



RPS Nature Group – Minutes of the 47th AGM

1st April 2023

The 47th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 1st April 2023 at Smethwick Photographic Society starting at 1317hrs. It was attended by 40 Members. The AGM Agenda, Minutes of the 46th AGM 2022, Officers' Reports and Programme Coordinator's Report were made available in advance of the AGM and remain available on the RPS website under: <https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

Welcome and Apologies for Absence:

David O'Neill LRPS, Chair of the RPS Nature Group welcomed Group Members to the Meeting. David thanked his fellow Committee Members for all the planning that had gone into making this event possible.

Apologies for Absence had been received from: Malcolm Blackburn, Moira Ellis, Thomas Hanahoe, Christine Holt, Margaret Johnson, Patricia Kreyer, Dawn Osborn, Colin Smith, Dan Jones (CEO, RPS), Michael Pritchard (Programmes Director, RPS) and Laura Gardner (Volunteer and Member Support Co-ordinator, RPS).

Minutes of the 46th AGM 2022 (printed in Issue 143 of The Iris, Summer 2022 and available on the RPS Nature Group Website):

There were no corrections to the Minutes and it was proposed by Greg Lovett and seconded by Ralph Snook that the Minutes be approved. They were adopted by the Members.

Matters Arising:

None.

Chair's Report – David O'Neill LRPS:

The RPS Website: there have been further signs of improvement with the website for both administration and events and it is now less disruptive to Group activities. However, we still have compromises in place for events and some aspects of administration are still causing issues.

Photographic Competition: we plan to launch our inaugural photographic competition shortly and a more detailed broadcast will be sent out to Members by Julia Wainwright.

The main advantage of PhotoComp is that it has the same look and feel as PhotEx, which means that Members who have entered exhibitions before should already be familiar with the way it works.

Events: unfortunately, Nick Bowman needed to step down from the Committee recently and I would like to thank him for the valuable support he has given Ann in planning and running events.

Ann Miles is continuing her work to extend our range of events to as many counties as possible and we are hoping to encourage more Members across the UK to offer to host events in their local areas. If you are a regular visitor to a local nature spot, then please consider organising an

event and sharing your knowledge with other Members. If you are interested in doing this, then please contact Ann Miles or any other Committee Member.

Advisory days have also become a regular feature of our calendar and have proven to be both popular and successful.

We are also looking for Zoom speakers so that we can continue to offer a variety of talks that are available to Members and I would like to encourage anyone who has experience of giving talks on nature to consider presenting a talk for the Group.

Young Persons Membership: there is now a section on the website for Young Photographers that can be used to monitor the progress of the RPS offering. This is planned to include a specific magazine for young people, workshops throughout the year and online digital content for them to access such as activities and competitions.

<https://rps.org/youngphotographers>

This includes 'Coming Soon – RPS Young Photographers', which is a survey aimed at Young Photographers between the ages of 12 – 16.

'The Royal Photographic Society strive to make photography exciting and accessible to everyone. Our education team are looking at ways that they can give young people interested in photography the resources and opportunities that are important to them. We really value the opinions of young people that want to engage with us and our programme, and want to hear what it is that you want from the Royal Photographic Society, and the things that will help you on your journey as a young photographer.'

The Sharp Shots Photo Club section covers workshops and courses, which includes Duke of Edinburgh awards.

There are many other articles on this page including a section on Activities and Resources.

Other Committee Business: this is my last report as Chair, so I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone on the Committee for the support that they give to the Nature Group.

Duncan Locke as Secretary and Membership Secretary has a strategically important role with organising Committee events and supporting New Members, but is now taking over from me as Chair. Christine Holt will take on the Membership Secretary role, but at the time of writing we still need a new Secretary. Peter Ward as Treasurer looks after our Finances, which is a vital and often overlooked role. Ralph Snook looks after the Website and continues to manage the Exhibition every year which is a major event in our calendar that celebrates the photographic achievements of Members. Dawn Osborn has managed the transition of The Iris into an A4 magazine, which has received a lot of highly positive feedback from Members as the flagship of the Group. James Foad continues to manage Residential Meetings, which despite the setbacks of Covid have all been popular and well attended. Ann Miles who in addition to her work on Events looks after Advisory Days too. Julia Wainwright manages a thriving Facebook community of 285 Nature Group Members in addition to the new Photography Competition.

The Chair's Report was accepted by the Members.

Treasurer's Report – Peter Ward:

This is included at the end of these Minutes.

In response to questions raised by the Members present, Peter explained:

- Problems caused by the RPS membership software updates, inadequate accounting information and delays in the RPS passing on Members subscriptions have made the allocation of costs difficult in the year 2022.

