

# Hampshire Ornithological Society

## Minutes of the 47th Annual General Meeting

Held at St Swithun's School on 28th March 2026

**(draft)**

The meeting was chaired by the HOS Chair, Keith Betton (KB), the Treasurer's Report submitted by the Honorary Treasurer David Brookes (DB) and minutes taken by the Honorary Secretary Dave Palmer (DP).

Prior to commencement of the AGM, the HOS President Chris Packham (CP) gave an address welcoming all members and guests to the Members' Day and spoke about the launch of the National Emergency Briefing that is highlighting climate breakdown and biodiversity loss through considering how this impacts food and energy security. There will be a film on this released in April and CP urged Members to arrange screenings. CP noted encouraging actions by the Government on solar and wind energy, but less progress on transport and a poor position on agriculture. CP urged Members to respond to Government consultations using advice provided by various conservation agencies. CP noted it is important to understand how we feel about nature.



### **1. Apologies for absence**

DP noted apologies have been received from the following: Becky Aziz, Chris Conry, Chris Drew, Jo Drew, Matthew Dryden, Les Easom, Julie Hallows, Richard Lemon, Di Mitchell, Martin Mitchell, Gillian Pickering, Jonathan Pickering and Jennifer Tubbs.

KB asked if there were any apologies further to those submitted before the meeting; apologies were given for Christine Gallger.

### **2. Minutes of the 46th Annual General Meeting held at St Swithun's School on 29 March 2025**

KB noted the minutes of the 2025 AGM had already been circulated to all members with the Kingfisher newsletter and in the Members' Day booklet and since then no corrections had been advised. Consequently KB invited a proposer and seconder to approve the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were proposed by Guy Michelmores, seconded by Jonathan Mycock and accepted by HOS members by a show of hands, with nil against.

### **3. Matters arising from the 46th AGM**

There were no matters arising from the 2025 AGM.

#### 4. Report by the Chair of the Society

KB noted a full report is provided in the Members' Day booklet. The following is a transcript of the report as presented at the AGM.

"So what about the biggest news in 2025? Three new birds for Hampshire! (Although maybe just two). Great-tailed Grackle, Black-throated Thrush and Hudsonian Godwit. And to be totally up to date on the Birds of Hampshire you must have the Birds of Hampshire Checklist – the latest edition is published today. Thanks to HBIC and London Camera Exchange, we are able to give each of you a free copy today. Thanks to Alan Cox and Martin Pitt for creating it in time for today.

HOS is big, as you can see, and we are getting bigger. 152 of you joined in 2025 – and we have 78 new members already this year. You are our greatest ambassadors, so when you are chatting with birders do please ask them if they are members and to help you we have again brought a supply of our business cards. Just pick up a dozen or so from the front desk as you leave.

Last year we issued a Questionnaire. We've had 317 responses, details of which will be published in Kingfisher. Basically, it says you are happy with what we are doing, but you've also given us plenty of good ideas for the future. Kingfisher is appreciated and over 75% of you are happy with the new digital version. But we do understand that not everyone loves things digitally, so we do print a small number. That costs about £5 per copy including postage, so a donation is welcomed if you want to stay with printed copies. Feature articles and local bird information are the two most valued contents. 99% of you are happy with our sales items; 25% had been on walks (this may seem low, but that's normal for a county bird club). We've had lots of new suggestions for walks. You're very happy with the Hampshire Bird Report. I am biased, but people who review it in magazines often refer to it as the benchmark for all counties to reach. However, most members refer to it infrequently, which is a shame. There are 250 species in it – read one a day and you can have the weekends off. We've also had 148 volunteer offers, which is wonderful, thank you!!!! And I am pleased to say that Opticron is helping us by donating and loaning equipment to be used by new Members and also our Young Members too. What a fantastic offer! Thanks to them too.

Our Young Members now number 100 and we ran over 20 walks and special events for them in 2025. They got to watch ringing – and especially Goshawk chicks last summer with Andy Page. It was a very special experience for everyone. And just this week we held a careers masterclass for those aged 15 and above. Many of our Young Members want to work in conservation, so we got them together with staff from the RSPB, BTO and Sparsholt Collage. We have many talented young members – quite a few are winning awards, and some never tell us. I just spotted on Facebook that Felix Hoskins was a finalist in a photo competition. We are surrounded by talent. I particularly want to thank the Cameron Bespolka Trust who were instrumental in helping to get our Young Member scheme where it is today. So, if you know of a young person from Hampshire at school or university and interested in birds then let us know. Similarly, our support group for female birders has continued to grow. We now have 148 in our WhatsApp Group that allows female members to build birding friendships. In fact, 24 of them are just about to head off to Skomer in West Wales to for a short break! So if you were thinking of going to Skomer next month, you have been warned!

