



## **RPS Nature Group – Minutes of the 43rd AGM – 6th April 2019**

The 43rd Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 6th April 2019 at Smethwick Photographic Society starting at 1345hrs. In the absence of Kevin Elsby FRPS, it was chaired by the Vice Chairman, David O'Neill LRPS and attended by 46 Members.

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for Absence had been received from: Margaret Beardsmore, Dickie Duckett, Moira Ellice, Kevin Elsby, Gianpiero Ferrari, Gordon Follows, John Jones, Margery Maskell, Jean Robson and Julia Wainwright.

### **Minutes of the 42nd AGM 2018:**

These had been published in the Summer 2018 issue of The Iris (No. 131).

There were no corrections to the minutes and it was proposed by Ralph Snook and seconded by Thomas Hanahoe that the minutes be approved.

### **Matters Arising:**

None.

### **Chairman's Report:**

In his absence, Kevin Elsby had provided the following written report, which was read out by David O'Neill:

Welcome to the AGM of the Nature Group for 2019.

Today I hand over the reins of Nature Group Chairman to Thomas Hanahoe. It has been a privilege and an honour to be your Chairman over the last two years.

I am sorry, however, that I cannot be with you today, but unfortunately, I had another previous engagement, in Costa Rica (sorry, I am not trying to rub it in) before the date for the AGM was set.

I hope you enjoy the talks from our speakers – they have been selected for their skill and expertise both with a camera and as their ability to entertain an audience and I feel sure you will have a great day.

As it is, I was lucky enough to have been on the selection panel for the Exhibition this year, and my colleagues on the day and I were all highly impressed with the standard of images we saw, in all categories. It was gratifying to see an increase in the entrants this year, and I hope that we can continue in this vein year on year. Of course, one of the drawbacks of this is that with every increase in entrants, it may reduce your individual chances of having your images accepted for the Exhibition and winning an award.

The membership of the Group has remained pretty stable over the last couple of years and again, as a Group we need to at least maintain the number of Members or increase them.

Over my two years tenure in the post of Chairman I have been ably assisted by a great Committee and would like to place on record today my grateful thanks for all their help. I feel sure that, under Thom's leadership that the Group will continue to develop from strength to strength. The change of Editor of The Iris went smoothly, and the introduction of the electronic version has also been very successful.

In concluding I would like to wish you all a very enjoyable day and look forward to seeing you at future meetings.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

RPS Special Interest Group (SIG) and Regional finance was discussed at the SIGs Standing Committee Meeting on 14th July 2018 and Derek Trendell (RPS Trustee and Honorary Treasurer) put forward a proposal that financial administration should be organised centrally by RPS HQ.

Regions and SIGs would retain authority over their budgets and spending, but the banking administration work would be done at RPS HQ.

Derek also recommended that the reserves of each group should be approximately 3 - 6 months operational costs. Our Nature Group reserves are closer to 3 years.

There is a trial underway with two Regions to pilot this system and we are unofficially being handled in the same way because we do not have a permanent Treasurer.

I suspect it may stay this way, which means as Treasurer I document Income and Expenditure, but have no access to the Bank Account. Personally, I do not have a problem with this as the Treasurer's role becomes an administration task without the burden of financial responsibilities.

The down side is that we can only properly recognise Income from Bank Statements, which are about 6 weeks behind. For example, February Income will show in the March Bank Statement that we will receive in the 2nd week of April.

The Balance Sheet (attached at the end of these Minutes) is an overall summary of Income and Expenditure for the year 2018.

There followed discussion on the Group's relatively large financial reserves and the following points were raised:

1. How can the Group's financial reserves be used to benefit Group Members?  
Suggestions made included:

- first year free membership for New Members
- subsidised Workshops, Field Meetings and two Residential Weekends a year
- a subsidised Weekend Conference
- creation of a web based education package that would attract Younger Members
- encourage Younger Members to attend our Exhibition - this could trigger their interest in Nature Photography

- work with the Field Studies Council to develop a course for young nature photographers
- creation of a monthly competition (perhaps with sponsorship) with a public vote on say Facebook to select the winner
- involvement with the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme

**Residential Weekends:** James Foad pointed out that there will be two Residential Weekends in 2019.

**Web Based Education Package:** David O'Neill said that the RPS was keen to grow the educational side of the organisation by liaison with Universities, etc. Ralph Snook said that we must not underestimate the amount of work required to produce such a package. Commissioning a University to produce one was suggested.

