

Minutes of Committee Meeting

The Foyer of the Ellison Hotel

Saturday 7th December 2024 at 11:30hrs.

Present	Apologies
Colm Madden - acting chairperson	Pádraig Keogh - chairperson
Graham Cawdell - secretary	Karen Hunt - assistant secretary
Mick Oates - treasurer	Marie Comerford
Colin Guilfoyle - research/IT officer	Jon Freestone
George Keegan - events co-ordinator	
Nuala O'Malley	
Nathy Gilligan	

Welcome Colm welcomed everyone, opened the meeting and noted the apologies as above.

Minutes of last meeting on Saturday 8th June 2024. Following distribution to the committee of the draft minutes Nuala had contacted Graham to stress that we should not send out the results which she had outlined to us until after the research had been published. The amended minutes were ratified.

Matters Arising

- Bank Account Mick confirmed that we are €295 in credit and that anyone could pay in but only he and Pádraig could withdraw funds. He would distribute the account name and IBAN details to the committee.
- Indoor Events George described his attempts to arrange a talk by an eminent speaker. Having secured a venue unfortunately his speaker had cancelled. Graham stressed that our indoor events should generate funds for our branch. The Sligo branch have regular meetings with talks by their members. They co-host major speaker events with the university or county council. The cost for these special events is borne by the council and university respectively. The Sligo branch helps to advertise and bring in an audience for which they are permitted to accept donations to their branch funds. Much discussion followed about who from our members might speak and possible venues. Graham had visited the Grainne Uaile pub in Newport recently where they have a small upstairs room used for presentations and training. He had spoken with the owner who would be willing to allow us to use it at no cost. It was agreed that Colin and Graham would look into this and Nuala would check on the use of rooms in the university. From the committee Graham and Colin said that they could do presentations and Nathy offered a short talk on barn owls. It was agreed that we should endeavour to set up indoor talks where we would request donations to the branch and a charge would be levied for major talks if the branch is incurring costs. George requested that these in house presentations are run by the committee and he would continue to find speakers for us.

- Website – Branch Information Section Now that the minutes of the last meeting were agreed they would be posted on our website. Graham reminded committee members of the importance of reading the draft minutes sent out after each meeting as they are now visible to all after they have been agreed at the following committee meeting.
- Mayo Swift Survey results Now that we are not providing a summary we discussed how we would present the results at a later date. It was agreed that once published we would provide a link on our social media and website.
- Mayo CoCo SPC Since being elected as the PPN representative onto the Environment and Climate Change Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), Graham attended two meetings which were mainly about acquainting new members with their role. In future he will only notify this committee of relevant opportunities for our branch or BirdWatch Ireland.

Reports from Recent Events Circulated with the agenda. Nathy had led a murmuration event at Lough Carra which we notified members a day beforehand on WhatsApp “BWMayo Info” alone. Only one person had turned up. Discussion took place about late notifications. Nathy agreed to host another in the New Year if the starlings are still gathering there which we will endeavour to notify by email as well.

Report from BWI Branch meeting, Limerick. Karen had provided the committee with her summary and Mick went through this. There were numerous opportunities for our branch to liaise with others on common problems and guidance. Mick emphasised an excellent talk from the Limerick branch on revitalising a failing group which had been in similar difficulties to our own.

WhatsApp - Misuse of “BWMayo Chat”. One of our members had put up a “go fund me” link which sparked a vitriolic response and caused a couple of our members to leave the group. Eventually the matter was resolved. The member apologised and was reinstated in the group. On this occasion Graham had been unable to respond quickly to delete the initial post. All committee members who use WhatsApp are now administrators for this group and should delete any post that are not birdwatch specific immediately. Colin recommended that the group description is updated and members are provided with our guidelines on joining WhatsApp “BWMayo Chat”.

Research Officer At our Kilcummin sea watch which attracted pelagic experts from Galway, Sligo and Mayo Graham noted that Colin knew everyone and thought that he would be ideal for our research officer role. They had spoken about this and Colin is willing to take on the role alongside his IT and social media commitment. Initially bird identity enquiries to our branch would be directed to him but there may be opportunities in the future for our branch to contribute to research projects and surveys which this committee member could lead.

Bird Hide At our sea watch event Colin was approached about having a hide at Kilcummin. Discussion followed about the difference between hides and shelters for birdwatchers. Then the maintenance, security, frequency of use and inappropriate use were discussed. In conclusion a hide at this site was thought inappropriate but that we should always be looking for opportunities to install hides and maybe the branch should have a temporary hide (gazebo style) to be put up when the opportunity arose.

Events for 2025 The updated calendar was distributed with the agenda. Graham mentioned that the Sligo branch recently cancelled their away day and thought that we should introduce one in 2025. It was agreed that we should look into this and possibly offer an overnight stay.

Lough Boora Discovery Centre, Co. Offaly and Inch Island Wildfowl Reserve, Donegal were discussed. Currently this event is scheduled for November 2025 giving plenty of time to organise it. Our trip to South Inishkea Island is a little later this year. Provisionally we have reserved the two ferry crossings and we will need at least one committee member on each to encourage responsible birdwatching during the height of the breeding season. The calendar for 2025 was agreed. It will be distributed to all our members shortly and put on our website and social media.

Upcoming Events

- **Ross Beach and Killala** Sunday 15th December. Meet at Ross Beach car park at 10:45. There will be a choice of observing the birds in the estuary and bay from the elevated car park or a walk along the beach where you should have close views of divers, cormorants etc at low tide plus waders on the mudflats further down. Depending on numbers we may visit Palmerston Bridge as we drive to Killala quay to view the birds in the harbour area on a rising tide. Graham and Colm can lead this.
- **Belmullet** Sunday 19th January 2025. Meet at the rear of Aldi car park in Belmullet at 11:00. Depending on numbers we may need to car share to visit a number of beaches, Cross Lough and Termoncarragh. Barnacle and other geese are our target species for this outing and possibly a rare winter visitor. Graham can lead.
- **South Mayo Turloughs** Saturday 15th February. Meeting point and time to be decided. Mick will lead this outing.

Any Late Notices No late notices.

Date of Next Meeting Saturday 1st February 2025 at 11:30 in the foyer of the Ellison Hotel.