

Minutes of the 47th Annual General Meeting of the Porcupine Marine Natural History Society, held in Kimmeridge House, Bournemouth University

24.03.2024

50 members present

Apologies: received from Council members Cat Joniver, Winter Dotto, Beccy Macdonald-Lofts and Craig Robertson.

Matters Arising from and agreement of the minutes of 46th AGM, held in Bangor, and published in the PMNHS Bulletin Number 20.

None. Minutes proposed as correct by David Kipling and seconded by Iain Dixon.

Officers' Reports:

Hon. Treasurer (Fiona Ware)

A summary of the Porcupine receipts and payments accounts for the year to 31st December 2023 are provided.

Overall situation – the Society continues to have a healthy bank balance of £19,227, an increase of £1,558 on the previous year. This balance includes £3,100 in bequests & donations which are ring-fenced for specific projects.

Membership subscriptions – receipts have increased compared to 2022 and subscriptions remain higher than the costs of the Bulletin and other core maintenance costs.

Bank interest – the Society's current account pays no interest. As interest rates have risen significantly, Council agreed to transfer £10,000 into a BoS Fixed Term Deposit at 5.08 % Gross p.a. (variable) with a maturity date of 14th February 2025.

Contributions - contributions of £59 were recorded from historic Standing Orders for lapsed membership subscriptions.

Bulletin – the costs of printing and postage continue to rise. In 2023, the cost was, on average, £17.16 for each member receiving hard copies of both the Spring and Autumn Bulletins (£5.88 printing and £2.70 postage per Bulletin).

Website – £57 was paid for the Society's web hosting service and £13 was paid for a temporary Mailchimp subscription.

Council expenses – £86 was paid for the autumn council meeting room hire and further £40 was claimed for autumn council meeting travel expenses. A gift from the membership to a retiring council officer was £34.

Accountancy fees and Corporation tax – the Society is registered with HMRC for Corporation Tax and the Society engaged a professional accountant (LJ Accountancy Services Ltd) to examine the 2022 accounts and submit the tax return. There was no income from non-members in 2022 so no tax was owed. The accountancy fee, including filing charges from HMRC, was £100.

Annual conference – the annual conference was held at Bangor University. 80 delegates (including 26 new members) attended the conference for one or both days and registration fee receipts covered the venue and catering costs, the tote bags and the subsidies below with £1,305 remaining to boost the Society's funds. The Society subsidised the Anglesey Sea Zoo visit (£75), the dive boat (£146) and the conference dinner (£50). The book stall raised an additional £603 and the raffle raised £269. A £355 deposit has been paid for the Conference 2024 dinner.

Field meeting – a deposit of £200 was paid towards boat hire for the Alderney 2024 field meeting. This will be recouped from the participants in 2024.

Roger Bamber Research Grant – Lara Baptista claimed the full amount of £995 for her project on phidolopodid bryozoans which was awarded in 2022. Elizabeth Beston claimed £767 of her £838 grant which was awarded in 2023 for her Norfolk coast plankton project – the remainder will be claimed in early 2024. Fliss Fraser has yet to claim her 2023 grant award of £750 for the Small Isles Snorkel Trail project.

Frank Evans Writing Award – David Kipling was awarded £100 for ‘Field observations of an inshore bloom of the coccolithophore *Emiliana huxleyi* (Firth of Clyde, 2021)’ published in Bulletin Number 17, Spring 2022.

Sponsorship – to raise the profile of the Society amongst students, £250 was provided in sponsorship of the MBA's 19th postgraduate conference held at Aberystwyth University in April 2023.

Hon. Membership Secretary (Jon Moore)

With the healthy overall finances of the Society, Council have decided not to increase membership rates. However, as reported above, with increasing costs, Membership fees will not cover production of the hard copy Bulletins for very much longer.

Thanks were given to new Members joining for the conference, and it was pointed out that this will give membership for one year. Reminders will be sent out closer to the time to rejoin, but it would be helpful if recurring payments could be set up by anyone interested.

There has been an issue with completion of the online application form lately, so alternatives such as Google forms are being considered.

Membership numbers:

	March 2023	March 2024
Full (£18)	194	198
Student (£10)	30	27
Reduced (£10)	9	14
Life Members	4	4
Free (Legal Deposit Libraries)	8	9
Total	245	270
New since March 23		26
Hard Copy Bulletin	157	160
Payments: PayPal	105	111
SO	117	116
BACS	12	11
Conference 2023		19

The Hon. Editor's Report (Iain Dixon)

The spring 2023 Bulletin comprised 13 articles from 14 contributors spanning 72 pages. Many of these articles were based on the PMNHS field trip to Lundy that had taken place during the previous summer, but also covered marine citizen science projects and several reviews. The latter included an illuminating critique by Chris Mettam on modern trends in classification as embodied in two new books covering fish and invertebrates.