**Exhibition:** David O'Neill said that the Group was keen to get the Exhibition into more venues. The one at the Apex in Bury St Edmunds had been well received.

It was suggested that getting the Exhibition into places such as RSPB Reserve Centres and Wildlife Parks where young people go would help to encourage their interest in nature photography.

David O'Neill said that at present the Exhibition space in the new RPS HQ in Bristol is not available to SIGs for their exhibitions. The RPS regards this space as being for high profile exhibitions that will bring revenue into the Society. Both the SIGs and RPS Regions are working to try and change this present RPS policy.

It was thought that putting the Exhibition on-line could be difficult as the Group does not have direct access to a web platform. Ralph Snook thought that putting the Exhibition on-line would probably not have a great impact on the attendance at the Exhibitions.

David O'Neill said that through the SIG Committee, the RPS was planning to book venues throughout the country that could be used by the SIGs and Regions to have joint meetings and which could include an Exhibition.

2. Is there a danger that RPS HQ could take some of the Group's reserves on the basis that they are currently excessive? It was also pointed out that the RPS is a Registered Charity and the Charities Commission could intervene if it becomes aware of excessive reserves. The Treasurer said that at present there was no indication that the RPS would take some of the Group's reserves, which from the Charities Commission point of view were only a small part of the overall RPS finances.

Brian Ferry said that as a Registered Charity we were not allowed to spend our reserves for the direct benefit of our Members.

**Conclusion:** in conclusion, David O'Neill said that the Committee would actively look at ways of using the Group's reserves for the benefit of Group Members and to encourage more young people to take up nature photography.

## **Secretary's Report:**

There have been two well attended Committee Meetings held at Smethwick since the last AGM. Going forward, the Committee will continue to have two face to face meetings a year, but I am going to look for a venue that is more central to where Committee Members live. Also we plan to trial video meetings. The AGM will remain here at Smethwick as it is central and provides an excellent venue for the Exhibition.

There have been no changes to the Committee during the year. We still do not have a full-time Treasurer and so David O'Neill has continued to act as both Vice Chairman and Honorary Treasurer. Ralph Snook, in addition to being Exhibition Secretary, also acts as Webmaster.

The Nature Group Committee is elected to serve for two years and the present Committee comes to the end of its term of office at this 2019 AGM. Four Committee Members: Gordon Follows, John Jones, Barbara Lawton and Richard Revels are all standing down from the Committee. I would like to thank them all very much for their excellent help and support over the last two years while I have been Secretary.

I act as Membership Secretary in that I monitor the number of Members in the Group, send a welcome letter and a copy of the current issue of The Iris to each New Member and I e-mail a questionnaire to those leaving asking them their reason for leaving.

The current membership of the RPS Nature Group from the RPS website is 897 and we are the third largest SIG behind Digital Imaging and Visual Arts. At the time of last year's AGM the membership was 980 and so there has been a reduction of 83 Members during the year.

Why the decrease in membership numbers? At last year's AGM I reported that the RPS ended central funding of First Year Free Membership of a SIG as of the 31st December 2017. After careful analysis we concluded that it was not cost effective for the Group to continue with First Year Free Membership funded from Group funds. This was agreed by the Committee and Free Membership ceased at the start of 2018. So up until the end of 2018, there was a continual loss of Free Group Members as a proportion of those who joined in 2017 did not take up paid membership.

I stated last year that I expected the Group Membership to decrease to somewhere between 850 and 900 Members by the end of 2018. Overall the decrease in membership is if anything less than I expected.

