



Open Spaces Society

PARISH, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS – WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

Information Sheet B4

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Parish, town and community councils - why you should join the Open Spaces Society

To qualify for professional advice and assistance in matters relating to the protection of common land, town and village greens, open spaces and public paths in your parish.

1. We have over 500 parish, town and community councils throughout England and Wales who are members of the society and they benefit from our free advisory service. We deal with over 300 cases a year for our members. In 2006, about 31 of these were on behalf of the local councils.
2. If there are commons or greens in your parish or community you may need our specialist help in protecting them from encroachment. If you own or manage them, you will have particular responsibilities on which we can advise. If those commons or greens have no registered owner, we can tell you how to go about acquiring ownership by adverse possession.
3. In the case of town and village greens we can help you to deal with illegal encroachments, using the special powers available to you.
4. We can also advise you on how to apply to register land as a 'new' town or village green. We have helped many parish councils

including Sunningwell Parish Council in Oxfordshire on such a case, which made important case-law in the House of Lords.

5. The Commons Act 2006 received royal assent on 19 July 2006 and the society was closely involved with the passage of the original bill through parliament. It includes new criteria for the registration of greens and a new exchange-land process.

6. On rights of way, the society is unique in being concerned about all categories of public paths and representing all categories of user.

7. We receive copies of all the proposals to alter the routes of paths, and our network of local correspondents respond to these and take up local cases on our behalf.

8. We advise and support our local council members in protecting and creating public paths and on their special powers in this respect.

9. With the Ramblers' Association, we have published a comprehensive guide to path law: *Rights of Way, a guide to law and practice*. This is available from the Ramblers' Association, 2nd Floor, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW
Tel: 020-7339 8500 Email: bluebook@london.ramblers.org.uk

**To obtain a discount price
on our publications**

10. In addition to the advice you can obtain from our staff, you can, as a member, make use of a free legal-advisory service offered by a firm of solicitors in Swansea. They will give the first 30 minutes of their time free to members of the society

11. Our book *Our Common Land* is the definitive work on the law of commons and village greens. *Getting Greens Registered* advises on the law and procedure of registering land as a 'new' green.

12. Membership also entitles you to any of the information sheets available on our publications list.

13. As a member you would receive three, free copies a year of our lively and informative magazine *Open Space*.

14. The subscription rate currently for parish councils is £30.00 a year, with an enrolment fee of £10. With effect from 1 January 2009 this will increase to £40.00 a year, with an enrolment fee of £12.