

Oxfordshire Badger Group (OBG)

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 20th August 2022

Held at Exeter Hall, Kidlington.

Apologies

Apologies were received from 9 members, [names redacted - for details contact OBG email]

Present:

The AGM was quorate with 15 members attending plus 2 invited non-members and a guest speaker.

Julia Hammett, Keiron Ward and Linda Ward declared conflicts of interest.

Stuart Hutchings, Police Inspector 5022, Thames Valley Police Rural Crime Taskforce attended by invitation
Ian Middleton and Fiona Mawson attended by invitation (non-voting)

Introduction and Chair's report

Julia Hammett welcomed everyone and thanked the Committee and all our volunteers for their hard work and support over the past 12 months. She spoke briefly to each of the Groups' main areas of activity. She highlighted the Group's commitment to badger vaccination and our ongoing opposition to the Governments appalling cull policy. Eileen Anderson was appointed to the Committee as Education and Outreach Officer at the 2021 AGM. She has since successfully established a programme with primary schools – an important new development for the group. Our rescue team has seen an increase in call outs and the volume of badger reports and public enquires have also increased. This probably reflects our success in building a strong public profile and raising awareness.

Review of previous AGM minutes and Matters Arising (Linda Ward)

The Group has actioned the decision to escalate the need for improved policing of wildlife crime. A senior member of the Rural Crime Taskforce will be joining the meeting. Barbara Witkowski proposed that the minutes be approved. Richard Tilley seconded. The Minutes of the AGM held 05 June 2021 were approved unanimously.

Officers Reports – Annual Report

The draft annual report for the period Jan 2021 to June 2022 had been circulated. Officers gave a series of presentations to highlight the main points. These may be downloaded (powerpoint) at:
<https://www.oxonbadgergroup.org.uk/members/agm-2022/>

Secretary/ membership report

Linda Ward presented a membership and activity report and urged members to consider volunteering for the more administrative aspects of running the charity and to join the Committee or become a Trustee.

Records Report

Barbara Witkowski gave a presentation summarising the badger reports we have received and explaining their value to the organisation.

Vaccination and rescue

Debbie White presented two videos showing the valuable work that volunteers are carrying out to rescue and vaccinate badgers. These can be seen at: <https://youtu.be/z2vfuPmp4Tc> and https://youtu.be/_066pKifOdA

Social Media

Emily Lawrence gave a verbal report (see the Annual Report)

Education and Outreach

Eileen Anderson presented some of the material she and Julia Hammett have been taking into primary schools in the form of a 'badger assembly'. She also presented details of the OBG Conference to be held on 12th November at FarmEd in the Cotswolds. Tickets cost £25 and are available via Eventbrite, OBG members have first opportunity to purchase.

Development and other activities

Julia Hammett spoke about planning and development which is a major area of activity. The Group has had some success in achieving mitigation for badgers, notably at Radley where a badger underpass and through routes were incorporated and the Bayswater consultation on the outskirts of Oxford. Overall, the picture remains grim as more and more land is built on.

Julia announced that the Group has purchased 2.05 acres of ancient / semi ancient woodland – Hutchcomb's Copse - that contains a badger sett. This is a major new direction for the Group.

Eileen Anderson presented an outline of what this might involve in terms of a 5 year woodland management plan and volunteering work.

Financial report (Richard Tilley)

Richard presented the financial statement for 2021 and the first 6 months of 2022. Overall the Group is financially healthy but needs to increase the fund raising effort to ensure we can expand the vaccination programme next year. The decision to take out a loan of £30,000 in order to purchase Hutchcomb's Copse is a major commitment. It will require a separate, focused fundraising campaign to repay the loan over the agreed 3 year term. The purchase also means that the charity accounts for 2022 will need to be independently reviewed. We have identified a chartered accountant willing to do this for us.

Annual Report 2021/2022

The officers reports will be incorporated into the Group's Trustee Annual Report for 2021/ 22. Once finalised this will be submitted to the Charity Commission along with the Group's accounts for the period 01/01/21 to 31/12/21.

The AGM gave a vote of thanks to all the officers and active volunteers for their work on behalf of the Charity.

Approval of draft report: Emily Lawrence proposed that the meeting approve the draft report in principle. Seconded: Keiron Ward. Agreed without objection.

Approval of accounts: Debbie White proposed that the meeting approve the accounts and financial report. Seconded: Eileen Anderson. Agreed without objection.

Election of Trustees

As per our constitution, one of the Trustees needed to stand down and may be re-elected.

Richard Tilley stood down and agreed to stand again for Treasurer. Linda Ward nominated approval and this was seconded by Debbie White. Richard as re-elected by unanimous vote.

Eileen Anderson stood for election as Trustee. Nominated by Richard Tilley and seconded by Fabienne Geall. She was elected as Trustee by unanimous vote.

AOB

Stuart Hutchings was invited to provide an update on the Thames Valley Police Rural Crime Task Force. He explained his role and how the Rural Task Force is working to tackle wildlife crime and rural crime. His Task Force is 3-4 years behind neighbouring forces with 2 sergeants and 9 PCs reporting to him. This is set to increase to 18 pcs. Eventually there will be 2 wildlife officers in each rural Local Policing Area (LPA) and 1 in urban LPAs. They have an intelligence team that targets potential crime hotspots such as the hare coursing season. When an incident happens it is passed to the Evidential Review Officer (ERO). The team has been able to appoint an ex-RSPCA officer as dedicated ERO and this has improved their effectiveness in bringing prosecutions. They are arranging to send the officers on a one week wildlife crime training course. The ERO has also developed an on-line wildlife training package for call centre staff.

We discussed that crime involving badgers is an arrestable offence and often needs urgent action to protect the badgers. Stuart emphasised the need to report all rural crime urgently so they can respond and understand where hot spots are. The police now have a system called 'good sam' that allows the police to see through the callers phone and get real time evidence.

Actions: Stuart will provide OBG with contact details of relevant officers. Emily will send him a link to the Gloucester wildlife crime report form which is considered exemplary.

Close of meeting

Julia Hammett brought the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for attending.

Corrections and feedback C/O 29 Webbs Way, Kidlington OX5 2EW or to OBG@oxonbadgergroup.org.uk