



Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Forum
Charity 224018

The thirty-second meeting of the Natural Sciences Forum was held at St Chad's Parish Hall, from 10.30am to 12.30pm on Saturday 27th February 2016.

MINUTES

Present: Peter Flint (Chair), Paula Lightfoot (minutes), Michael Archer, John Bowers, Terry Crawford, Sharon Flint, Keith Gittens, Andy Godfrey, Albert Henderson, Andy Millard, Adrian Norris, Peter Roberts, Terry Whitaker, Chris Young.

Apologies: Jon Capel, Jill and Simon Warwick, Colin Howes, John Newbould

1. Minutes, actions and matters arising from the meeting held at the University of York 14/11/2015

The minutes had been circulated via e-mail prior to this meeting and are available to download from the YNU website. They were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

MA commented that Urban Buzz project has now started in York. Several training days have taken place and flagship sites identified, there is cooperation between the civic authorities and other interested groups to improve these sites for pollinators. MA has advised on planting regimes for pollinators.

PL added that Harry Woolner (who came to the last NSF meeting) is leaving the Urban Buzz project officer post on 11th March due to a desire to switch careers. In his place will be Andrew Cutts, who started on the 22nd February (andrew.cutts@buglife.org.uk).

There were no other matters arising that were not on the agenda.

2. YNU Library

TC advised that the YNU library is now well established at NEYEDC's new offices at 10a Minster Gates and there is also a very good meeting room available for YNU meetings. AN confirmed that the site is an excellent location, but it is not easily accessible to those with limited mobility. CY said there is spare space to add more publications, e.g. by replacing half height book cases with full height book cases. It was agreed, as per the previous NSF meeting, that any request for investment in the library would need to be presented as a strategic plan for the development of the library, informed by a fact-finding mission.

The Education Committee recommended that the loan charge of £1 should be removed. This was subsequently agreed by the Executive.

TC said that the YNU website needs more information about the YNU library and that Mark Wills at NEYEDC has offered to write this.

TW asked if there is an electronic catalogue of content and whether this could be put on the website. CY responded that the catalogue is in Pisces software which is very old. It is not known whether data can be exported in a format compatible with modern software, e.g. as a .CSV file, but PL will investigate. JB offered CY the YNU laptop, which was purchased with OPAL funding, to replace the old library computer which is not internet-enabled.

JB had previously suggested that the YNU library should be a repository for a complete collection of the journals of our affiliated societies. MA stated that he has given the library his collection of Sorby Natural History Society journals. David Lindley had a collection of journals of affiliated societies which AN has now passed to the library. TW said that some of the smaller affiliated societies might find it easier to send their journals in PDF format rather than in print. KG stated that Ryedale Naturalists decided to make their journal available online as a PDF, but they print one copy as an archive copy and could produce a second printed copy for the YNU library. AN offered to contact affiliated societies about securing or maintaining supply of their journals to the library, provided that someone can provide him with information about the library's current journal holdings and contact emails for the affiliated societies.

JB advised CY he has the YNU laptop purchased using OPAL funding and could provide this to the Library to replace the current PC.

PL - investigate whether the library computer will export catalogue data so this can be added to the website.

PL – remove reference to the £1 loan charge from the website and Membership Card.

CY – send AN the library's holdings of affiliated society journals highlighting where there are gaps.

AN – contact all affiliated societies (contact details available from Ellen Tidy) to advise them of our library holdings and ask for help in filling gaps or maintaining the supply going forward, as paper copies or PDFs.

3. Vacancy for Chairman and Secretary of the Botanical Section and VC63 Botanical Recorder

Don Grant has stepped down as Chairman and Secretary of the Botanical Section and as VC63 Botanical Recorder.

It was agreed that a replacement needs to be found asap, as botany is one of the main interests of our membership. TC stated that the Botanical Section has not provided a tutor for the Leeds University training day in recent years. PL stated that the Botanical Section pages on the website are incomplete and out of date and that there have not been any botanical events listed in the Membership Card in recent years.

PL – email the five Botanical Section contacts to ask them about the Section's plans to fill these posts and whether members of the Executive or NSF can provide any help.

4. YNU Conference 2016

The conference will be held at York University on the 19th March on the topic of 'Names, Knowledge and Natural History'. The list of speakers can be found on the website and

the conference programme will be uploaded shortly. Online and postal booking forms are also on the website. A poster is available as a PDF and jpeg.

TC asked if someone could have a 5 minute slot at the end of the final plenary discussion session to tell people about the Leeds University Field Skills day, with the aim of attracting more tutors. This was agreed.

JB suggested putting information about the Leeds Uni Field Skills day and call for tutors in *The Naturalist* and SF suggested putting the same on the YNU website.

All - Please book your place at the conference if you have not already done so, and please circulate information/poster/link to YNU website to friends and colleagues.

