



Minutes of Committee  
Meeting held in the foyer of  
the Ellison Hotel, Castlebar  
on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>  
September 2023 at 19.00 hrs.

#### **Present**

Graham Cawdell (Secretary)  
Pádraig Keogh (Treasurer)  
Nuala O'Malley  
Jon Freestone

#### **Apologies**

Ruth Ann Leak (Assistant secretary)  
Colm Madden  
Colin Guilfoyle  
Kieran Flynn  
Marie Comerford  
Nathy Gilligan

**Welcome** Graham said that this meeting was again just quorate with 2 officers and 2 committee members present. Jon said that he was not aware that he was a committee member and was accompanying Nuala. We joked that he was and thanks for making the meeting quorate.

**Minutes of last meeting** on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023 approved with no amendments.

#### **Matters Arising**

- **Mayo Naturalist's Field Club** This club will not be resurrected this year due to changes in the roles of staff at the Wild Nephin centre, Ballycroy. Jon and Nuala expressed their disappointment and stated that these events were interesting and usually well attended.

**Recent Events** Reports from our last 3 events were circulated with the agenda. The Clonbur Woods walk was cancelled due to a high wind weather warning. After consultation with committee members on WhatsApp (WAP) notification was sent by email, Facebook and WAP to BWMayo members. Graham was aware that one person who had travelled from Sligo did turn up and that person has subsequently joined our WAP groups. Graham apologised that there was minimal notification and no flyer for our Seawatch at Downpatrick. Consequently only two attended.

**Resignation of George Keegan as our PRO and committee member.** George had met with Pádraig and said that he was no longer able to continue on our committee. Graham had spoken to George who confirmed his decision and said that he and Mary wish to remain members of the Mayo branch. George's network of contacts to advertise our events has been most beneficial and he alone organised the talk by Gordon D'Arcy which has been our most successful event. Our thanks to George.

Discussion followed about appointing a new PRO or alternatively an assistant secretary. Jon said that this may need to be put to our AGM and Pádraig felt that we may need to call an Extraordinary General Meeting.

With only 2 officers residing in Ireland on the committee now, we need to reconsider our guidance on quorum numbers. Graham had emailed all our members regarding the chairperson vacancy and assistance with running Instagram but had no response. Pádraig said that he had received an expression of interest at Foxford so we decided to approach him and other frequent attendees in person.

### **Upcoming Events.**

- Trawmore Bay and Claggan Strand – Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October Graham will be away for this event. These two bays are separated by a narrow dune spit which extends out to Claggan Island. Trawmore Bay is a good site for waders and you can drive your car onto the beach and use it as a hide. Claggan Strand is a sandy beach where various gulls, sanderling and great northern divers are frequently seen. Nuala said that there was a track around the edge of Claggan island.
- Rahasane Turlough, Co. Galway - Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November This is Ireland's largest turlough but from Google maps access seems poor. Graham had contacted Bláithín Kennedy (secretary of the Galway branch) who confirmed this and suggested the turlough at Belclare, Tuam where there is a hide. It was agreed to change to this site and possibly include the turlough at Shrúle where the lane goes close to the lake though this can flood.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event Nathy had spoken to Colin Stafford Johnson whose initial response was positive but he has since declined. Nuala suggested Eoin Warner, presenter of RTE's "Ireland's Wild Isles" programme. She contacted him and passed on his details for Graham to organise a talk. Graham read Eoin's response which was very positive for a weekday evening session in November but less for a weekend due to childcare commitments. After much discussion we agreed to abandon this event as there was significant risk and the amount of work for our depleted committee. Graham will contact Eoin to thank him and apologise.

**Social Media and Website** We now have 70 members in our branch Gmail contacts list though not all are BWI members. Graham said that he can post simultaneously on Facebook and Instagram but avoids chat and messaging on these platforms. WhatsApp (WAP) is the preferred communication method for most clubs. Colin had recently posted an excellent photo of an osprey carrying a large fish in North Mayo on the BWMayo Chat so we should encourage the use of this WAP group for sightings. Very late changes to our arrangements are sometimes necessary and WAP would be the ideal platform to convey this information. For example, we had an outing to Clew Bay meeting at Murrisk Abbey only to find on our arrival that a group of horse riders were there blocking all the parking with their pickups and trailers. The ability to quickly change the meeting point to Bertra would have been ideal. Graham suggested that all branch members are made aware that our Gmail and WAP are the branches preferred communication platforms. Nuala said that she'll download the app.

**Mayo PPN Secretariat** Numerous requests for a member of our group to apply for membership of the Secretariat of Mayo Public Participation Network had been received. This is an advisory body which meets about every 2 months with 14 members, 2 from each Mayo

municipal districts and 2 representing the environment, social inclusion and community & voluntary. Graham asked if any committee member wished to apply as he was considering doing so. Discussion followed on whether this might be onerous with little benefit for our branch. Graham said that he felt the environment should be considered in all deliberations and as he was a recent “blow in” it would help his networking. Pádraig and Nuala signed the application on behalf of the Mayo branch of BirdWatch Ireland.

**IWeBS and other BWI Surveys** A new season of IWeBS has commenced. Colin and Graham are involved with the group count of Clew Bay organised by John Mulroy. However there are numerous loughs and other sites available in Mayo to survey. It was suggested that branch members are made aware and also request that they inform the branch of any other surveys in which they are participating, such as the Garden Bird Survey and the Countryside Bird Survey. Then we could have a meeting to share our findings. It was agreed that this could be interesting as data is sent to BWI never to heard of again!

**Events for 2024** Last year Barry and Graham produced a template for the year ahead. For the coming year Graham suggested that branch members are asked to recommend areas and whether they would be willing to guide the group. This was agreed. Jon commented that by the time our outings gather he would be returning from birdwatching! Large groups in the middle of the day are not ideal but we are likely to attract and enthuse more people.

**Venue for committee meetings** Pádraig had suggested holding this meeting in the foyer of the Ellison Hotel and it worked well though there were only 4 attendees but the area could have accommodated double that number. Nuala said that meetings had been held in the TF hotel when the committee was very small. It was agreed that we should continue with this arrangement.

**Any Late Notices** Colin is speaking at the Mayo Dark Sky Festival which is taking place in Mulranny and Newport on 4-6<sup>th</sup> November. The programme would suggest that events at Mulranny are biodiversity related whilst those at Newport are astronomy.

**Date of Next Meeting** Date and venue to be decided. Winter meetings have been on Zoom but there is a preference for face-to-face meetings so it was suggested that we consider a day time meeting either weekday or weekend. Graham will discuss this with Pádraig after responses to a branch newsletter.