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07 May 2015

Dear Member

## Commons: lost, missing and stolen

After 150 years of campaigning by the society against selfish private interests and official indifference, there remain commons still at risk, commons still to be acknowledged and commons still under threat. In other words there is a massive job for us still to do.

Fifty years ago the Commons Registration Act 1965 was a great advance for which we had worked and fought, but it allowed only three years for the complex business of getting land onto the registers.

As a result the registers were often inaccurate and often incomplete.

In 2006 a new Commons Act appeared to enable these faults to be put right: it makes it possible to correct the registers by adding and removing land. And this process is now in operation in nine 'pioneer' areas\*.

But over most of England the act has been only partially brought into force so that, although land can be taken *off* the registers, it cannot be put *on*. This is a manifest injustice of which we have forcefully complained, but as yet to deaf ears. And we have asked to be notified of all proposed changes so that we can monitor what is happening and intervene where needed. We are far from sure that notification will happen everywhere. Hence Hugh Craddock's timely advice in spring *Open Space* (page 5) is for all our members to contact their registration authorities (county and unitary councils).

*continued ...*

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\* The pioneer areas are Blackburn with Darwen, Cornwall, Cumbria, Devon, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Lancashire and North Yorkshire.



So there are some important jobs to do—and we can help you. Please:

- **claim lost commons** in those nine areas where it is now possible. This will ensure the land is protected and that the public has rights of access to it. See our *DIY guide to registering lost commons* which you can download from the free-publications page of our website, or ask the office to send it to you;
- **investigate and object** to bad applications to deregister commons in your area, which mean the land will lose protection and we shall lose access;
- **call on your candidates in the general election and subsequently your MP** to pledge the full implementation of the Commons Act 2006, throughout England, and your Assembly Members for implementation in Wales; this will empower us to reclaim lost commons across both nations and to restore equity to the process.

All this requires technical knowledge and legal support, which the society is uniquely placed to provide. In turn this requires the time of our expert staff which puts further pressure on our limited resources.

If this vital work is to go on we need *your* backing. **Please give to our lost commons appeal.**

Thank you for your generosity.

Yours sincerely

*Kate Ashbrook* #

Kate Ashbrook  
General secretary

***PS Please send your cheque to Open Spaces Society, FREEPOST (RG1344), Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 2BA or visit our website <http://www.oss.org.uk/how-you-can-help/donations/>. Thank you.***



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