5. Future YNU Conferences

Organisers and themes need to be found for future conferences. Conferences may be held biannually or annually, depending on the availability of people willing to organise them. JB had previously proposed recruiting a 'conference fellow' to organise this task. It was agreed that the YNU should pay for conference organisation if necessary. Although the conferences already run at a loss, they are an important part of the YNU's charitable remit. PL said that the tasks of conference organisation fall into three areas; programme content, logistics and promotion. It would therefore be possible to share the role of conference organisation among up to three people working as a team.

Eight people so far have indicated in the membership survey that they might be interested in helping to organise a conference in future.

Conservation and land use (particularly mineral extraction) in national parks was suggested as a possible conference theme.

PL proposed that suggestions for future conference themes must contain at least 4 pieces of information:

- a) Conference theme
- b) An offer to organise the programme or suggestions for people to approach who might be willing to organise the programme.
- c) Rationale for suggesting this theme e.g. local relevance, opportunities for collaboration, relevance to current conservation issues, alignment with YNU's charitable remit etc
- d) Conference aim and objectives.

It was subsequently agreed at the Executive meeting to put together a brief notice inviting suggestions for themes and offers of help with conference organisation. This will first be distributed at the 2016 conference and sent to those who expressed an interest in helping to organise conferences, and could then also be sent via e-mail to the membership, put in *The Naturalist*, social media and on the website.

6. Education Committee Report

TC reported on the Education Committee held on the 26th February 2016.

TC reported that Howsham Mill is an 18th century mill on the River Derwent, which was renovated with HLF funding. They have been providing training for school children but are keen to start providing courses for adults in natural history. TC met their education officer and she attended the Education Committee meeting to discuss possibilities for

collaboration. They would provide facilities and any profit from course income would be split 50/50 between the YNU tutor and Howsham Mill.

SF stated that there is an ever-growing number of ID training courses in the region provided by various different organisations. Most of these organisations charge participants for attendance, with prices starting at ~£40 for a day course. It was agreed that if people have to pay for a course, even if it is just a nominal charge to cover costs, they value the course more and are less likely to fail to attend. The YNU does charge for some training courses, but there is no standard structure for this.

AG pointed out that the YNU's current training provision is reactive rather than proactive.

The YNU offers a range of opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in natural history, from attending courses (structured learning) to attending field meetings and conferences and sending records to YNU recorders (unstructured/informal learning). MA said that mentoring less experienced recorders is part of the duties of a county recorder. It was agreed that the word 'training' on the website could be misleading, giving the impression that we provide more formal courses than we do. PL will change this as soon as someone sends her revised text.

7. Using biological records to inform environmental decision-making

Simon Pickles and Matt Millington from the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre have written an article in the recent *Naturalist* entitled 'Inclusion of biological records and related information in local decision making'. This article has now been added to the recording page of the YNU website along with our Data Policy.

Key points are:

- If NEYEDC do not have access to data or information, it is highly unlikely to be considered in local environmental decision making e.g. forward planning and development control or the identification of sites which are important for biodiversity but do not hold legal protection.
- NEYEDC do not need to hold raw supporting data – they simply need to be able to 'signpost' a reliable, available source, which could be a local source.
- Sections, affiliated societies and individual members are asked to consider the data, information and expertise at their disposal, and think about which elements they would like to be included in local decision making. NEYEDC staff would be delighted to discuss with individuals or groups how this can be achieved.

AN stressed the importance of Local Environmental Records Centres knowing what is in their area, there have been instances of locally important species and habitats being lost due to development because the data or information was not readily available.

TC stated that people often make the mistake of thinking that NEYEDC is a commercial organisation, when in fact it is a charity.

TC has initiated a meeting between NEYEDC, BC Yorkshire and the YNU. Tom Hubball is coordinating this. TW offered to attend - TC suggested that TW should contact Tom Hubball to make this offer.

MA stated that he has given his aculeate Hymenoptera records to NEYEDC every year and to BWARS who pass them onto the NBN Gateway.

KG said that Yorkshire Dragonfly Group have been contacted by NEYEDC about this. Yorkshire Dragonfly Group doesn't hold records locally, they pass them to the British Dragonfly Society who put them onto the NBN Gateway, they would like NEYEDC to contact BDS directly.

8. YNU publications online

Bird Reports from 1970 to 2004 are now available to download as PDFs from the YNU websites.

JB has signed an agreement on behalf of YNU with the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#) to make the entire collection of *The Naturalist* available via their website.

The three issues of *The Naturalist* from 2014 have now been added to the YNU website. 2015 issues will be added after a year, in line with the YNU's policy that access to publications is a benefit of membership.

9. YNU membership research

The background and rationale for conducting the membership survey are explained in the minutes to previous meetings. The survey asks members for their views on YNU events, activities and publications, and whether they would be willing to contribute to the running of the YNU in a variety of ways. The survey of members and former members is now live and will run until just after the conference. 115 responses have already been received.

An additional survey specifically for affiliated societies will be sent out shortly.

Prior to the survey, the Trustees and Section Heads filled over 40 gaps in the membership database for members for whom the YNU held no e-mail address. A notice was also placed in the last *Naturalist* asking members to send us their e-mail address. However, there are still ~100 members for whom we hold no e-mail address. AG offered to review the list again and try to fill more gaps.