The autumn 2023 Bulletin presented 14 articles from 19 contributors over 84 pages. In addition to book and website reviews, it included papers from the preceding Bangor conference, an account of the captain and cruises of HMS Porcupine, the first in a hoped-for series of articles documenting the history of marine citizen science and articles covering nudibranchs from Skomer, bryozoan phylogeny and the identification of shovel head worms (Magelonidae). The latter two articles were the culmination of projects that had received funding from Porcupine's Roger Bamber grant Awards.

Thanks were given to Vicki Howe who, after 12 years and 24 Bulletins, handed over the Hon. Editor role to Iain Dixon. Thanks were also given to all who contributed articles, to Teresa Darbyshire for putting each bulletin together and to the members who proofread: Tammy Horton, Iain Dixon, Vicki Howe, Sarah Bowen, Jane Pottas and Peter Barfield.

Articles for the Bulletin are always required. These can be on any aspect of the marine environment: stories of interesting records or observations, projects, research, current issues of interest, taxonomy, history, and reviews are all welcome. The deadlines for copy are the same from year to year: end of the first week in June for the autumn Bulletin and end of the first week in December for the spring bulletin. Proposals for articles, questions can be sent to editor@pmnhs.co.uk. Guidelines for authors can be found on the website and on the inside back cover of each Bulletin.

The winner of the 2023 Frank Evans Writing prize was announced and went to Lara Baptista for her article 'Reconstructing the phylogeny of philodopodid bryozoans in the North Atlantic'. Congratulations to Lara, and also to close runners Abbie Taylor & Kate Mortimer for their 'Comprehensive guide to the terminology and identification of shovel head worms (Annelida: Magelonidae) – Part 2' and Jo Clark for 'A Somerset Shoresearch Journey: from Clueless Newbie to Littoral Addict'.

Hon. Website Officer (Cat Joniver)

Report compiled by Cat Joniver and presented by Paul Brazier in Vivien Shaw's absence. Thanks were given to Cat as the outgoing web officer.

Hosting and Costs: The website is hosted by UK2, which provides a good service including the hosting of email addresses for all council members which can be managed and access provided on the server.

Domain registration for pmnhs.co.uk for two years Total: £19.98. Next due 28th October 2024.

Web-Complete for pmnhs.co.uk Total: £47.88. Payment every year. Next due for renewal in 27th November, 2024.

Porcupine email addresses are: General: porcupine@pmnhs.co.uk

chairperson@pmnhs.co.uk

treasurer@pmnhs.co.uk

secretary@pmnhs.co.uk

editor@pmnhs.co.uk

records@pmnhs.co.uk

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grantsawards@pmnhs.co.uk

General updates: Please continue to send notices to be uploaded: text and appropriate pictures need to be sent separately – not embedded in a word document.

Newsletter hosting & downloading: Issues of the Bulletin from the last two years are available to paid members of the Society. This is updated on the website prior to the March conference each year. Therefore, all back issues of the Newsletter/ Bulletin are available on the website. Downloads of the Bulletin (password protected) for those choosing to receive the Bulletin as PDF is via the website.

Council member details/positions & Constitution: Annual changes to council members' details are hosted on the website. This is also where we host the AGM notices.

The current Constitution is here: <http://pmnhs.co.uk/contact-us>

The Privacy Policy is here: <http://pmnhs.co.uk/council-documents>.

Conference & Field trip information: The website hosts information and downloads about the annual conference and field trips, including linking to Eventbrite for tickets and posting information about the venues.

Social Media: The Facebook group remains very active with **1,300 (~ +100 since March 2023)** current members. Facebook is well-used for PMNHS interactions; for posting pictures, general discussions and enquiries. Our Twitter account continues to be popular with **1707 (+ 100 since March 2023)** followers and **>3750** tweets posted. The platform seems to have varying amount of engagement since it changed to X. As it stands both are useful platforms for disseminating information about PMNHS and require minimal effort. We remain grateful to @cardiffcurator who sends many Porcupine posts for us.

The Hon Record's Convenor Report (Julia Nunn)

The recording scheme remains small and is principally used for PMNHS field trip records. Records from the 2023 Porcupine conference fieldwork (March, Menai Strait) have been entered. There are no records from autumn fieldwork due to the cancellation of the event. Casual records were received from a DAERA training course in May, and Paul Brazier from personal fieldwork in September. Record entry this year would have been low if I had not received 1547 plankton records (so far) from Elizabeth Beston from her Porcupine funded project recording in north Norfolk.

