



Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Committee
Charity 224018

The twenty first meeting of the Natural Sciences Committee was held at St Chad's Parish Hall, Otley Road, Far Headingley, Leeds, LS16 5JT at **10.15am Saturday 28th April 2012.**

Present: Adrian Norris (Chair), Paula Lightfoot (minutes), Chris Young, Andy Godfrey, Mark Seaward, Roger Key, Terry Crawford, Michael Archer, Albert Henderson, Paul Simmons.

Minutes

1. Apologies for absence:

John Wint, Geoffrey Wilmore, Graeme Coles, Michael Denton, Andrew Grayson, Phyl Abbott, Sarah West, Bill Curtis, Jill Warwick, John Bowers, Janetta Lambert, Andy Millard, Hannah Droop, Terry Whitaker, Mick Carroll, Colin Howes, J. R. Mather.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of the meetings held at St Chad's 17th September 2011 and at the AGM on 19th November 2011 had been circulated by e-mail and are available to download from the YNU website. The minutes were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising

Update on the B-Lines project (item 15 on the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th September): Paul Evans was invited to talk at a meeting of the YNU entomologists. He has agreements with farmers in the Malton area to establish some B-Lines and YNU entomologists have agreed to do the monitoring later in the year.

4. Review of the remit and membership of the Natural Sciences Committee

This group used to be the Executive Committee of the YNU until the YNU's constitution was changed. This change to the constitution and the establishment of the smaller Executive left many members without a forum to discuss issues and bring about changes, so the Natural Sciences Committee (NSC) was formed and opened up to a wider membership.

The NSC does not manage a budget, but can apply to the Executive for funds and can apply for external grants, as in the case of the Bioblitz.

Over the years, the NSC has been very successful at bringing about significant changes to the YNU. It has also been responsible for establishing temporary specialist committees and temporary working groups when necessary, e.g. the Species Biodiversity working group and the Checklist of Yorkshire Species working group (both of which have now fulfilled their remit and been disbanded), the Education and Training Committee and the website working group. These specialist committees and working groups report back to the NSC. The NSC has occasionally closed down inactive Sections or given them a boost to get them running again. The NSC also provided a forum for discussing the planning of events for the YNU's 150th anniversary.

However, having steered the YNU through a time of considerable change in recent years, the NSC now seems to have lost its focus and it was agreed that the group's remit needs to be reviewed.

The scheduling of meetings should also be reviewed. Currently, meetings are held three times a year, once in spring and twice in autumn, one of the autumn meetings being held at the AGM. The Natural Sciences Committee needs to feed back to the Executive committee any decisions that are made, so these meetings need to take place before the Executive meetings. The meeting at the AGM has not always been worthwhile, being so soon after the Autumn meeting.

The NSC officially consists of the Trustees of the Union, the Excursion Secretary, Divisional Secretaries, representatives of Affiliated Societies, Sections and Committees and those Vice Presidents who opt for membership. Agendas and minutes are sent via e-mail to over 40 people, as well as being published on the website.

PL - review the e-mail list against the membership card to ensure it is complete and up to date.

It was agreed that the central responsibility of this group needs to be to ensure that the aims and objectives of the YNU are met. The aims and objectives are:

To promote the scientific investigation of the fauna, flora and physical features of the county and encourage their conservation by means of a) the Union's publications and b) the holding of field and indoor meetings in the Yorkshire Watsonian vice-counties 61-65.

(Charities Commission website and Annual Report)

The Executive is largely concerned with strategic and financial issues, not with ensuring the aims and objectives are met.

VC representatives and Sections choose when and where to hold their field meetings. The NSC sometimes makes suggestions, particularly in response to communications. It was suggested that the NSC should receive proposals from Section heads and VC representatives in advance of finalising the annual programme, but this is not always practical. The freedom of the Sections to organise their own programme of field meetings must be retained. However, it would be preferable to avoid clashes between meetings.

Affiliated societies should be encouraged to attend meetings to ensure they are getting what they want out of the YNU. Sections should all appoint one person to represent them at NSC meetings.

