



Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
Natural Sciences Committee
Charity 224018

Minutes of the twenty second meeting of the Natural Sciences Committee held at St Chad's Parish Hall, Leeds, at 10.00 am Saturday, 15th September 2012

Present: Adrian Norris (Chairman), Paula Lightfoot (Secretary), Roger Key, John Wint, Joyce Simmonds, Paul Simmonds, Albert Henderson, Chris Young, Sharon Flint, Peter Flint, Phyl Abbott.

1. Apologies for absence:

Michael Archer, Alan Braddock, Mick Carroll, Terry Crawford, Bill Ely, Andy Godfrey, Andy Grayson, Jean Kendrew, Janetta Lambert, David Lindley, Bob Marsh, Andy Millard, John Newbould, Mark Seaward, Jill Warwick, Sarah West, Geoffrey Wilmore.

2. Minutes and actions of the meetings held at St Chad's on the 28th April 2012

These have been distributed via e-mail and can also be downloaded from the [YNU website](#). These were agreed as a true record of the meeting and all actions have been completed. There were no matters arising.

3. Replacement of Chair and review of Natural Sciences Committee remit

Adrian Norris is stepping down as Chair of the NSC. The committee expressed their gratitude to Adrian for carrying out this role for ten years. Adrian asked if Roger Key would be willing to take on the role and this was discussed during the meeting, but Roger has since stated that he does not wish to take on the role.

All – nominations for Chair of the Natural Sciences Committee should be sent to the Chair of the Executive

As agreed at the last meeting, Roger Key has undertaken a review of the remit of the NSC. He has produced a document outlining his views on what the core functions of the NSC are and where there is overlap with other committees such as the Educational Committee and the Executive. This document was circulated with the agenda and is being circulated again with the minutes.

ALL (including those not present) – send comments about the diagram and about the suggestions in the minutes below to Roger Key

It was agreed that the NSC had become more of an 'ideas forum' than a committee in recent years, and that its open nature has given it the flexibility to adapt as the YNU has gone through changes. However, the NSC should not spend time discussing trivial issues like the format of the membership card. They should have constructive discussions around bigger issues such as filling gaps in recording effort, improving data flow and developing useful relationships with other organisations involved in studying and recording Yorkshire's wildlife – and these discussions must result in recommendations for action.

In the past the YNU had several committees, often with the same people on them, and there has been some repetition of content, but this has been streamlined now. For example, the Publications Committee was a sub-committee of the Executive set up specifically to deal with specific issues. Once it had reported to the Executive it was disbanded. Its recommendations were implemented in full. Recommendations for new book publications should be made by the Natural Sciences Committee to the Executive, and the Executive would decide whether the YNU should finance them.

Two options for improving the Natural Sciences Committee were discussed.

- To restrict its membership and give it a very clear and focussed remit.
- To allow it to become a totally open 'ideas forum' and to welcome to meetings any YNU members wishing to contribute ideas for the development of the YNU and achievement of its charitable objectives of studying and recording the natural history of Yorkshire

Those present favoured the second option and suggested renaming it the Natural Sciences Forum. It was proposed to combine the first meeting of 2013 with an event to encourage wider attendance. A larger room could be hired if necessary. Suggestions included a guest speaker or a book sale and equipment swap. This can be discussed further and promoted at the AGM.

It would also be good to put on a YNU promotional event where non members can come and meet different sections and find out about field meetings for the year – to be discussed at the next meeting.

PL – take these recommendations to the Executive

It was asked whether people should be given an opportunity to participate before meetings, e.g. by sending out documents for comment. Although this has had limited success in the past, it was agreed to be good practice and should continue.

It was commented that the different strands of membership (individuals, sections, affiliated societies) are critical to the viability of the YNU, and suggested that one of the core functions of the NSC should be to nurture this structure and monitor its health.

4. Dates and venues of future Natural Sciences Committee meetings

York Museum have offered a free venue for YNU meetings. It was agreed that St Chad's is a convenient venue because it has free car parking and it is reasonably central, whereas York would be less convenient for people travelling from South Yorkshire. It was agreed that Saturday mornings are a good time to hold meetings as there is less traffic.

NSC meetings should take place before Executive meetings to allow the Chair to report to the Executive.

