



Doc: Minutes AGM 20042024 Rev A.pages

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## **Minutes of Annual General Meeting**

The 49th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 12 April 2025 at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS starting at 13:15hrs. It was chaired by Duncan Locke ARPS and attended by 36 Members. The AGM Agenda, Minutes of the 48th AGM 2024 and the Officer's Reports were made available in advance of there AGM and remain available on the RPS website under: <https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

### **1. Welcome to Members attending**

Duncan Locke ARPS (DL), Chair of the RPS Nature Group welcomed Group Members to the Meeting. He thanked his fellow Committee Members for all the planning that had gone into making this event possible.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence had been received from the following Group Members: Maggie Bullock, Christine Holt, David O'Neil, Ann Miles, James Foad, Dawn Osborn, Jeanette Hill and Lorina (last name not provided).

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

It was proposed by Bruce Kendrick and seconded by Margaret Beardsmore that the AGM Minutes be approved. They were adopted by the Members.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Annual Report of the Nature Group given by Duncan Locke ARPS**

DL reported to the Members as follows:

#### **5.1. Committee:**

I must start my Report by thanking all of the Group Committee for their hard work over the last year to maintain and improve the services provided to our Members. Historically, the Committee has been elected to serve for two years and the present Committee finishes its term of office at this 2025 AGM. However, following the adoption of new Terms of Reference for the Group in March 2024, the Committee elected at the 2025 AGM will serve for three years. Our Group Secretary, Greg Lovett, will report on any Committee changes and the results of this year's election in his Secretary's Report.

#### **5.2. Nature Group Membership:**

I am very pleased to report that the membership of the Group as of the 1st March 2025 was 981 as compared to 948 Members on the 1st March 2024, giving a 3.5% increase in

membership during the year. The Nature Group remains the third largest of the RPS Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

As of the 1st March 2025, the Group had 916 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 65 overseas Members. The biggest single overseas Group is in the USA, with 14 Members. The Group continues to have a high turnover of Members to keep our Membership Secretary, Christine Holt, very busy.

### **5.3. RPS Developments:**

As I reported at the 2024 AGM, the RPS is implementing a Transformation Plan to assure its long term financial viability. I sit on the Members Committee (MemCom) along with the Chairs of the other SIGs and Regional Organisers. The RPS has now imposed a charge on each SIG for the Financial, Membership and Website/IT services that it provides to that Group. For the Nature Group, this is just over £3 out of your £18 Annual Subscription. MemCom Members are working hard to put in place Service Level Agreements to ensure that the RPS delivers the services that we are being asked to pay for.

Your Finance Officer, Peter Ward, and Committee have carefully considered whether we can make cost savings, but has reluctantly come to the conclusion that to balance our budget we have to propose an increase in the Nature Group's Annual Subscription from £18 to £20 from the 1st January 2026; this will partially offset the charge imposed by the RPS.

More generally, I understand that discussions are taking place with a potential buyer for RPS House and Dan Jones, the CEO is leaving shortly and a replacement is being recruited. I expect the services the RPS provides to the Group to continue with these changes, but improvements may be delayed.

### **5.4. Group Website:**

You must now all be aware that the Group now has its own website separate from the RPS. We have about 335 Members registered on the site. I must thank Ian Wilson for all of his hard work in providing and maintaining this website.

The website provides us with an excellent place to advertise Group events, report on past events and share Group news with our Members. In addition it has enabled us to provide new services for our Members and improve on existing ones. In particular:

- Lightbox: Greg Lovett has developed this as a place where Members, particularly those working towards ARPS, can get constructive criticism on their images
- Galleries: this provides an easy to use place for Members to share images from successful Distinction Panels, Field Meetings, etc
- Exhibition: is provides a place for Members to view the accepted images in our Annual Exhibition
- Competitions: this has enabled us to provide our Monthly Competition

### **5.5. Monthly Competition:**

We launched the Monthly Competition in October 2023 on the basis that the competition year would run from April to March; this to fit in with our AGM in April. There would be a winner each month and, based on the accumulated scores, there would also be an overall winner for the year with a prize presented at the AGM. I am very pleased to report that the overall winner for 2024 – 2025 is our Group Secretary, Greg Lovett ARPS.

The Competition continues to prove very popular. In the competition year 2024 – 2025, 112 Members entered at least one image. On average 41 Members have entered each month and 36 have scored the images.

## **5.6. Group Activities:**

I must thank Ann Miles for continuing to coordinate a very large programme of Field Meetings, Zoom talks and Distinction Advisory Days. Last year's are listed in her Programme Coordinators Report. In 2024 the Group organised well over one event a week, all thanks to Ann's and others hard work. Last May and July we ran two very successful Macro Workshops at Toft and Welney

respectively. I would like to give particular thanks to Nick Bowman, who organised the Welney Workshop. Ann Miles also ran a Fungi Photography Workshop at Brandon Country Park in October. I am very keen to build up a programme of workshops to help Members develop their nature photography skills. Please let me have any ideas for topics and venues.

