



HCCPS - 2023 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Thank you Philip. I wanted to start with picking up on the finances. We have benefitted from a positive and stable position for some years now. We appreciate the work of Philip and previous treasurers and the support they have had from our Honorary Examiner which has been Mike Fletcher for the last 11 years; before this Mike was our Treasurer for 24 years. So after this marathon stint' Mike has decided to stand down – we're extremely grateful for Mike's commitment and careful examination of our accounts has always meant that the numbers have been scrupulously checked.

The good news is that previous treasurer Ben Lewis has agreed to pick up the gauntlet as Honorary Examiner so thanks Ben; good to have you back.

More widely our sound finances have enabled us to pursue our aims, generally speaking, without constantly worrying about the funds. Furthermore and because of this we have agreed to make an annual contribution towards Christine's tree work costs. These threaten to be substantial and whilst we do not have the means to underwrite these entirely we do feel that a contribution is relevant and appropriate use of funds.

The subscription rate has remained constant for many years and as costs rise around us the subscription represents increasingly excellent value for money. We may at a later date need to raise the subscription but we have no immediate plans to do so. Along with members subs our main income sources are card and calendar related. For the most part Lindsay should take the credit for this as she continues to lead with these initiatives and they make a significant difference to the Society. Our pre Christmas fair held at the cricket club has become a popular occasion and has made a helpful contribution to funds; Lindsay's cakes selling out along with good card and calendar sales. Thanks to Nick Brown and his wife Georgie in particular for their help at this.

This date marks the first of our new Spring AGM dates and despite slightly disappointing weather I hope it proves a better diary date in the future. It seems more appropriate to be focused on Commons matters given the new green leaves and emergence of life on the Commons at this time of the year, rather than gathering at the end of November. Its still raining but at least its light outside!

Turning to our activities; obviously since we haven't had an AGM for 18 months a great deal has happened in that time. We have been busy with a combination of annual and one off initiatives; so in no particular order.

County Wildlife Site Christine has had confirmation from Fiona Everingham of the Bucks and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre that all of the Commons are now to be included as a County Wildlife Site. Previously, the Manorial Waste (the strip outside houses on the south side of the main road) was not included but, as more residents of these houses are now leaving the area outside their houses to nature in order to create a corridor for wild flowers to spread, this area is now to be included with the main area of the Commons. As elsewhere, the vegetation needs minimal care and should only be cut after the wildflowers have set seed in the autumn. We understand that more residents might be willing to leave theirs too but are concerned that they may not be able to carry out the annual cut when the vegetation is too long for a lawn mower. However, if this is a worry, please contact [HCCPS](#) or [Christine Stott](#). We would be happy to ask James to cut it when he does his annual cut around September. Christine's farmland at Hawridge Court Farm is also a County Wildlife Site and it is a tribute to her thoughtful management

to have two such awards.

We have been grateful to James Jolliffe's work which has both kept the Commons tidy and accessible but also helped open up inaccessible areas to a greater extent. The capability of James' equipment far exceeds that which we had available to us when we used to try and manage with our tractor and although the change in approach has caused some concerns about the role of the society I do think the results speak for themselves. We are grateful that at a time when the cost of everything else has gone up James has continued to deliver effectively at 'Mates Rates'.

James and his team completed the winter work in late February which is just before such work has to stop to allow the birds to nest undisturbed. We hope the amazing work on Rays Hill will make it much safer for riders and walkers in that area. James has also carried out work on the rides to widen them and to make it safer to use the tractor in those areas. All tree work was approved by John Morris (formerly of Chiltern Woodlands), Christine's woodland advisor.

There are of course still some jobs which need to be done by individuals and we are grateful to Janet and Peter Hopkinson and their neighbour Duncan Colquhoun who are proactive in getting smaller jobs done when they see the need.

As there has been a shift in how maintenance work is organised and undertaken we regularly review how the role of the Society is best dovetailed with Christine's wider work and the future role of the Society. It is clear that we do not need to be as hands on as our predecessors. However, as Lindsay has said to me we believe that if those who were involved in the setting up of the Society in 1967 were able to see what we can do now they would be impressed and in envy of the progress that has been made. As we move forward we aim to continue to engage the community in fostering a love and engagement for our special environment and encourage people with the necessary skills to continue to contribute to efforts to raise awareness of issues both on a micro and macro level; maintain our website; update species records; liaise with the school and DofE's; raise money to pay for work done etc. As I said earlier on the Common, moving forwards we will look to hold more village events, especially linked to themes of education relating to ecological value and biological diversity and, in particular, issues that affect us on the Commons.

Species Reports: **BORG** Were here in mid February when they found an adult male in one of the boxes on Christine's land and visited again just recently and found that all 3 owl boxes on the Commons were being used.

