



## Open Spaces Society

Chairman RODNEY LEGG Charity No 214753 General Secretary KATE ASHBROOK

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Friends House,  
Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ on Tuesday 3 July 2007**

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#### PRESENT

Mr Paul Clayden	(vice-president)
Mr Roger de Freitas	(vice-president)
Mr Rodney Legg	(chairman)

and 53 other members of the society, five members of staff,  
two guests and one uninvited person.

Apologies were received from 11 members.

#### WELCOME BY THE AGM CHAIRMAN

- 07/1 The AGM chairman, Roger de Freitas welcomed members to the meeting. The society had existed for over 140 years and had been an incredible help in making Britain the wonderful place it is. It gave birth to the National Trust and access, and much else. It was important to be effective and to have light-touch governance. There were too many charities that were turned in on themselves. He hoped the society was on the brink of a big change to allow us to focus on our beneficiaries. He was very proud to be a part of the OSS. The AGM had a simple agenda. As members we had a duty to make sure the society had done what it had said it would do over the past year.

#### APPROVAL TO LIMIT SPEECHES

- 07/2 It was agreed that speeches would be limited as follows: proposers of motions maximum five minutes, others maximum three minutes.

#### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 3 JULY 2006

- 07/3 With the amendment of 'this' to 'his' in minute 06/06, third line, the minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

#### MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There was none.



## ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2006

- 07/4 Rodney Legg (chairman) proposed the adoption of the annual report and trustees' report for 2006. He referred to a complaint, made by a former member of staff, about the appointment of the general secretary to her post 23 years ago. The trustees had responded to the Charity Commission, and the Charity Commission had confirmed that it was content that the matter was closed. Proof of the trustees' confidence could be seen in the current annual report. After decades of urging second-stage-common-land-protection legislation we had made important contributions to what was now the Commons Act 2006. We had also played a part in securing a favourable House of Lords' judgment on the registration of greens, at Trap Grounds.
- 07/5 The society had over the year gained more members, inspired more activists and made more interventions on behalf of the people against abuses of privilege. We had recorded 280 commons, greens and path submissions through the Henley office and our volunteers had also done their bit in the wider world.
- 07/6 He proposed an amendment to the trustees' report: under the heading 'Details of funds materially in deficit, and steps taken to eliminate the deficit', replace 'such investments have not been realised' with the words 'sufficient funds have always been forthcoming'.
- 07/7 The annual report and the amended trustees' report for 2006 were seconded by Phil Wadey.
- 07/8 At this point, Brian Wright (who was not a member of the society and had not been invited to attend the AGM) claimed to raise a point of order. He said he was a former assistant secretary of the society and was challenging the lawfulness of the AGM. The chairman said that as we were in the middle of the AGM and as these points were not raised in good time before the meeting, they could not be raised now. Brian Wright refused to stop speaking. The chairman proposed that we adjourn the meeting for five minutes and ask him to leave.
- 07/9 Some time later the meeting reconvened with a member of the Friends House staff present to watch the proceedings. Brian Wright again began to speak. It was proposed by Geoffrey Myers, seconded by Louise Harrison and overwhelmingly agreed that Mr Wright be removed on grounds that his behaviour is disruptive. However Mr Wright still showed no sign of leaving and so it was decided to proceed regardless.
- 07/10 The general secretary spoke to the annual report. She referred to a number of cases where the society was making a difference, for instance in getting the illegally blocked footpath at Northwick Park in Brent reopened, in publishing the book *Getting Greens Registered* which encouraged people to identify land which could be registered as
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a green and rescued from development and in publishing the book *Our Common Land* which advised members on matters relating to commons. We continued to campaign against unwanted developments on common land and the general secretary congratulated Edgar Powell for opposing, at a public inquiry, a village hall on Garway Common in Herefordshire which had been rejected. However in Wales, commons were under threat from wind turbines which the National Assembly for Wales seemed to be permitting too readily. The general secretary thanked Bernard Selwyn for his continuing work on parliamentary matters, even though he had said he was retiring.

07/11 She referred to the many challenges which faced us: threats from development, gating orders on paths, the issue of fencing commons in order to reintroduce grazing, to name a few.

07/12 The society was looking forward to developing the strategic plan but members needed to be aware that we were small, and had limited capacity for growth so we would need to find a way of creating space and time to accommodate new work. The general secretary closed by thanking local correspondents and other volunteers, the trustees and the staff for all their hard work and loyalty to the cause.