I really must thank James Foad for organising an excellent Residential Weekend on the Yorkshire Coast in June last year, including an intensive day photographing diving Gannets off Flamborough Head. James has decided to step down from organising Residential Weekends and so I would very much like to thank him for all of his hard work over the last eleven years. Preston Montford Field Studies Centre near Shrewsbury is already booked for the 2025 Residential Weekend. Could you take on James' role and organise Residential Weekends for the Group? Please contact me if you are interested. Help is available to get you started.

Last, but not least, I would also like to thank Ralph Snook for continuing to organise the Group's Annual Exhibition.

## **5.7. Challenges Facing the Group:**

Last December I sent an e-mail to Group Members outlining the challenges facing the Group in 2025 and asking Members to reply with their thoughts and if possible offers of help.

The Iris sets us two challenges in 2025: firstly Dawn Osborn intends to step down as Editor at the 2025 AGM in April and secondly the ever increasing cost of producing and more particularly posting a paper journal.

One person that I must really thank for her years of service to the Group, is Dawn, who took over as Editor for Issue 87 of The Iris, Winter 2003, and we have now reached Issue 151. There have been short breaks when other Editors have taken over, but I estimate that Dawn must have now edited over 50 issues. As a result of my e-mail last December I am hopeful that we will be able to find a replacement for Dawn.

Of the 17 Members who gave me their thoughts on the future format / frequency, of The Iris, the majority preferred to stick with the status quo: three paper issues each year and were prepared to pay more to cover the increasing costs. We plan to try and maintain three paper copies a year, but are also conscious of the very high cost of sending paper magazines overseas.

Finally, I don't think that I will offend anyone as it is a statement of fact that the Nature Group Committee are not getting any younger! We would be delighted to hear from any Members who would like to get involved in running the Group. The main qualification required: Enthusiasm!

## **5.8. Going Forward:**

As I said at last year's AGM, I believe that the aim of the Group is to inspire and educate its Members into taking better images of the natural world and so we must organise events for Members to get together and develop their nature photography. We now have an excellent and ever growing programme of Field Meetings and Workshops and it would be very helpful if you could let Ann Miles or any other Committee Member know what events you would like the Group to organise.

## **6. Group Finance Officer's Report**

Peter Ward presented his report as Group Treasurer, a copy of which is included at the end of these minutes.

## 7. Group Secretary's Report

GL reported to the Members as follows:

### 7.1. Meetings

The Committee meet bi-monthly, all meetings being undertaken by Zoom. We have therefore had 6 meetings since the last AGM. Committee meetings generally last a couple of hours on a Friday evening. I must thank the members of the Committee for their diligence in making the effort to prepare and attend Committee meetings and in particular to turn up on time. While there are inevitably occasional absences, the members of the Committee had all done their level best to attend.

### 7.2. Committee

As I mentioned at last year's AGM, the Trustees of the RPS introduced some new Terms of Reference, the document that sets out how the Nature Group (and all the other Special Interest Groups) are governed. These changes have come fully in force over the last 12 months.

As a result as we come to this year's AGM we have been operating with an elected committee of 7 individuals:

Group Chair	Duncan Locke
Group Finance Officer	Peter Ward
Group Secretary	Greg Lovett
Group Engagement and Events Officer	Ann Miles
Group Communications Officer	Ian Wilson
Ordinary Committee Members	Dawn Osborn
Ordinary Committee Members	Ralph Snook

This is a smaller committee than we have been used to operating with historically, but we are allowed to delegate responsibilities to individual volunteers or to teams of volunteers to assist in the execution of committee duties or in delivery of Group activities. We have been lucky enough to have enjoyed the support and assistance of:

- Christine Holt - Membership Secretary
- Bruce Kendrick - Publicity and events
- James Foad - Residential Weekend Advisor
- David O'Neil - Immediate Past Chair

You may recall that Dawn Osborn announced that she will be stepping down as Editor of the Iris and the Spring 2025 Edition will be her last as Editor. While Dawn will be a very hard act to follow we have received some offers of help in this respect and we hope to be able to announce the appointment of a new editorial team for the Iris in due course.

On the subject of changes, after many years helping to organise the annual Residential Weekend, James Foad has now stepped back from that role. Those of us that have had the pleasure of experiencing one of the Group's residential weekends in the past will be all too

aware of the amount of hard work and effort that have gone into making them as successful as they have been.

