**Attendees: Chair:** Nick Freeman; **Committee**: Robert Antipoff, Margery Slatter, Cathy McEwan,

Nick Boyes, Ivor McArdle, Andy Hollox, Chris Sayer, Stewart Waight

**+ 24 other attendees –** see Attendance Register for who attended

**Apologies for Absence:** Charles Gilchrist, Judith Qualtrough

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| 1 | **Welcome & Introduction**  Nick Freeman opened the Meeting by giving a warm welcome to all and mentioned he was looking forward to hearing the talk by Ivor McArdle – ‘WAG to Riches’ – The Story of Cold Ash Wildlife Allotment Garden, who will be arriving a little later.  In total, there were 33 attendees. All bar one of the attendees are members of the Society.  A handful of copies of the agenda were placed on seats and a copy for all to see was projected on screen. |
| 2 | **Chairman’s Message / Report**  Presented by Nick Freeman – see attached report.  The key message given by Nick was that as we come to the end of another year, it is good to report that the Society is thriving both in terms of the work of the Tuesday volunteers (and occasionally Friday) and the Barn Owl Group.  Nick mentioned that as well as being a regular Tuesday volunteer, he shared with the attendees some of the other things he had been involved in throughout the year, in his capacity as Chairman.  Nick took the time and opportunity to thank all those who make a valuable contribution to our work and the reputation of the Society. He further added that as most of you know, he will be standing down as Chairman, after almost 4 years.  Finally, Nick added that subject to our decision shortly, he will be leaving us in the hands of a worthy successor who has a wealth of knowledge on environmental matters, having been a farm manager in West Berkshire for many years. |
| 3 | **Approval of 2024 AGM Minutes**  These were signed by Nick Freeman. |
| 4 | **Matters Arising**  There were no matters arising. |
| 5 | **Treasurer’s Report**  Presented by Robert Antipoff – see attached report.  Copies of the Society’s Income and Expenditure Account were circulated for attendees to share.  The headlines were as follows:  The year to 31st March 2025 ended with the Society having cash resources of £19,199, compared with £18,574 last year. An increase of £625, leaving the Society in a healthy financial position. |
| 6 | **Membership Report**  Presented by Stewart Waight – see attached report.  The key headlines were as follows:  Membership has remained the same at 251 members.  Since the last AGM, we have welcomed 10 new joiners but sadly lost 10 existing members.  Based on current membership, expected revenue from members subscriptions alone, continues to equate to approximately £3,500. This excludes annual donations that Bucklebury and Frilsham PC’s make to the Society. |
| 7 | **Honorary President’s Report**  Presented by Tim Culley in Dick Greenaway’s absence – see attached report.  Dick apologised for being unable to come to the AGM but assured everyone he was with us in spirit.  Dick mentions that he follows the volunteers’ activities as reported in Upstream with great interest, and the client’s comments in Andy’s diary makes him proud to still be a member.  Dick mentioned his continued involvement with printing parish path and individual walk leaflets, as well as selling the Society’s 3 publications that are still in print.  He also mentioned his involvement with helping the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, where his research into books and guided walks, had come in handy.  He finished by saying the Society provides a very valuable service to our splendid countryside and its inhabitants, so keep up the good work. |
| 8 | **Group Leaders Reports on their Group’s Activities**  **West Berkshire Conservation Volunteers**.  Andy Hollox gave an update on the volunteers’ year – see attached report for more details.  Andy produced a slideshow using pictures extracted from his ever-growing library of photos used in his weekly events emails, which is sent to just over 50 people.  Over the last year, Andy stated that we had visited around 23 different locations, carrying out various activities including bramble and bracken bashing, scalloping, tree felling, hedge laying, dead hedging, coppicing, haloing and much, much more.  Andy gave an update on the power tools that we use and mentioned that the new electric chainsaws have allowed us to work more accurately and quickly when laying hedging.  Andy concluded by saying that he believes our volunteers remain a very healthy group combining sound ecological work, with a great sense of comradery and he’s sure this will continue in the year ahead.  **Barn Owl Group.**  Samantha Boyes presented the Barn Owl Group Report (for 2024) – see attached report.  The key points were as follows:  In total, 105 Barn Owl chicks fledged from our boxes. This number is in line with our average levels over the previous 7 years, where the average for 2017 – 2023 was 100.  42 of our boxes had Barn Owl chicks, with an average brood size of 2-3 chicks.  Samantha added, that in addition to Barn Owl boxes, they also checked a further 28 boxes put up for Kestrels, Little Owls and Tawny Owls. From these boxes and other Barn Owl boxes, they reported 19 Kestrel chicks and 1 Tawny Owl chick.  Samantha commented that they have had a very busy year installing new or replacement boxes – in total, they have 208 Barn Owl boxes and 26 other boxes which require monitoring during the year.  The Group have welcomed 7 new volunteers, taking the numbers to 35, split across 13 groups.  Samantha concluded that early indications are that 2025 is likely to be a late breeding season for Barn Owls compared to last year. The most likely reason for this is that the very recent dry weather is delaying grass growth, which has an adverse impact on vole numbers which are the main food source. |
| 9 | **Election of Officers and Representatives**  As mentioned earlier, following Nick’s decision to stand-down as Chairman, John Haggarty put his name forward to be the new Chair.  This was put to a vote of the attendees and unanimously accepted.  John introduced himself, saying that he is a regular (Tuesday) volunteer and is very much looking forward to taking on the role.  Nick having asked the Committee earlier whether they are willing to keep their offices for the next year, the meeting confirmed the Committee as follows:  **Chairman:** John Haggarty  **Hon. Treasurer**: Robert Antipoff  **Membership Secretary**: Stewart Waight  **Hon. Secretary**: Stewart Waight  **Upstream Editor**: Margery Slatter  **Conservation Volunteers**: Ivor McArdle, Chris Sayer & Andy Hollox  **Barn Owl Group**: Cathy McEwan / Nick Boyes |
| 10 | **Any other Business - Presentations**  Nick did a presentation to Tim Clarke who is standing down from his responsibility for training, that he’s being doing for the Society over the last few years.  Stewart then presented Nick with a passing gift of a voucher for the Corn Exchange and on behalf of the Society, thanked him for his 4 years as Chairman.  There was no other business raised. |
| 11 | **Food and Drinks**  Following the formal part of the meeting, there was a short break in proceedings, whilst all attendees were treated to a finger buffet and drinks. |
| 12 | **Talk by Ivor McArdle – WAG to Riches – The Story of Cold Ash Wildlife Allotment Garden**  Ivor gave a presentation on how changes are impacting WBCS.  Engagement with Parish Councils and voluntary groups has driven more demand than can be accommodated by just reducing visits to existing landowner sites.  West Berkshire Councils ‘Public Right of Way’ Strategy and ‘Devolution’ is likely to drive greater demand from Parish Councils.  Ivor’s presentation gave the story of the Wildlife Allotment Garden, WBCS’s support for the changes and why it could be a model for future engagements.  See attached presentation for Ivor’s talk.  Following a few questions from attendees, Nick thanked Ivor for his excellent presentation.  As there was no further business, Nick concluded the meeting. |
| 13 | **Date & Venue of Next AGM**  Likely to beMay next year, but both date and venue to be confirmed. |

Signed: Chairman Date

**Enc:** Attendance Register

Chairman’s Message / Report

Treasurer’s Report

Income and Expenditure Account Summary for year ending 31/3/25

Membership Secretary’s Report

Honorary President’s Report

Conservation Volunteers Report

Barn Owl Group Report

Talk / Presentation – RAG to Riches – The Story of Cold Ash Wildlife Allotment Garden