- Considering the outstanding subscriptions due from the RPS, which Peter has been told should be resolved over the next 6 months, the Group's income and expenditure are considered stable and in line with previous years.

The Treasurer's Report was accepted by the Members.

Secretary's Report – Duncan Locke ARPS:

Committee: since last year's AGM on the 9th April 2022, we have had five well attended Zoom Committee Meetings plus a number of shorter ones to discuss particular issues. Committee Meetings will continue to be held on Zoom at about 6 to 8 weeks intervals unless there is an opportunity for the Committee to meet face-to-face without incurring additional travel costs.

There has been one change to the Committee during the year. Nick Bowman stood down from the role of Assistant Programme Coordinator at the end of 2022 for personal reasons and I would like to thank him for the tremendous amount of work that he put into helping Ann Miles with Field Meetings.

The Committee is elected for two years and the present Committee will stand down at the AGM on the 1st April 2023. At full strength the Committee should have twelve Members and going forward into the 2023 – 2025 period we will only have eight Committee Members. We are always keen to hear from Group Members who are interested in joining the Committee and helping to run the Nature Group. We are also aware that we have some specialist roles on the Committee and long term will have the difficult task of filling these.

Nature Group Membership: I act as Membership Secretary in that I monitor the number of Members in the Group and send a welcome e-mail and a copy of the latest issue of The Iris to each New Member.

The membership of the Group as of the 1st March 2023 was 899 as compared to 960 Members on the 1st March 2022, so there has been a 6.5% decrease in membership during the year. Some of this decline may be due to the ongoing issues with the RPS Membership System, particularly in the summer of 2022.

Over the period 1st March 2022 to 1st March 2023, 125 New Members joined the Group and, based on overall membership numbers, 186 left so there continues to be a high turnover of Members.

As of the 1st March 2023, the Group had 841 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 58 overseas Members. The biggest overseas Group is in the USA, with 14 Members. Although the Group membership is down from last year, I am encouraged by the fact that we had 28 New Members join the Group in January and February 2023, which is comparable with past years.

Issues with the RPS Membership System: as many of you will know the RPS installed a new Customer Relationship Management system in the middle of 2022 and this has caused significant issues with the Membership and Event Booking systems. One area that has been a particular issue for me is the preparation of the address list for The Iris. A number of Members' addresses have become corrupted on the database so please let me know if you do not receive your copy of The Iris and do login to the RPS Website and check that your details are correct.

Due to the issues with the Membership System I have delayed handing over the role of Membership Secretary to Chris Holt. This I will be doing in the near future.

What Do Nature Group Members Want? 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 ever growing programme of Field Meetings, Workshops and Residential Weekends. 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.

The Secretary's Report was accepted by the Members.

Programme Coordinator's Report – Ann Miles FRPS:

The Nature Group has organised many events since the last AGM with a series of Zoom Lectures, Distinction Events and a wide variety of Field Trips. All events are listed on the Nature Group home page when ready for booking and News Items and Galleries are created after the events (see appended, some of the images from our Galleries).

The talks by Bruce Kendrick, Ann Miles, Ian Wilson, Kevin Pigney, Kevin Elsby, Danny Green and Mick Durham were excellent and many thanks to those who have helped provide this service to Members. If you missed any of these, recording can be found from the Nature Group home page under Event Recordings.

We ran a 'live' Advisory Day at Smethwick in the autumn so that those long-neglected prints could be shared and an online Advisory Day in January. The event at Smethwick was expensive to run so we will need to be sure that it will be well subscribed (Advice places as well as Observers) before undertaking another.

We have run a great number of Field Trips since the last AGM and have many more planned (lists for 2022-2023 appended). Thanks to Duncan Locke, Peter Ward, Nick Bowman, Bruce Kendrick, Ken Rasmussen, Chris Holt, Margaret Beardsmore and David O'Neill who are helping to run events. Hopefully those attending have had fun, got the occasional satisfying image and made new friends.

We are still looking for Volunteers to help organise events so we can spread the locations out over more of the country. I have e-mails from South Western, Northern and Scottish Members wishing the events were not so far away, so it would be great if more Members were willing to share their favourite locations: you do not have to be an expert in any field, just have an enthusiasm for a locality and its wildlife.

We would also love to hear your suggestions for events – do you want more Zoom Events and on what topics; more Practical Workshops and topics; ideas for Field Trips.

The Programme Coordinator's Report was accepted by the Members.

Committee for 2023 – 2025:

The Committee is elected to serve for a two year term and were now due to retire having been elected at the 45th RPS Nature Group AGM in 2021.

All of the Committee, save the retiring Chair. David O'Neill, had indicated their willingness to re-stand and were re-elected accordingly, with Duncan Locke becoming the new Chair.