The Naturalist now includes features on particular geographic areas. Leeds was the focus of a previous issue and Scarborough will be the focus of a forthcoming issue. The Editorial Board liaises with affiliated societies to get their input, just as the editor of *The Bulletin* used to invite contributions from affiliated societies. The YNU's new website will include updated information on all the affiliated societies and links to their websites, they can also publicise their events on the news page and via the events calendar.

The five VC secretaries should liaise quite closely with the affiliated societies in their area and invite them to field meetings.

There are no written terms of reference for the NSC, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to produce them.

The NSC needs to be involved with data flow – the relationship between the YNU and (1) the NBN, (2) National Recording Schemes and Societies and (3) Local Environmental Records Centres. The Biological Records Officer is concerned with

these issues and reports to the NSC. Some thought should be given to how the NSC could better support the Biological Records Officer's work.

The NSC needs to think strategically about how to provide balance within the YNU for its membership.

There was discussion around what role the NSC should have in planning the annual conference and events such as the Scarborough Bioblitz and the Malham Tarn weekend. These events were discussed during NSC meetings, but the actual planning and organisation was done by individual members outside the NSC.

All – send bullet points to RK of what should be the remit of this group and what should come under other committees or the Executive.

RK - collate comments and send recommendations regarding the remit of the NSC to the Executive.

5. Replacement of Chairman of the Natural Sciences Committee

Adrian Norris will step down at the end of this year, having performed the role of Chairman for 10 years. It is stated in the YNU constitution that the Chairman of the NSC also needs to be a Trustee of the YNU. The Chairman of the NSC needs to report to the Executive so needs to attend both NSC and Executive meetings. AN also took responsibility for gathering content from all the Sections for the Annual Report.

This is an opportunity to bring about real change to the Natural Sciences Committee and its role within the YNU. AN will talk through the post with anyone who's interested. If there is more than one candidate there will be a vote.

AN – arrange for the position to be advertised in *The Naturalist* (14th June for the August issue) and on the YNU website.

ALL – promote the position through our network of contacts.

6. Update on YNU Website

Biskit are putting the finishing touches to the new YNU website. A link to the prototype website has been circulated to Section Heads, who have been invited to give feedback, provide content and to have training in how to use the Drupal content management system to keep their page/s updated. Eight members have so far been given training and a manual has also been provided.

The working group is aiming for the website to go live by the end of May so that it is live before the Bioblitz in June.

The need for a webmaster has been acknowledged.

Note from secretary – since the meeting, a YNU Facebook group has been set up which already has 49 members including students from the Universities of Leeds, York and Hull: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/146528302138921/>

7. Leeds University Training Days and other Training Events.

This is taking place on the 2nd and 3rd May. There will be talks on the first day and field activities on the second day. There are 12 tutors (fewer than in previous years) and 60 students (more than in previous years). Pre-course administration has been better this year thanks to Terry Crawford and Roger Key, with the result that the students have already been allocated to groups in line with their interests.

Delivering these training days is extremely time-consuming and is a financial burden on the tutors as Leeds University have not budgeted for travel expenses. This issue should be taken into account when planning the event next year.

A mollusc identification training event is being held by Adrian Norris and Terry Crawford at Wheldrake Ings on Saturday 5th May. Seven people have signed up for the event and some members of the Barnsley Naturalists are joining in.

8. Annual Conference 2012 York University Feedback

The event attracted 70 delegates. Very positive feedback was received about the format, the venue and the quality of the presentations. The catering and parking facilities were excellent too. Sarah West did an outstanding job of organising the event and Adrian Norris intends to write to officially thank and congratulate her. The NSC would welcome having future conferences at York University. It was suggested that each breakout group should be in a separate room next time for ease of discussion. It was also suggested that a separate flyer should be sent out in *The Naturalist* to advertise the conference next year.

The Education Committee is currently considering suggestions for themes for the 2013 conference. A theme suggested during this NSC meeting was 'Biological Recording in the Electronic Age'

All – any further suggestions for conference themes should be sent to the Education Committee.