PL – check availability at St Chads for two dates in February and two dates in October, each two weeks apart, and check with the Executive before booking

5. YNU Conference 2013

The YNU Conference will be held on Saturday 23rd March 2013 at the National Science and Learning Centre at York University. The same venue and format will be used as this year's conference, as feedback was extremely positive. The theme will be 'Using

Yorkshire's Biological Data'. The Education Committee is currently making suggestions regarding content and John Bowers is approaching potential speakers.

6. New YNU Website

The YNU website is now live. In the first two weeks (between the 1st–13th September) it received 161 visits from 114 different people.

- 47% came via a search engine (e.g. Google)
- 39% came directly to the site by typing the URL www.ynu.org.uk
- 14% followed links from the following websites (in order of greatest number of visitors)

1. iSpot www.ispot.org.uk
2. Fatbirder www.fatbirder.com
3. Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society www.hdns.org.uk
4. National Biodiversity Network www.nbn.org.uk
5. BirdGuides www.birdguides.com
6. Bradford Botany Group www.bradfordbotanygroup.co.uk
7. Facebook www.facebook.com
8. Hull University Coastal Observatory
<http://www.hull.ac.uk/coastalobs/general/conservation/natureconservationgroups.html>
9. Stockholm Environment Institute <http://www.york.ac.uk/sei/>
10. South Holderness Countryside Society
www.southholdernesscountryside.com
11. Wharfedale Naturalists www.wharfedale-nats.org.uk
12. Yoredale Natural History Society www.yoredalenaturalhistory.com
13. Yorkshire Moths www.yorkshiremoths.info

Some Section pages still lack content. Claire Neill and Jill Warwick are trying to obtain content from Section Heads. Content can be sent to Claire at webmaster@ynu.org.uk

Suggestions for future additions to the website made during this meeting included a 'wants and exchange' page, an ID help page (or a link to iSpot), the facility to submit wildlife records and a map showing the location and date of all VC excursions with a reference to the relevant report in the *Naturalist*.

Colin Howes has created a YNU Excursions Index, listing all YNU excursions from 1877 to 1999 along with the reference for the excursion report in the *Naturalist*. Hannah Droop has completed this index up to 2012 and added grid references to it so that the locations can be mapped. The addition of grid references has been completed for excursions dating back to the 1980s. A volunteer should be sought to add grid references to the index for excursions from 1877 to the 1980s. This index could be used as a basis for an interactive map of VC excursions on the website. NEYEDC could also use this in data searches to direct data users towards excursion reports in the *Naturalist*.

PL – follow up with NEYEDC about this.

Anyone interested in volunteering to add grid references to the YNU Excursion Index should contact Paula Lightfoot

7. Update on YNU Library

Some books have been sold from the Pemberton bequest, but progress is slow as bookshops are unable to take on more stock at the moment. The library is running

short of space at NEYEDC and so cannot accept any more books unless more room can be found.

8. Biological Records Officer and YNU Administrative Officer

Hannah Droop stepped down from her position as YNU Biological Records Officer and her voluntary role as Membership Officer at the end of July 2012. Hannah worked closely with Section Heads and Recorders to carry out a data audit to find out how many records are held by the YNU, where and how these records are stored and whether the records have been shared with other organisations. Hannah has provided the Executive with a detailed report of the audit's findings with clear recommendations for improving the accessibility and use of YNU data. The findings of this report will be printed in a future issue of the *Naturalist*. The Executive and NEYEDC will seek to appoint a new Biological Records Officer to take this work forward.

Claire Neill was appointed to the newly created paid post of YNU Administrative Officer in July. This new post encompasses the membership and administration work that Hannah carried out, some of the former General Secretary duties and the role of web master for the new YNU website.

9. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Wild Workshops

Paula Lightfoot, Sarah West and Jill Warwick met with Caroline Commins (Nature Reserves Manager) and Harriet Linfoot (Wild Workshops Project Officer) from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust on the 12th July at York University to discuss opportunities for collaboration on the YWT's programme of Wild Workshops. A series of actions have been agreed. The minutes have already been circulated to the Executive and will be circulated to the Education Committee before their next meeting so that they can oversee the completion of these actions.

SW – add this to the agenda of the next Education Committee meeting

10. YNU Annual General Meeting

Please note there is an error in the Membership Card which gives the date as 17th November, rather than the correct date of **24th November**. Members have been notified of this error via the recent issue of the *Naturalist* and via the website. A message will also be sent out to all members by e-mail where possible and post where necessary before the end of September.