PL said the Executive needs to discuss the possibility of sending the questionnaire to these members by post, but the cost of printing, posting, providing SAEs for return and digitising the returned results is likely to be high. JB felt that the response from this subset of the membership is likely to be small.

KG said that all current members should be given the opportunity to respond. It was agreed that this would be ideal if possible. The possibility of sending out with the Lepidoptera Report or the next *Naturalist* was discussed, but this is our first mailing using a new printers (Duffields having closed in January) so it might be best not to complicate it.

TC said there is no need to include an SAE for postal survey responses. Respondents can cover the cost of stamps and envelopes, just as those who responded by e-mail or online have to cover the cost of their broadband fees.

SF asked if the results of the survey would be published to the membership, PL confirmed they would be although the report will be anonymised and individual responses will be kept confidential.

10. Correspondence / Announcements

10.1 Spurn Visitor Centre planning application

JB advised the Forum that he has objected on behalf of the YNU to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's planning application to develop a visitor centre at Spurn. The objection was on the grounds that the location would disturb the roosts of wading birds.

10.2 Scampston Walled Garden Big Bug Hunt (National Insect Week)

Scampston Walled Garden in Malton are holding a bioblitz on Sunday 26th June as part of National Insect Week and have contacted the YNU to ask if our members would be willing to help with identification and recording. They will cover travel expenses and supply refreshments. They can also provide display space indoors or outdoors if anyone is willing to bring YNU banners and membership leaflets. If you are interested, please contact Emma McKenzie, Heritage Learning Officer, on: 01944 758646, 07792 519497 or hlo@scampston.co.uk

AN has already contacted them – he confirmed that the entrance fee will be waived if you contact them in advance. He also confirmed that recording can take place in the wider estate not just the walled garden.

JB suggested running a moth trap. TC confirmed there are electricity supplies and that this could be done the night before so the public can see the trap being emptied.

10.3 Rotherham Biological Records Centre

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council announced in January that they could no longer host Rotherham Biological Records Centre. There was a 30 day consultation period, at the end of which a letter was sent to the Chief Executive Sharon Kemp outlining the importance of RBRC as a cost-effective source of information to inform environmental decision making. It was signed by 71 signatories including the Trustees of the YNU. A summary letter and list of signatories was sent to all councillors. There is a full council meeting on 2nd March when the letter to the Chief Executive will be presented to the Councillors.

YNU website: change of webmaster

John Hume resigned as YNU webmaster in November 2015. PL is now acting webmaster. The site has since been moved to a new host server which is cheaper and provides more storage space. New security features have been added which prevent the creation of bogus user accounts (previously 5-10 such bogus accounts were being created per day).

PL is refreshing the site as time allows, by replacing photos and adding news items, but someone from each Section needs to look at their part of the website and decide what changes need to be made to make it welcoming, up-to-date and relevant. Pages for which no content has been provided are being removed, e.g. 'news' or 'events' pages within specific sections. These can be reinstated in future if anyone provides content.

10.4 New Spurn Bird Observatory

JB has been approached by Spurn Bird Observatory Trust asking us to contribute to funding the renovation of a hostel for naturalists visiting the area. This will be discussed by the Executive.

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust are opening their new observatory building at 2pm on Sunday March 27th 2016. Members of the YNU are invited to attend. The building will be opened by Mike Dilger.

10.5 HLF Yorkshire's Back Garden

This is a campaign by the Heritage Lottery Fund to raise awareness of funding opportunities for projects to record and conserve wildlife in Yorkshire. The natural environment, wildlife and biodiversity are part of our heritage, and local groups are encouraged to apply for projects in these areas under the HLF open grant programmes including [Sharing Heritage](#), [Our Heritage](#) and [Young Roots](#). HLF have contacted YNU to say they are running a free networking event for local groups on the 2nd March in York to showcase successful projects and discuss opportunities. Visit their [website](#) for more information or to book a place.

10.6 OPAL Neighbours with Nature

OPAL are running a free national networking event on the 14th May in South Yorkshire to celebrate the role of volunteers and communities in nature conservation. It will bring together volunteers, scientists, environmentalists and policy makers for a mix of talks, workshops and hands-on activities. Please [click here](#) to book your place.

10.7 New YNU Recorders

Three new Recorders have been appointed since the printing of the Membership Card. Their details are on the website.

Andy Jowett – Bird Recorder for West Yorkshire

Linda Robinson – VC65 Plant Recorder

Peter Nicholson – Harvestmen Recorder

11. Any other business

TW stated that there are multiple errors in the Membership Card, including several that had been corrected during the proof reading process. There are also errors in the excursion reports published in *The Naturalist*.

PL replied that she has taken over responsibility for putting together the Membership Card with immediate effect.

AN replied that mistakes occurred in the excursion reports this year because the original authors were not involved in the proof reading. The process for producing excursion reports this year will be streamlined and the reports will be shared in a Dropbox.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held before the AGM on the 5th November 2016.