



Open Spaces Society

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Dear Member

What would Octavia say? And what would Octavia do?

Octavia is of course Octavia Hill*, the legendary pioneer of this society who died one hundred years ago this summer. She would have been dismayed by the moves to threaten and dismantle the safeguards for open spaces and paths which she championed all her life.

Octavia had a vivid and a visionary turn of phrase. For her, urban open spaces were 'the open-air sitting rooms of the poor' and public paths were the 'little winding, quiet byways with all their beauty'. How would she react to the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that extraordinarily ill-thought out document which promises 'sustainable development' but leaves implementation to the whims and vagaries of local councillors? And what phrase would she find for the proposed 'local green space' designation which says nothing of how designated land is to be protected?

The naivety of such follies might cause her sorrow, but surely she would be angered by the government's proposal to put development before protection of new town and village greens? And would she not deplore the slashing of local-government spending and the neglect of public rights of way which must follow?

We have to keep Octavia's brilliant legacy alive. Among much else we must—

- make the Local Green Space designation of real value to communities, a new opportunity to protect open spaces which is not so restricted as to be useless;
- prevent the government from rewriting the laws for registering land as a town or village green, to enable local people to continue to enjoy these spaces as they have done for decades;
- respond to the government's forthcoming consultation on public paths, by arguing for a robust process to get the definitive maps up to date and ensuring that the only changes that are made to the law are in the public interest;
- make submissions on a bevy of consultations from the Welsh Government—including a new planning policy for Wales, how to manage and regulate Wales's environment, and the arrangements for a new body for Wales's natural resources—so as to ensure that the government takes account of the interests we champion.

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(registered in England and Wales, limited company number 7846516, registered charity number 1144840)

The Open Spaces Society (formally The Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society) campaigns to create and conserve common land, village greens, open spaces and rights of public access, in town and country, in England and Wales. Founded in 1865, we are Britain's oldest national conservation body.

It is a very tall order for our small society facing multiple campaigns all at the same time. Lobbying MPs, Assembly Members, ministers and peers costs money; so do the supporting publicity and the tiny office from which we run these things. But we must keep Octavia's shining torch aflame. Please help save your green spaces and public paths by giving what you can to Octavia's legacy appeal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Crowther". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Crowther
Chairman

PS Please send your cheque to Open Spaces Society, Freepost (RG1344), Henley-on-Thames RG9 1BR or visit our website <http://www.oss.org.uk/appeals/>. Thank you.

*Octavia Hill was born in 1838 in Wisbech and died in 1912. By late 1875 she was involved with the Commons Preservation Society, as the Open Spaces Society was then known. In 1888 she spoke eloquently at the society's annual general meeting in support of a motion for the better protection of public paths. In 1895, along with our founder Robert Hunter, she formed the National Trust.