

09 May 2017

Dear Member

**Good causes, green causes—  
and how to fight for them**

Five years ago, we set up a special legal fund with, as the name suggests, a simple and vital purpose—to fund legal action by the society in defence of commons, green spaces and public paths. Thanks entirely to the members of the society we raised a remarkable £15,000 and some of the causes on which it has been spent are listed below. But now the money has all been used, and we are starting afresh by asking you to match your previous generosity and commitment.

We take great care over how we spend from the fund. When, for instance, local campaigners ask for help with a case, their application goes to the legal subcommittee of our trustees which considers it against set criteria. For example, we ask: is the issue of more than local significance? In other words, will victory in the courts set a useful precedent? Are public rights at stake? Is the chance of success more than 50 per cent? Does the case have local community support?

In using the fund, we have:

- financed legal representation at a three-day public inquiry into an historic-footpath claim across a river at Chippinghurst, Oxfordshire
- challenged the closure of a footpath across a railway line at Penzance, Cornwall
- fought the unlawful commercial development of London commons—green havens in an endless townscape

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- backed claims for village greens at Saltash, Cornwall; Norton St Philip, Somerset, and at Lancaster
- defended open space at Whitstable in Kent

among others.

But from now on, unless the fund is renewed, we shall be forced to dip into our reserves to finance further action. And there are already new cases on the horizon, including a challenge in the appeal court to the London Borough of Haringey's proposed commercialisation of Finsbury Park. Unless we can reverse this decision, there will be severely harmful consequences for open spaces all over Greater London.

Of course, we sometimes lose cases, but over the years our successes constitute a solid body of useful decisions which will stand us in good stead. Win or lose, they must all be fought. Even an apparently unsuccessful outcome can be useful in establishing legal clarity. The fact that we have spent the fund speaks for itself—it is needed, urgently. Please help us to replenish it so that we can continue to support essential legal cases in town and countryside.

Yours sincerely

*Kate Ashbrook*

Kate Ashbrook  
General Secretary

***PS Please send your cheque in the envelope provided to  
Open Spaces Society, FREEPOST (RG1344), Henley-on-Thames RG9 1BR  
or visit our website <http://www.oss.org.uk/how-you-can-help/appeals/>.***

***Thank you.***