PL - arrange this with Claire Neill.

11. Vice County Excursions and Field Meetings

The dates and locations of the Vice County Excursions for 2013 are:

VC63	18 th May 2013	Cromwell Bottom, near Elland. Car park grid reference SE125224
VC64	8 th June 2013	Grassington, Grass & Bastow Woods, SD9865 and SD9965
BES Festival of Ecology	14 th and 15 th June 2013	Scarborough Spa – see notice in the latest issue of the <i>Naturalist</i>
VC65	6 th July 2013	West Tanfield/Nosterfield, Nosterfield Nature Reserve SE2779
VC61	20 th July 2013	Danes Dyke, Flamborough
VC62	10 th August 2013	May Moss and Langdale Forest, North Yorkshire Moors

The dates of the Vice County Excursions for the next two years are:

2014		2015	
VC62	May 17 th	VC61	May 16 th
VC63	June 14 th	VC62	June 13 th
VC64	July 5 th	VC63	July 11 th
VC65	July 19 th	VC64	July 25 th
VC61	August 9 th	VC65	August 15 th

The question was raised as to whether only Section Coordinators can organise field meetings and other activities within their Section. It was agreed that other suitably experienced YNU members could offer to organise field meetings but should always contact the Section Coordinator in the first instance to ensure this is part of a balanced programme of activities for members and potential members with a wide range of interests and levels of experience.

Having discussed the suggested field meeting(s) with the Section Coordinator, the date(s), grid reference(s) and a brief description should be sent to Claire Neill at membership@ynu.org.uk for inclusion in the YNU membership card and website.

In order to send the membership card out with the next issue of the *Naturalist*, the final draft will need to be ready by the AGM on the 24th November.

Content for the membership card must be sent to Claire no later than Friday 16th November.

12. Correspondence / Announcements

Whitby Naturalists' Club are celebrating their Centenary next year. They are thinking of running a Bioblitz in Whitby and have asked if the YNU will assist.

PL – reply to Whitby Naturalists and as plans develop, feed back information to the NSC and let YNU members know how they can get involved.

It has also been suggested that one of next year's issues of the *Naturalist* could focus on Whitby. Craig Thomas is giving a talk as part of the Whitby Naturalists' winter programme and we will promote their centenary events on the YNU website as details become available.

13. Any other business

Natural England funding for Field Studies Council

The Field Studies Council have been awarded a contract by Natural England to develop skills and capacity in the volunteer recording community. This could involve running courses, developing ID guides, keys and online resources and helping recorders use online recording systems.

RK – investigate opportunities for the YNU to be involved in local implementations of this work, e.g. Malham Tarn

This discussion raised the issue of professionals attending subsidised or free courses aimed at volunteer recorders. It was suggested that the YNU seek to discuss this with the regional branch of IEEM, with the aim of encouraging ecological consultants to attend field meetings as well as training courses, as these are the most effective way of learning and improving ID skills.

SW – add both of the issues above to the agenda for the next meeting of the Education and Training Committee

Leeds University Field Skills days

The Education Committee are in discussion with Leeds University about plans for next year. The field skills course could be run at a different location and opened up to students from other Universities. It is very important that we do everything we can to keep this course running as students have very few opportunities to develop field skills during their formal education. Some students who attended the Field Skills days have since attended field meetings and joined the YNU.

Equipment

The YNU has various equipment that can be borrowed for field meetings and training courses, such as white trays, pond nets, a microscope, laptop and projector, as well as promotional pull-up banners. This is currently stored at the homes of various members as the YNU has no central storage facility.

The question was raised as to whether YNU funds were available for the purchase of additional equipment for field meetings and training courses. The Treasurer responded that the YNU does have a Development Fund and that requests for equipment purchase should be sent for her attention (p.lightfoot@btinternet.com) with 3 quotes and a brief summary of how the equipment will be used at YNU events. She will then seek the approval of the Executive to issue the funds.

PL and AN – bring pond nets to next meeting for Sharon Flint.

YNU Presidency

Nominations for YNU President for 2013-14 need to be announced at the AGM. Nominations should be sent to the Chairman of the Executive John Bowers on j.k.bowers@o2.co.uk

14. Date of next meeting – The AGM on Saturday the 24th November 2012