We were honoured to be selected by the BTO and the Marsh Charitable Trust to receive the 2025 Award for Local Ornithology. This was for a wide range of initiatives, but primarily our work with Young Birders and female Members. And here is Janice Beck receiving the award, and it was great to have Tommy Saunders on stage too – he recruited our first batch of almost 20 Young Members when he was about 15.

Thank you to everyone who surveyed over 200 1km squares to look for breeding waders in the New Forest last spring. The results are rather sobering – Curlew and Redshank numbers are down – indeed just two pairs of Redshank. The latter may have been because the boggy areas dried out last year, but again we saw Curlew numbers drop in what appears to be great habitat. We know that along with other things they are challenged by predators. Although the Curlew pair count has gone down since the previous HOS survey, productivity has generally been much better with circa 0.5 chicks/pair fledging in 2023 and 2024. However, in 2025 the

control of mammalian predators was delayed and nest survival rates took a hit. We must do all we can to keep these birds – a New Forest without the call of Curlews would be a sad place. Lapwing numbers vary depending how much water there is in the forest or elsewhere, but Snipe numbers continue to grow – and we found many more territories. And thanks to a comment by Chris three years ago that we should also survey everyday birds, we carried out a survey of House Martins. You found 2000 nests last year! Alongside this, we also managed to get lots of nest cups put up. You'll hear more about this a bit later from Nigel Matthews.

It is now 25 years since last public inquiry into plans to expand port facilities in Southampton Water. The Planning Inspector recommended that it be rejected because the environmental damage outweighed the economic benefits. Well developers never go to sleep – they just rest their eyes and once again there is a proposal from ABP to develop the area. You'll see it in the news as Solent Gateway 2. HOS has put in objections on the initial plan, and so have many others including the RSPB and HWT. But access to the Dibden Bay area is not easy and in part restricted. To really find out what birds are there we need access to all areas that may be impacted by the development proposals. I am pleased to say that ABP has agreed that nominated HOS members can visit to gather data. We are working with the HOS members that live nearby – but we need more helpers to do this. So if you are a birder who is willing to support our bird survey activities, do please come to the HOS Scientific Committee table in the exhibition where George Baker would like to meet you. And if you'd like to help us with our plans for House Martins, go to the same table and find Nigel Matthews.

In 2024 we gave Hampshire Wildlife Trust money to build a new Sand Martin bank at Testwood Lakes. That has been created – and here's the team that did it. I am told that many are retired builders and they loved doing it. I know of two more groups who are keen to install Sand Martin banks, so we may be giving them a call again! We were pleased to again help the local team in Newton Valence, who are putting up lots of nest boxes for Starlings and getting good success. In the 1990s they used to keep me awake nesting in the roof above my bed. Tap dancing at 4am!!! In 2002 they became Red Listed – and I never see them in my garden now. We've had two recently approved applications from HIWWT. We have agreed to fund another tern raft at Fishlake Meadows and we have bought a water monitor to allow HIWWT staff to better understand their water depth at Fishlake and hopefully top it up if it gets low. They are keen to get Bitterns nesting and deeper water is what they need to have the right sized fish."

KB then invited questions from members. There was a question regarding the wader survey and why snipe are increasing while the other species declined. KB noted that this is likely to be both down to good conditions for the snipe and the dry summer making it easier for the surveyors to get close to where the snipe are. Plus our experience is helping HOS to get better at undertaking these types of survey.

No further points or questions were raised.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

KB presented the Treasurer's Report on behalf of DB and noted that the Society's independently examined accounts for the year ended 31st December 2025 are available on the HOS website. The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis and a copy of the approved accounts will be filed, along with the Annual Return, as required with the Charity Commission, within 10 months of the year's end.

KB noted that in summary, the Society's receipts totalled £67,094 and expenditure was £25,708, resulting in a net surplus for the year of £41,386. KB noted the following key points from the accounts:-

- Subscriptions increased slightly from 2024 owing to increased membership.
- An unused grant for a Jack Snipe project was refunded owing to the project being delayed whilst waiting for a BTO licence to proceed. It's expected that this will be granted at which point the grant will be reissued.

