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23 November 2017

Dear Member

Lost commons: the rescue begins

Nearly three years ago (April 2015) I wrote to tell you of the society's plans to register the hundreds of commons which had not been included in the original but flawed legislation, the Commons Registration Act 1965. With the help you gave us that work got under way and in the current *Open Space* ('Claiming commons', page 5) we announced the appointment of Tomas Hill, an experienced researcher, who is now working for us part-time ferreting out commons which were wrongly omitted from the registers. We were able to appoint him because of legacies from generous members and others.

At present it is only open to us to register such commons in England in what are known as 'the pioneer areas'*, and in Wales. Tomas Hill has started work in one of these pioneer areas, his home county of Cornwall, where he has already succeeded in registering a useful number of commons—and there are more to come. From Cornwall he is extending his investigations, applications and registrations to North Yorkshire and other places.

We have only until the end of 2020 to apply for registrations in many of these areas—barely three years off now.

We must register the missing commons before then. This is vital. These are important open spaces for walkers and riders to enjoy and they need the protection that comes with registration. And if we are to get the limited 'pioneer areas' extended to cover the whole of England we must demonstrate to the government that there are many missing

continued/2



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Charity no 1144840 Registered in England and Wales, limited company no 7846516

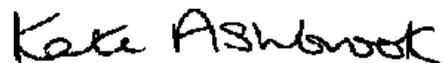
commons which ought to be registered. A good showing between now and 2020 in these areas will be the foundation of success across the rest of England in the future. (And, unexpectedly, in Wales we now have the opportunity (until 2032) to register commons—a huge new challenge.)

This is one of the most essential tasks the society has ever tackled. How can you help? The obvious way is by letting us know of any common you think should be registered but which is not. Such commons must have been provisionally registered under the 1965 Act. But as ever we are going to need money too. The legacies won't last for ever and Tomas must be supported in the field with a modest salary and expenses for travel and research. These will increase as he moves further afield into new territory. In some cases, as the deadline nears, he will only have time to submit preliminary findings which our office staff and volunteers will need to follow up in detail. This is one of those open-ended exercises for which it is impossible to budget precisely, although we can be sure that the demands upon us will grow.

In some contentious cases we shall need professional legal support which means more money. And if existing national office staff have to become involved, that will put pressure on all our other activities. Again, we shall be spending to save land for us all.

This is why I am again asking for your support for our lost commons appeal. I do so knowing that many of you have already given to this and other calls on your generosity, and I am therefore certain that you will not let the lost commons go by default now.

Yours sincerely



Kate Ashbrook
General Secretary

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

***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.