9. Correspondence / Announcements

9.1 British Ecological Society Grant

The YNU has been awarded a grant of £2,000 to run a 'Festival of Ecology' event at Scarborough Spa on the 14th and 15th June 2013 as part of the BES's Centenary celebrations. YNU members, partner organisations and local groups will be invited to run activities and displays in the Spa and the surrounding area, to educate and inspire the public about natural history. There will be a focus on the seashore, but this is not exclusively a Marine and Coastal Section event.

9.2 Northern Coleopterists Meeting in Manchester

The Northern Coleopterists Meeting is taking place at Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester on Saturday 22nd September 2012. There will be presentations in the morning and a discussion and identification session in the Museum's Entomology Department in the afternoon. To book a place, contact Tom Hubball on 01535 678334 after 6pm or ukbeetles@blueyonder.co.uk. Members are encouraged to promote relevant YNU news and field meetings on the Northern Coleopterists Forum: <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/northernbeetles/message/109>. This can either be posted directly on the site or by contacting Tom Hubball as above.

9.3 Foxholes Quarry Community Project Management Plan

Foxholes Chalk Quarry lies on the eastern side of the B1249 (Driffield to Staxton) at SE approx 1 km to the north of the village. (TA 013735). The quarry is presently owned by Foxholes Parish Council and leased to North Yorkshire County Council Highways Department as a road grit store, with a fence, unlocked pedestrian access gate and a locked vehicular access gate.

A biodiversity survey is currently underway to inform a management plan for the site. Tony Ezard and Dave Chesmore have compiled a species list of moths. This year, Adrian Norris will carry out mollusc surveys and Dave Chesmore will carry out insect surveys. Some data have been gathered on plants, birds, bats and butterflies. No data have yet been collected on fungi or lichens. The draft management plan, which contains further information and the species list compiled so far, is available on request from Adrian Norris or Paula Lightfoot (contact details in the YNU membership card and website). Any one is welcome to survey there at any time, but please notify the Local Authority before your visit.

9.4 Calder and Colne Rivers Trust Friends Group

The Calder and Colne Rivers Trust (CCRT) was established in 2009 to help the River Colne and its tributaries recover from 150 years of industrial pollution.

CCRT is preparing to form a “Friends” Group of interested individuals, organisations, riparian owners and companies wishing to support the Trust and its aims. The inaugural meeting will take place at Brighthouse Civic Hall on Thursday 31st May at 7.30pm. Andy Godfrey will attend the meeting as a representative of the YNU. If anyone else would also like to attend or to be involved in the work of CCRT, please contact John Netherwood on 07795 173074 or e-mail friends@calderandcolneriverstrust.org. For more information visit: <http://calderandcolneriverstrust.org/>

9.5 Richmond Bioblitz

Transition Richmond Yorkshire (TRY) are running a day of biodiversity surveys on Saturday 14th July, with a particular focus on pollinating insects. They are keen to hear from naturalists who would be willing to lead surveys or help to identify specimens. Please contact Brigitte Donoghue on ebdonog@hotmail.com or visit <http://transitionrichmond.org/together-we-can-bio-blitz-richmond-and-discover-whether-the-town-is-a-pollinators-paradise/> for further information.

10 Any other business

Mick Carroll has arranged for YNU members to have access to private farmland in Appleton le Moors near Pickering on **Saturday 30th June**. The aim of the field meeting is to gather information on species and habitats present to help the landowner to manage the farm to as high a conservation standard as possible.

The farm contains around 90ha of arable and grassland with another 45ha of SSSI woodland along with a good stretch of the River Seven. This is for a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme application, which means that Natural England will reimburse survey costs, enabling YNU to claim travel expenses.

Records are needed of all species groups. Please contact Mick Carroll if you would like to attend.

Lepidoptera group website – will add link to it from our website and they will reciprocate. Excellent quality website, achieved in 4 weeks. Approach them to ask if they would like to integrate with our new website when it is up and running.

11 Date of next meeting

The next Natural Sciences Committee Meeting will be held on Saturday 15th September 2012.

PLEASE NOTE: due to increased postal costs, meeting minutes and agendas will be sent by e-mail and made available to download from the YNU website.