Greg Lovett was nominated as Honorary Secretary, the nomination being proposed by David O'Neil and seconded by Dawn Osborn. The Members present voted unanimously in favour of his election.

Accordingly the new Committee was:

Chair:	Duncan Locke ARPS
Honorary Secretary:	Greg Lovett ARPS
Honorary Treasurer:	Peter Ward
Vice Chair:	Vacant
Editor of The Iris:	Dawn Osborn FRPS
Exhibition Secretary and Webmaster:	Ralph Snook ARPS
Membership Secretary:	Christine Holt LRPS
Programme Coordinator:	Ann Miles FRPS
Residential Weekend Advisor:	James Foad LRPS

Facebook/Competition Admin:
Immediate Past Chair:

Julia Wainwright FRPS
David O'Neill LRPS

Duncan Locke thanked his fellow Committee Members, for all their hard work during the year just gone and in the year to come.

Duncan then thanked David O'Neil for all his efforts on behalf of the Nature Group Members over the ten years during which he had served on the Committee in a variety of roles, of which the last two have been in his role as Chair. Duncan then presented David with the RPS Silver Medal in recognition of that very significant contribution.

Any Other Business:

A number of Members raised the issue of the continuing problems being experienced with the RPS website portal.

The RPS Journal was raised and after discussion it was clear that in the view of those present, the RPS Journal was largely irrelevant to their own photographic interests.

The delays in the RPS paying the monies due to the Group reported by Peter Ward should not be allowed to continue.

After discussion the following resolution was proposed by Brian Ferry and seconded by Bruce Kendrick

“The Nature Group expresses strong dissatisfaction with the performance of the RPS in the following areas:

- 1. It is considered that the Journal lacks balance and should better reflect all Members' interests;**
- 2. Problems with the new website continue to have a real detrimental impact on Members in the areas of (i) booking events and (ii) the process of membership renewal;**

and

- 3. Inadequate financial control by the RPS is leading to delays in the receipt of funds by the Nature Group.**

All of which cause a risk of loss of faith amongst the membership of the RPS.

The Chair is accordingly requested to seek a meeting with the CEO of the RPS to discuss these problems and to seek his assurance of improvements within a specific measurable timeframe.”

The resolution was passed by 40 votes in favour and none against, with no abstentions.

Date and Venue of the 48th RPS Nature Group AGM 2024:

The 48th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held on Saturday 20th April 2024 (date to be confirmed) at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS.

The AGM closed at 1440hrs.

Greg Lovett ARPS
Honorary Secretary RPS Nature Group

Treasurer's Report for AGM 2023

Peter Ward

Report for the Year Ended 31st December 2022

Cash Book Summary:

Current Account Balance:	31 st Dec 2021	£ 28,369.81
Income for 12 Months to 31 st Dec:		£ 14,306.03
Expenditure for 12 Months to 31 st Dec:		(£ 20,768.86)
Closing Balance:	31 st Dec 2022	£ 21,906.98
Bank Account Balance:	31 st Dec 2022	£ 21,906.98

Income and Expenditure Summary:

	Income:	Expenditure:
Members' Subscriptions:	£ 8,283.18	
Field Trips:	£ 50.00	£50.00
Publications:	£ 36.00	
Administration:		£ 928.85
Exhibition:		£570.65
Events in Year:	£470.00	£ 50.00
Printing & Distribution (Iris):		£ 13,297.56
Distinction Days:	£195.00	£ 518.18
Residential Kingcombe:	£4430.00	£ 4,362.45
Residential Margam:	£548.85	
Talks and donations:		£ 160.00
Other Income/Expenses:	£ 293.00	£100.00
Committee:		£ 731.17
Totals	£ 14,306.03	£ 20,768.86

Notes:

1. Income is down by 32% because of RPS updates to the membership software resulting in membership subscriptions not been credited into our account. The last payment was made in June so we are missing 6 months of subscriptions.
Payments were received for July, August and Sept 2022 in February 2023 and will be included in 2023 accounts. The shortfall in 2022 will balance out in the 2023 accounts as we should receive an extra 6 months of membership subscriptions.
2. The next biggest income was from the residential trip to Kingcombe, but this was balanced by the expenditure for the same trip.

3. Expenditure was up by 8% mainly driven by the extra cost of the A4 print of The Iris. Printing and distribution costs of The Iris increased by £3818.10 compared to the previous year, but the feedback from the membership has been very positive.

Summary:

2022 has been a very difficult year to allocate the costs because of the membership software update. I received bank statements with just payment codes and no description of the source.

Considering the missing subscriptions our income and expenditure are stable and in line with previous years.

Peter Ward
21st March 2023