The database now holds 90 surveys with 46, 065 taxa records: an addition of 2417 for the year.

All records entered onto the Porcupine *Marine Recorder* database are made publicly available via DASSH, and sent by DASSH on our behalf to the NBN Atlas. It is disappointing that an older dataset (sent about a year ago) has not yet been uploaded to the NBN. An updated dataset including 2023 records will be sent within the next couple of months.

I would encourage everyone who has casual records (even common species), or datasets from fieldwork such as student projects to consider sending them to the Porcupine recording scheme. Apps such as iRecord & iNaturalist are ideal for a few casual records with images, but the Porcupine scheme is ideal for longer lists, where supplying images is impractical.

PMNHS has been represented by myself at four virtual meetings of the *Marine Recorder* Working Group during the past year, chaired by JNCC. The new *Marine Recorder* Online

has been under construction since November 2021 when the contract (funded by DEFRA) was awarded to Ocean Ecology. It is now in an intensive testing and data migration stage. My intention is to send the Porcupine database for migration after receipt of the final records from Elizabeth Beston i.e. early summer.

Marine Recorder will be entirely online. The model is that participating agencies, record centres and groups such as ourselves have separate tenancies within the online structure. Within this model, duplication is not ideal, so Porcupine will no longer hold copies of Seasearch records generated on Porcupine field trips.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Paul Brazier as Chair of PMNHS and sent to JNCC on 13th March 2023. Log in credentials were supplied by JNCC on 20th March (post conference/AGM). A further Memorandum of Agreement (specifically referring to *Marine Recorder* online) was signed by Paul Brazier on 30th January 2024 and sent to JNCC in March 2024.

Hon. Chair (Paul Brazier)

Porcupine Council have been very busy this year; we have had five meetings in total, with 3 zoom meetings and two face to face meetings including one the evening before the conference. The additional zoom meetings have helped us to discuss the organisation of the conference as well as other considerations.

There have been many items for the Council to consider, largely covered by the preceding officers' reports. We have taken forward planning for field trips and the conference, ongoing updates for the website, updates on the grants and awards, material for the bulletin the financial status, particularly in respect of the increased costs for printing and posting of the bulletin.

Last autumn, a few Porcupines joined the Cornwall Wildlife Trust on a field trip completing Shoresearch with Matt Slater and there were also a few independent excursions to the seashore as part of the Porcupine autumn field activities.

There has been a spring and autumn bulletin and it's the 10-year anniversary of the publication as a bulletin. Iain has done a great job coming into the post as honorary editor.

We have instigated the Betty Green bequest to provide a small financial assistance to aid individuals to attend the conference this year and in the future.

I would like to thank Roger Herbert for organising the conference he's done an excellent job with the assistance of Laetitia and I would also like to thank Sarah for so much that she's done in the run up to the conference and Vivien for jumping in to the web officer's role at such a busy time just before the conference. Vicki has done a sterling job at

maintaining the Twitter feed in the absence of Kate Mortimer who would normally have completed this role. In the background all the council have pulled together to support the conference in the different elements of the weekend, including the bookstore, raffle, front desk and the quiz.

Officer reports were accepted.

Proposed by Frances Dipper, seconded by Doug Herdson and agreement of all members via a show of hands.

Grants

Teresa updated Members on the current Roger Bamber grant awards.

Elizabeth Beston has been very active, recording throughout the year. She submitted an interim report for Bulletin number 21 and will produce a final report next year.

Fliss Fraser from the Small Isles Community Council, has promised drafts of the snorkel trail leaflet for Council members to view prior to printing.

There was no grant award made this year as the only application was not felt to be suitable for funding. The Shelagh Smith bequest, ring-fenced for a molluscan project, was awarded to Fiona Boston and Ingrid Hesling for their project to survey *Phorcus lineatus*.

It was surprising that there were so few applications for the 2024 round of grants, so members are strongly encouraged to apply. Awards of up to £1,000 are available.

Elections

Two positions needed to be filled:

Vivien Shaw (existing Ordinary Council Member) to take on the Hon. Website Officer role and a nomination from Charlotte Cumming to fill the Ordinary Council member vacancy.

Both nominations were accepted, with Vicki Howe proposing and Iain Dixon seconding.

AOB:

Paul explained that he had hoped to be in a position to announce the dates and venue for the 2025 conference, but discussions are at a very early stage and nothing has been firmed up yet. Council will meet via Zoom in the next few weeks to try and confirm and Members will be informed as soon as possible.

Sarah Bowen, Hon. Secretary

30.04.2024