07/13 The annual report and amended trustees' report were approved.

#### **ACCOUNTS FOR 2006**

07/14 The vice-chairman, Phil Wadey, proposed the accounts. He was sorry to report that the former treasurer, Robert Greenly, had resigned on 1 June due to sudden and unforeseen illness. The accounts were seconded by David Hunt.

07/15 David Hunt asked the society to look into its reserves policy since it seemed that it was planning to hold a lot of money in reserve. He suggested this be linked to the risk management statement. Bernard Selwyn responded that the society needed reserves because it never knew when we would embark on litigation. Phil Wadey assured the meeting that the trustees regularly looked at the accounts and the reserve position, as well as the risks facing the society.

07/16 The accounts were approved nem con.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS FOR 2007**

07/17 It was proposed by Edgar Powell, seconded by Claire Cunningham and agreed nem con that Villars Hayward, chartered accountants and registered auditors of Henley-on-Thames, be appointed independent examiners for 2007.



## **ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS, OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **Vice Presidents**

- 07/18 The vice-presidents had been formally proposed by Donald Lee and seconded by Bob Milton. The meeting agreed that Lord Clark of Windermere, Paul Clayden, Roger de Freitas, Richard Mabey, Edgar Powell, John Riddall, Margaret Smith, Anne Wilks and Pat Wilson be elected vice-presidents.

### **Chairman**

- 07/19 Donald Lee had proposed and Peter Newman had seconded Rodney Legg's election of chairman. This was agreed by the meeting.

### **Vice-chairman**

- 07/20 Rodney Legg had proposed and Chris Beney had seconded the election of Phil Wadey as vice-chairman. This was agreed by the meeting.

### **Treasurer**

- 07/21 The chairman said that the treasurer had resigned due to sudden and unforeseen illness and no other nomination had been received. At this point Brian Wright said that he wished to tell the meeting something about the treasurer. However the meeting overwhelmingly said it did not wish to hear from him. Brian Wright then left and did not return.

### **Executive Committee**

- 07/22 The following had been proposed and seconded as members of the executive committee.

Diane Andrewes	Donald Lee
Chris Beney	Bob Milton
Tim Crowther	Peter Newman

- 07/23 As there were insufficient candidates for a ballot they were automatically elected.
- 07/24 Rodney Legg thanked Claire Cunningham, who was retiring from the committee after five years, for all her work.

## **MOTIONS**

### **Unlawful and unnecessary structures on paths**

- 07/25 John Ives proposed and Chris Beney seconded the following motion.

*The OSS recognises that many path structures are unlawful and that many that are lawful are unnecessary. We shall work with highway authorities and government to phase out these structures.*



- 07/26 Pat Wilson proposed that the second sentence be amended to read 'We shall work with highway authorities and government to have unlawful structures removed without delay and unnecessary ones phased out'. This amendment was accepted by the proposer and seconder. The amended motion then read:

*The OSS recognises that many path structures are unlawful and that many that are lawful are unnecessary. We shall work with highway authorities and government to have unlawful structures removed without delay and unnecessary ones phased out.*

- 07/27 This was passed by an overwhelming majority.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 07/28 Joyce Bellamy (London Borough of Merton) said she was working vigorously to get better awareness of the need for green space when town centres were regenerated. She was concerned that Natural England did not seem to be aware of the laws relating to urban commons and tended to apply rural standards to urban spaces.
- 07/29 Geoffrey Myers (London Borough of Croydon) was concerned that patches of green in Croydon were being regarded as brownfield sites when they should be kept undeveloped.
- 07/30 Peter Cuming (Friends of Talacre Gardens, London Borough of Camden) said that his group had recently joined the society for help in registering a 2½-acre park as a green. The London Borough of Camden wanted to develop this for overspill car-parking and was claiming that registering land as a green was complicated. The society needed to communicate what a simple process it was.
- 07/31 There was no other business.
- 07/32 The meeting closed at 12.45 pm.

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- 07/33 In the afternoon there was a talk by Graham Bathe, Natural England, major project manager for common land on linking ancient and modern: commons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 07/34 Phil Wadey, vice-chairman, gave a presentation of the trustees' strategic plan for 2007-12, supported by a business plan for the period, and led the discussion. Members were assured that their comments would be given full consideration before the plan was finalised.