There is now the normal turnover of Nature Photographers joining the group and those of more advancing years ceasing to be Members. Difficult to quantify as the numbers do vary considerably from month to month, but on average it is about twelve Members per month.

I get very few complaints about the Nature Group from those who reply to my questionnaire asking them why they left the Group. Some have simply left the RPS due to the high cost of membership, but some do complain about the lack of Nature Group events close to where they live. Something that I believe we need to address.

Finally, 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 more events for Members to get together and develop their nature photography. So please think about whether you could organise an event that would be of interest to Nature Group Members – you'll learn a lot from it as well – if you have any ideas then please come and talk to the Committee about it – we are here to help.

### **Committee for 2019 - 2021**

Like many Clubs and Societies, the Nature Group is finding it increasingly difficult to find willing volunteers to serve on the Committee. I am pleased to say that with two notable exceptions that the Group does have a complete Committee for the next two years; that is from this present AGM to the 2021 AGM. The exceptions being that the Group still needs to recruit a full-time Treasurer and a full-time Webmaster.

Four Committee Members: Gordon Follows, John Jones, Barbara Lawton and Richard Revels are all standing down from the Committee.

Four replacements have been nominated and agreed to join the Committee: Ann Miles, Julia Andrew, James Foad and Julia Wainwright. No Committee positions are being contested and therefore no elections will be required.

The Committee for 2019 – 2021 will be as follows:

<b>Chairman:</b>	Thomas Hanahoe FRPS
<b>Vice Chairman:</b>	David O'Neill LRPS
<b>Honorary Secretary:</b>	Duncan Locke LRPS
<b>Honorary Treasurer:</b>	David O'Neill LRPS (acting)
<b>SIG Group Representative:</b>	David O'Neill LRPS
<b>Immediate Past Chairman:</b>	Kevin Elsby FRPS
<b>Exhibition Secretary:</b>	Ralph Snook ARPS
<b>Programme Coordinator:</b>	Ann Miles FRPS
<b>Editor of The Iris:</b>	Gerald Griffin ARPS
<b>Editor of the eNewsletter:</b>	Dawn Osborn FRPS
<b>Webmaster:</b>	Ralph Snook ARPS (acting)
<b>Committee Members:</b>	Julia Andrew LRPS James Foad LRPS Stan Saunders ARPS Julia Wainwright ARPS

Sonja Thompson proposed and Trevor Davenport seconded that the new Committee be elected and it was agreed with none against.

### **Any Other Business:**

None.

### **Date and Venue of the 44th AGM 2019:**

The 44th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS on Saturday 4th April 2020.

## Treasurers Report for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018

### Cash Book Summary:

Current Account Balance:	31 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 2017	£19,593.14
Income for 12 Months to 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec:		£15,555.43
Expenditure for 12 Months to 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec:		(£9,576.44)
Closing Balance:	31 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 2018	£25,572.13
<b>Bank Account Balance:</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 2018</b>	<b>£25,572.13</b>

### Income and Expenditure Summary:

	<b>Income:</b>	<b>Expenditure:</b>
Members' Subscriptions:	£12,128.53	
Life Members' Subscriptions:	£686.00	
Deposits for 2019 Event:	£400.00	
Exhibition:	£1,144.00	£1,372.49
Chairman's Day:	£830.83	£814.78
Printing & Distribution (The Iris):		£4,717.95
Travel, Room Hire AGM/Committee:		£2,195.84
Admin. and Other:		£475.38
Other Income:	£366.07	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>£15,555.43</b>	<b>£ 9,576.44</b>

### Notes:

1. Exhibition Expenses includes unplanned costs of £360 to hire the Apex, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk for the current Nature Group Exhibition. This is a current exhibition that is still open.
2. Income includes £400 in deposits for our 2019 Event at the Field Studies Centre.
3. Printing and Distribution Costs only covers 2 editions, so we expect another invoice of about £2400.

### Summary:

We have an increase of income over expenditure of £5,978.99 and even after adjusting for Notes 2 and 3 this remains a healthy increase of £3,178.99.