"The box by the top road had 1 large white warm egg, there was no adult in the box but we are confident that it is a Tawny Owl egg. This is the first time this box has been used by an owl. The pyramid box on the Common which has had Tawnies in before was looking very dilapidated and the perch had fallen off but this has clearly not put the birds off because inside was an adult tawny owl with two, possibly three, chicks; approximately a week old. We then checked the box along the bottom track and were very surprised to have a female Mandarin duck fly out! The hinge on the door has rusted and broken so we could not risk opening the door but we managed to put a camera in and counted 6 eggs. When we come back for the Tawnies we will repair the hinge. "

Reptiles and Amphibians: When you have been out on the Commons you may have seen several pieces of matting with numbers on. These were part of a National Reptile Study conducted here by Dr Claudia Bernardini, Environmental Project Officer, Bucks Council. The mats were being checked about every two weeks over the summer and two common lizards were recorded in different areas; so we had limited but some success. Claudia and two colleagues, Charley Scales, Newt Officer, Buckinghamshire Council and NatureSpace Partnership, and Emma Foster also visited in late April 2022 to survey amphibians in Pallett's Pond, Lindsay's garden pond and the Dew Pond. Happily, there were numerous toad tadpoles and a number of smooth newts in the first two. What is

encouraging is that, despite all the problems with NZ Pygmy Weed, Pallett's Pond remains a breeding pond. Claudia was convinced that though they didn't find them it is almost certain that Great Crested Newts will still be found in the area.

Bucks Invertebrate Group Visit on Saturday 3rd September. Thanks to Fiona Everingham we were privileged to have a visit from members of Bucks Invertebrate Group who carried out two surveys on the Commons. The daytime session was led by Martin Harvey, from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and the evening moth session by Neil Fletcher.

Results of daytime and evening are on the website and are a welcome addition to our records.

Moths/Butterflies: David Dennis and Peter Bygate have to date identified:

Macro moths	326	Micro moths	100	TOTAL	426
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Thanks to John Morris for his informative talk just now. Christine continues to walk the Commons a couple of times a year to inspect the trees with John and they decide on the necessary work, John's talk tonight will have clarified what has happened and why and some of the expected work to be undertaken over the coming years.

Thanks to Pete Leybourne and his team who continue to fell much of the trees in exchange for the wood. So far there has not been too much need for climbers or cherry pickers which would be much more expensive.

Thanks to all members of the Committee. Everybody makes a contribution in their own way. I won't get into a list of it all but its noted.

Thanks to Community support; Photographers; Calendar sponsors; Calendar design Susie Bell; Orbit Press; Hilltop News.

Thanks to Veronica Mash for her technical support, mail chimp and invaluable website and newsletter work.

Since the last AGM we are sad to announce a couple of resignations from the committee:

Isobel Clark: We were sorry to learn that after 22 years on our Committee, Isobel has decided to resign. She will be sorely missed as an active member of the Committee and many of you will know of her commitment to maintaining the Commons in good order by organising the working parties on Sunday Mornings for many years. She also drove and helped maintain our little tractor and recruited and trained many other drivers over the years. She has also been very heavily involved in maintaining the ponds and in extending the heather regeneration on each side of Horseblock Lane. In more recent times she has used her acute observational skills in identifying and recording mosses and lichens found on our Commons and her photographs of these minute species are a joy to look at. Thank you very much, Isobel for all of your hard work and your outstanding commitment over all these years. We had a gathering at the Velo Café in June 22 to celebrate Isobel's work and that of David Barnard. We also took the opportunity to congratulate David Dennis for the number of moth species identified which I think at the time was 300?

David Dennis: David has been a committee member for many years and served as Chairman in 2017. He has played an important part in a number of initiatives on the Commons including his work on the ponds and the heathers; providing wonderful photographs for the cards and calendars; helping monitor DofE volunteers; looking for Glow worms; as well as surveying Moths and butterflies; holding Butterfly presentations; writing segments for the Hilltop News; and hosting popular annual moth release mornings. Fortunately, David has said that he will continue to monitor the Moths and Butterflies on the Commons with his colleague Peter Bygate and to help in other ways. We've asked David to give us a moths/butterfly talk in the Autumn so we've not seen the last of him!

Sarah Higgins: has also been an active member of the Committee for 5 years - she has supported work in a number of ways: with ride closures, checking reptile mats, keeping an eye on the frog spawn, bulb planting, etc. as well as watching vigilantly when she is riding or dog walking on the Commons. She too will continue some of these activities.

It is not our intention to fill all of the other vacancies at present but to co-opt individuals to specific roles during the year.

Thanks finally to Lindsey whose enduring enthusiasm, commitment and work for the Society and its positive impact on the villages is second to none.

And last but very much not least thanks to Christine who has to balance a great number of issues with the ultimate responsibility for the Commons. We hope our efforts are a help to her.

Election of the committee:

Chairman: Mark Hobbs,

Vice Chairman: Lindsay Griffin,

Treasurer: Philip Prettejohn,

Minutes Secretary: Rolling.

Committee Members: Nick Brown, John Caple, Janet Hopkinson, Rebecca Walton and Tim Watts.