



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 30 June 2009**

PRESENT

Mr Paul Clayden	(vice-president)
Mr Roger de Freitas	(vice-president)
Mrs Pat Wilson	(vice-president)
Mr Rodney Legg	(chairman)
Mr Phil Wadey	(vice-chairman)

and 40 other members of the society, five members of staff
and two guests.

Apologies were received from 15 members.

WELCOME BY THE AGM CHAIRMAN

- 09/1 The AGM chairman, Roger de Freitas, welcomed members to the meeting. He spoke of the importance of walking, because it generated conversations of civic relevance which made a difference, and because it made you feel better. He had heard from Bernard Selwyn, our London representative, who was unable to attend the AGM because he was at a public inquiry about Hackney Marshes. Bernard was campaigning to save Shepherd's Bush Green as an open space. Roger was proud to be associated with him, but said we needed a successor to carry on his campaign with equal vigour.

APPROVAL TO LIMIT SPEECHES

- 09/2 It was agreed that speeches would be limited as follows: proposers of motions maximum five minutes, others maximum three minutes.

APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

- 09/3 It was agreed to appoint Julie Jiggins and Ruth Walker as tellers and scrutineers.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 1 JULY 2008

- 09/4 The minutes were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 09/5 (08/6) John Ives (North Somerset) said that at the AGM two years ago he had proposed a motion to deal with structures on public rights of way. There had subsequently been an OSS survey of highway authorities and a consultation paper from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on structures on rights of way. He asked when the society was going to publish the results of its survey.
- 09/6 Chris Beney said he has undertaken to have this ready for the website and distribution by the end of July. The Defra work had superseded it. Regarding the Defra guidance, Dave Waterman of Defra had been pressed by the disabled lobby to enable disabled people to have an input, so the paper had been delayed, which was regrettable. However the draft was in the public domain.
- 09/7 (08/23) Dilwyn Chambers (London Borough of Harrow) repeated his suggestion from last year that we produce special recruitment leaflets focusing on particular boroughs, to attract members living in those areas.
- 09/8 Chris Bloor (Bristol) said he had produced a leaflet aimed at running clubs and had already attracted two to join the society.

ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2008

- 09/9 Rodney Legg (chairman) proposed the adoption of the trustees' report for 2008. He said he was standing down after 20 years as chairman and a further period before that as treasurer. He recalled the committee meetings when he joined, which were held in the crypt under Westminster Hall with MPs in attendance.
- 09/10 The trustees' report was seconded by Diane Andrewes.
- 09/11 The general secretary spoke to the trustees' report. This year was the sixtieth anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, in which the society had been heavily involved. We were delighted that the anniversary had been marked by the government's announcement that it would confirm the South Downs as a National Park. Now Natural England was filling the gaps between the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales by recommending an extension of those national park boundaries.
- 09/12 The Marine and Coastal Access Bill was another tribute to the National Parks Act and was making good progress through the House of Commons.
- 09/13 The recession had not reduced our work, we were busier and more needed than ever. We were likely to top 400 cases this year and those were just the ones dealt with by our small staff. Our local correspondents and other volunteers helped with many more.

- 09/14 Our views were now sought by Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Wildlife Trusts and others about works on common land, and sometimes they were prepared to pay a consultancy fee. We had advised 115 members on applications for new greens in the last year and this year expected the figure to be over 160. On rights of way we were represented on Natural England's Stakeholder Working Group looking at historic paths. Staff now needed to turn their attention to fundraising, and were having some success. The general secretary praised Ruth Walker for her work on creating the new website, which was attracting a lot of interest and new members to the society.
- 09/15 Kate Ashbrook closed by thanking the members, local correspondents, board of trustees and staff. In particular she thanked Rodney Legg and Don Lee who were standing down from the board after long and dedicated service.
- 09/16 The trustees' report was approved.

ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2008

- 09/17 Phil Wadey, vice-chairman, proposed that the accounts be adopted. He explained that we did not currently have a treasurer. He said that in previous years we have produced a deficit budget, but this year reserves had lost £70,000 during the year and were now down to £320,000. Consequently the previous treasurer had encouraged the trustees to set up working parties to consider fundraising, which they had done. Since the trustees had approved the budget, we had received a legacy of £40,000 with a further £175,000 promised, and a generous anonymous donation from a member of £50,000.
- 09/18 Diane Andrewes seconded the accounts.
- 09/19 Peter Turtill (trustee) objected to the accounts and in particular to note 17 regarding reimbursement of part of the general secretary's expenses incurred by her in the performance of her duties.
- 09/20 A number of members spoke in favour of the payment.
- 09/21 John Ives made a statement regarding the need to 're-brand' the society and raise money for local projects, attracting gift aid.
- 09/22 The accounts were carried overwhelmingly, with Peter Turtill voting against and one abstention.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS FOR 2009

- 09/23 It was proposed by Brian Reader, seconded by Claire Cunningham and agreed that Villars Hayward, chartered accountants and registered auditors of Henley-on-Thames, be appointed independent examiners for 2009.

ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Vice Presidents

- 09/24 The vice-presidents had been formally proposed by Diane Andrewes and seconded by Chris Beney. The meeting agreed that Lord Clark of Windermere, Len Clark, Paul Clayden, Roger de Freitas, Tony (Lord) Greaves, Richard Mabey, Edgar Powell, John Riddall, Bernard Selwyn, Margaret Smith, Anne Wilks and Pat Wilson be elected as vice-presidents.

Trustees

- 09/25 The following had been proposed and seconded as trustees;

Diane Andrewes	Peter Newman
Chris Beney	Phil Wadey
Tim Crowther	Jacqueline Warr
John Ives	

- 09/26 As there were insufficient candidates for a ballot they were automatically elected.
- 09/27 The vice-chairman, Phil Wadey, thanked Rodney Legg, who was retiring after 20 years as chairman, and presented him with a card signed by all the members at the AGM. He also thanked Donald Lee who was retiring from the board of trustees having been a member since 1984. The vice-chairman's words were endorsed with acclaim.

MOTIONS

Constitution

- 09/28 Chris Beney proposed and Phil Wadey seconded the following motion:

That the OSS constitution at objects clause C.b) at present reading:

'C.b) to protect and preserve existing public paths...'

be changed to

'C.b) to protect, preserve *and enhance* existing public paths...' (our italics)

- 09/29 The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 09/30 Hugh Craddock (Defra), gave a short presentation on the implementation of part 1 of the Commons Act 2006. Many commons had been registered in the 1960s and 70s by the activists of the OSS and Ramblers, but that process did not go too well. Registrations were cancelled because of the hostility of landowners, applicants withdrew in the face of concerted opposition, or registrations were cancelled by agreement. There was now an opportunity to make applications for certain land which had been omitted under schedule 2 of the Commons Act 2006. This could be done now in the seven pilot areas and would become possible over the whole country in due course. He wondered what had happened to the enthusiasm which imbued the society in the nineteenth century and the 1960s and he hoped that members would be willing to participate in registering land which might qualify for the registers now.
- 09/31 There were many questions and comments about Hugh's presentation, indicating that there was a great deal of interest among members for this opportunity.
- 09/32 The AGM chairman thanked Hugh for his presentation, saying this was the meat of the society's business.
- 09/33 He then closed the meeting thanking everybody for attending.
- 09/34 Phil Wadey asked the AGM to thank the loyal and hardworking staff over the last year: Kate, Nicola, Ruth, Julie, Moira and Mark. The AGM gave a round of applause.
- 09/35 Rodney Legg thanked Roger de Freitas for chairing the meeting so ably.
- 09/36 The meeting closed at 13.00pm
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- 09/37 In the afternoon there was a talk by Paul Kingsnorth, writer and author of *Real England: the Battle against the bland*, on 'The modern inclosures: the corporatisation of place and the fight against it'. This was followed by questions.
- 09/38 Diane Andrewes led a session on 'working together to promote and sustain the Open Spaces Society', in a number of small groups who then fed back to the plenary session.

P. M. L. Clayden
6.7.10