### **7.3. Facebook**

The Nature Groups' Facebook Page is moderated by Ann Miles and myself. We currently have 389. Members of whom 311 are considered to be active. One rate course of the year 115 people have applied to join the page, 63 of whom met the membership requirement and were allowed to join. We have declined membership of the page to 52 applicants, in each case because they failed to provide confirmation of their membership of the RPS and the Nature Group.

Of those who declared a gender, the membership is 66% male and 32% female.

The membership is largely UK based, 353 members are based in the UK, 7 in Ireland, 4 in the USA, 3 in each of India, New Zealand and Hong Kong. We also have 2 members in Switzerland and a member in each of Belgium, Israel and Gibraltar.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the most popular times to access the page is either over breakfast or later in the afternoon/early evening (UK time).

I am pleased to confirm that over the course of the year Ann and I have found the Nature Group Facebook page easy to moderate. Thanks to those who participate in the group we find that comments are generally helpful and supportive even where there are negative points to be made and, most of all, are relevant to our Nature Photography

### **7.4. Image Critique Forum**

As some of you will be aware, this time last year we set up the "Towards Associate" image critique forum aimed at those members of the Group who are working towards the Associate qualification and who would like to receive feedback on individual images. This initiative was intended to be separate from the existing Advice Days and One to Ones (which look at panels of images) but is intended to be complimentary to them.

Our aim with the "Towards Associate" group has been to provide a forum for those taking part to provide feedback which will, over time, help them recognise what constitutes images that meet the criteria needed for inclusion in a panel of images at Associate level. The facility allows those taking part to upload images for positive critique by other members of that closed group. The group includes some individuals who have already achieved either Associate or Fellowship distinctions, who are able to offer advice and guidance.

Inevitably with a forum of this nature most people choose to participate for a limited time, and once they become more confident of what is required for the Associate qualification they will want to step back from membership as they concentrate on their panel submission. As a result there is generally only a short waiting list and I encourage those members who are interested in taking part to email me for further details.

## **8. Group Engagement and Events Officer's Report**

Duncan Locke reminded the members attending that Ann Miles has only recently been discharged from hospital after a significant operation and was unable to attend. He praised the sheer number and quality of the events that she has organised over the last 12 months and referred Members to her detailed report which can be found at <https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

## **9. Membership Subscription**

DL presented the following resolution:

*“In accordance with the recommendation of the Group Committee the Members resolve that the annual membership subscription for the Nature Group be increased from £18 to £20 with effect from 1st January 2026.”*

Proposed Margaret Beardsmore second Bruce Kendrick, the resolution was passed with the unanimous approval of all Members in attendance.

## **10. Committee for 2025 -2028**

The following were elected unopposed:

Group Chair	Duncan Locke
Group Finance Officer	Peter Ward
Group Secretary	Greg Lovett
Group Engagement and Events Officer	Ann Miles
Group Communications Officer	Ian Wilson
Ordinary Committee Members	Dawn Osborn
Ordinary Committee Members	Ralph Snook

## **11. Q&A Session for Group Members with the Group Committee**

DL the gave the attending members the usual opportunity to raise questions of the Committee.

### **11.1. The Iris**

In response to various questions there was a discussion over the cost of sending The IRIS to overseas members (which exceeds an individual’s membership subscription). The general feeling was that given the relatively small number of overseas members the cost was probably inconsequential in the context of the Group’s budget as a whole.

### **11.2. The Membership Subscription**

It was suggested that the Group should just automatically uplift the membership subscription by reference to inflation rates or similar. GL explained that the current Terms of Reference did not make provision for this and that we would continue to need to seek Members approval to any potential increases members either at an AGM or EGM.

### **11.3. Membership Numbers**

In response to questions about Membership “turnover”, DL explained that while the Group’s membership remained very healthy and indeed, continued to increase, there was no real information available from the RPS as to the numbers who did not renew their subscription and their reasons for not doing so. The Committee had previously organised a Members survey which did not throw any greater light on the subject. Some degree of turnover was to be expected in the membership of a special interest group and the RPS as a whole. The age profile of RPS membership was likely to also play some part. Certainly for the time being the group membership looked healthy, and the Committee would be keen to try to ensure that this remains the situation in future.

### **11.4. Generating Revenue from the Exhibition**

The exhibition was very well received by members and several asked whether it would be possible to share this more widely and indeed to generate revenue for the Group in the

process. DL promised to take this back to the Committee to see if there was more that could be done in this respect.

## **12. Date and Venue of the 50th AGM 2026**

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held on Saturday 11th April 2026 at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS.

## **13. Thanks and Close of the AGM**

The AGM closed at 14:19hrs

**Greg Lovett ARPS**

RPS Nature Group Secretary