

As I write this report for the AGM about my first year at the helm of The Iris, we await our second issue, due out in mid-March. It's been a hectic 12 months but hopefully we can now move forward with confidence.

Your wonderful Editor of 57 issues, Dawn Osborn, gave the Nature Group committee plenty of notice of her desire to retire. Her experience in the world of graphic design and printing is second to none and she is a top photographer too. We asked for volunteers to take on her work, and I put my name forward to manage the content of the Iris (I have had two nature books published), but I have no experience, whatsoever, in graphic design and article publishing. We were delighted to receive an offer from Brian Boyes, LRPS, to help manage the technical side of things - the desk top publishing work of creating the necessary files which can be used by our printer. Brian is a retired policeman who lives on Mull. His retirement project is running a successful guiding business for those seeking to observe and photograph otters.

To complicate matters, Microsoft had declared they would be withdrawing support for the software we had been using. So, we asked Brian to use Affinity, a much-used desk-top publishing package for the enthusiast. Brian agreed, although it was new to him, and together we managed to publish Issue No 153 in the autumn of 2025. We were well warned, and supported, by Dawn but I think it's fair to say that we were in for a severe learning curve. We were pleased with the Autumn issue, but it had been a struggle.

Having put the Autumn issue to bed I had a good look at the current finances of producing The Iris. Expenses everywhere were increasing but the increased cost of postage and distribution were now of serious concern. We could either increase the membership fee to the RPS Nature Group to cover these increased costs or move to two issues per year - like other specialist interest groups within the RPS. Our three issues per annum format, on average, offered around 120 pages of content. We decided to move to two issues per year but provide the same volume of annual content. It was not a difficult decision to take.

During the winter months I collected and edited content to meet our 64-page commitment but we also decided to prepare a supplement to celebrate 50 years of the Nature Group since its formation in January 1976.

Meanwhile Brian was finding it difficult to offer his time to work on the new issue and its supplement whilst running his guiding business. I can well understand Brian's concerns. He retired to Mull to work with otters and this, clearly, must come first in his priorities.

It was time to rethink our ideas of how best to move forward. Finding another volunteer to help with the technical preparation of The Iris would not be easy or indeed possible. I am pleased to say that we now are using professional services. We have made sure the magazine is compiled on what is the industry's professional standard, Adobe InDesign and have agreed that we own, and have easy access to the software templates which have been created specifically for The Iris. This gives us the flexibility to easily appoint an alternative technical support should the need arise. I have also obtained a competitive quote from a new and reliable printer. All in all, we have avoided any cost increases which includes an additional 24 page 50th Anniversary supplement.

When you read this report for our AGM on 4th April, you will have received The Iris, Spring 2026, Issue No 154 and its 50th Anniversary supplement. I do hope you enjoy reading The Iris and sharing it with others.

It will always be a magazine by the members and for the members. I have to say I am thoroughly enjoying my time as your Editor.

Bruce Kendrick ARPS