- Survey and data sales are up from last year owing to the receipt of the payment in January for the Woodlark Survey for Forestry England that was completed in 2024.
- Member's Day receipts were £1,759, up slightly from the previous year.
- Grants and donations were down in 2025 from the previous year, primarily because we'd spent a lot on some major projects in 2024.
- Kingfisher publication costs reduced as a result of moving to the digital version. This also accounts for the reduction in postage costs.
- The Society paid no sums by way of remuneration to Trustees or committee members during the year. Trustee expenses represent reimbursed mileage expenses for attendance at committee meetings and other meetings and events on behalf of the Society.
- The Society's funds are held in a one-year bond and a 100-day notice deposit account, both with the Charity Bank, an instant access deposit account with the Co-op Bank and a Co-op Bank current account. This follows the completion of the move to the Co-op bank from Lloyds Bank as a more ethical choice of bank, although we have retained the Lloyds current account to avoid having to change all the standing orders Members have for their subscriptions. So subs still go into the Lloyds account, but are then rapidly transferred into the Co-op account.
- The Trustees remain conscious that the cash funds are significantly in excess of the Society's reserves policy, which is to hold funds sufficient to meet one year's expenditure. However, it is intended that the surplus funds will continue to be used over the next two to three years to support research and conservation projects that meet the Society's objectives, to purchase capital equipment to expand and enhance research and education projects and, ideally, support a future land purchase (by others) to protect and preserve key habitats for Hampshire's birds.

KB thanked Joy Aubin, who acted as the Independent Examiner of the accounts at no cost to the Society.

KB invited questions from members on the accounts, but none were raised.

KB invited a proposer and seconder for approval of the independently examined accounts. The accounts were proposed by John Clark, seconded by Helen Wood and accepted by members by a show of hands, with nil against.

## **6. Amendments to the Society's Rules**

KB noted that the proposed amendments to the Society's Rules had been circulated with the AGM papers and so did not propose to go through them in detail. KB outlined that primarily the changes were cosmetic/administrative and included elements such as making the role of President gender neutral, bringing the categories of Membership into line with current arrangements, removing restrictions on voting rights so all Young Members have a say in the Society's affairs and clarifying the rules relating to appointment of Trustees and Officers of the Society. By a show of hands the amendments to the Rules were approved unanimously.

## **7. Election of Officers**

KB noted he has now been Chair for nine years and the HOS rules allow a person to be Chair for a maximum of ten years. In the absence of any alternative proposal, KB has agreed with the Trustees that he will stay on for another year and is happy to do that. However, KB is planning to stand down no later than 2027. KB asked that anyone interested in becoming the next Chair to let him know.

KB expressed thanks to David Brookes, who stands down after three years as Treasurer and was Secretary before that; to Carol Rawlings, who stepped down last year as Editor of Kingfisher; to Mike Chalmers, who stepped also down last year as the Editor of the Hampshire Bird Report; to Nicola Whitmarsh who stepped down earlier this year as Sales Officer and to Di Warner and Tommy Saunders whose three year terms as Ordinary Members and Trustees has now come to an end. Di will carry on in her role as Walks Co-ordinator and as such will (with her agreement) be co-opted back onto the Management Committee next month.

KB welcomed the following as new members of the Management Committee and Trustees. Graham Bishop, who joins as Honorary Treasurer; Colin Prescott, who has taken over as Editor of the Hampshire Bird Report; Peter Little, who has taken over as Editor of Kingfisher and Alessandra Oliveto and Felicia Green who join as Ordinary Members. KB also welcomed Esther Stannah who has taken over the role of Sales Officer.

**The line up of officers and trustees for the next year looks like this:**

Chair Keith Betton

Secretary Dave Palmer

Treasurer Graham Bishop

Chair, Scientific Sub-Committee Keith Betton

Secretary, Scientific Sub Committee George Batho

Events Manager Barry Page

County Recorder Martin Pitt

Editor of Bird Report Colin Prescott

Conservation Liaison Officer George Baker

Editor of Kingfisher Peter Little

Membership Officer Kay Shillitoe

**Ordinary Members remaining on the Management Committee are:**

Janice Beck

Claire Melville

Helen Wood

**New elected Ordinary Members being proposed to join this year are:**

Alessandra Oliveto

Felicia Green

KB invited a proposer and seconder for election of officers as shown on the screen and in the papers for the AGM. Proposed by Ian Packer, seconded by Simon Stacey and accepted by members by a show of hands, with nil against.

**8. Election of an Honorary Life Member**

KB announced that the trustees wished to nominate a HOS member for Honorary Life Membership. This was not something done very often and was reserved for individuals who have consistently served the Society to an exceptionally high standard over an extended period. Mike Chalmers had been editor of the Hampshire Bird Report from 2015-2025 and not only had the report been of

a very high standard, the publication date had been met without fail in his tenure. The report was now frequently referred to by independent reviewers as a benchmark for other organisations to match. While Honorary Life Membership was a nomination made by the trustees it was always for the membership to vote on. Those present were unanimous in voting their support for Mike Chalmers to be honoured in this way. On behalf of the Society KB warmly thanked him for his service.

#### **9. Any other business**

KB invited questions from members; there were none.

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