them and for masterminding the schedule.

We continued our work surveying Moths in our local area. As we have carried this out for several years now, it would be nice to tell you how much better we have all become in

identifying the species that we catch and release. However, given that there are over 2500 species in the UK, I feel that most of us are still just starting out and we would be lost without Tony Burnand's expert advice, for which we are most grateful.

10 years ago, the Society started working with the RSPB to carry out annual surveys at the newly created Medmerry reserve. Under the expert leadership of Philippa and John Arnott we carry out 5 surveys a year looking at vegetational succession on a sown bank and the changes in the populations of dragonflies, damselflies, grasshoppers and crickets. I am greatly looking forward to the presentation after the AGM on these surveys.

As individuals, members have continued to enjoy the use of the Society's bat detectors and other equipment e.g. trail camera. Our automated bat detector has continued to yield interesting results, of which you will hear more later. The number of members submitting phenology sheets was down this year on previous years. I would encourage people to take part in this study as we have a good record of over 15 years results, which show both interesting and worrying trends.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to organise any Pub meetings this autumn as Dee Bowerman has stood down as organiser and we have not been able to find a replacement. This is a shame, as I know that these events were much enjoyed by the attendees. If anyone would like to take on this role, please speak to one of the committee.

At the start of 2023 the Society was honoured to receive a civic community award from Chichester District Council. Whilst we carry out our activities for their own intrinsic enjoyment, it's always nice to receive external recognition.

As I said at the start, our Society has been active and successful in 2023. In total we have run over 35 different events for our increasing membership, now up to 166, and it is always very satisfying to see new faces at our activities. As a Society we always try to keep increasing the scope and depth of our Natural History studies. If any member has ideas for lecture topics, field outing locations or new areas for study, please don't hesitate to let us know.

4. The Honourable Treasurer's Report.

Once again I am pleased to report that the Society's finances are in good health. We have two accounts - No1 and Project and the following figures are for Year Ending 30th September 2023:

No.1 Account shows total receipts of £2261.41 and it is pleasing to see how the membership subscriptions have increased. On the payments side, total expenditure came to £1540.45, leaving us a net surplus of £720.96. A word of caution going forward is that I feel sure the cost of lectures, room hire and insurance are bound to increase. This year we have spent £612.01 of our Project funds on updating existing and purchasing new equipment for our ongoing field surveys.

We start the year 2023/24 with £6593.17 in the No 1 account, £5097.45 in the Project account and with £54.00 cash in hand. This gives us total funds as at 30 September 2023 of £11,744.62

I wish to thank Richard Fisk for his help during my seven years as Treasurer and for being our Independent Examiner during those years.

No requests for amendments were received, so Chris Harvey proposed, and Terry Timblick seconded, that the Treasurer's report should be accepted.

5. Vote on the proposed changes to the Society's current Rules adopted 2 November 2022.

The Chairman explained that it was felt necessary to update the Society's Rules particularly as it had become apparent that there was a need to protect the Society's trustees and receive assistance from other co-opted members who are not also committee members or trustees. He went through the proposed changes to the Rules. No requests for amendments were received, so Helen Dignum proposed, and Ken Smith seconded, that the Society's Rules should be amended as proposed.

6. Election of President.

The Chairman explained that the President is elected annually and Jim Bagley has indicated that he is happy to stand again. There were no objections or alternative nominations, so it was proposed by Gill Hance, and seconded by Heather Hart, that Jim should continue as President.

7. The election of the Treasurer.

The Chairman explained that David Hart is stepping down after a number of years in the role. He expressed his thanks to David for doing an excellent job and presented him with a gift in recognition of his outstanding work and commitment to the Society. Ian Barnett has offered to stand for election as the Treasurer and his appointment was agreed, after he was proposed by Daphne Flach and seconded by Rodney Wildman

8. Re-election of the Field Outings Organiser and the Indoor Meetings Organiser.

Gill Hance has agreed to continue as Field Outings Organiser and her re-election was confirmed after being proposed by David Hart and seconded by Daphne Flach.

Linda Smith has agreed to continue as Indoor Meetings Organiser and her re-election was confirmed after being proposed by Ken Smith and seconded by Maria Wildman.

In relation to other roles, the Chairman explained that the Society has a wide range of equipment that is available for members to use/borrow. Consequently, the committee felt that the Society needed to have someone focused on managing the use of this to be a single point of contact and David Hart had kindly agreed to take on this role. Dee Bowerman had stood down from the committee and her role as Pub Meetings Organiser, and the Chairman will pass a card and present to Dee to show the Society's appreciation and thanks for her work. Helen Dignum has stepped down as the Society's Newsletter Editor and the committee, but has kindly agreed to stay on as Webmaster. Helen was presented with a card and present to show the Society's appreciation and thanks for her previous work on the committee and as Newsletter Editor.

9. Election of the Independent Examiner.

Richard Fisk is stepping down as the Independent Financial Advisor and a new person will be appointed to this role in due course.