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**Minutes of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 12 noon on Thursday 22 September 2016 at
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ**

PRESENT Phil Wadey (chairman)
Diane Andrewes
Chris Beney
John Lavery
Jean Macdonald
Peter Newman
Steve Warr

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

APOLOGIES Graham Bathe

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

86/16 There were no declarations of interests.

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 9 JUNE AND 7 JULY 2016

87/16 The minutes of both meetings were approved as a correct record and for publication on the website.

SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

88/16 It was agreed that Jean Macdonald would join the membership working party.

89/16 It was noted that there would be a review of the terms of reference and membership of the subcommittees and working parties at the next meeting, and it was agreed that the subcommittees and working parties would look at their terms of reference and propose any changes before the end of November.

- 90/16 Chris Beney expressed the view that, in the light of the recent intranet introduction, we should consider setting up a website liaison group. He agreed to draft terms of reference for the office to consider, with proposals to the next trustees' meeting.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Minutes of finance committee meeting on 9 June 2016

- 91/16 The trustees noted the minutes.

Minutes of finance committee meeting on 8 September 2016

- 92/16 The treasurer reported that the finance committee had ratified the £75,000 deposit to Charity Bank which the trustees had approved by email; discussed the appropriateness of the management information and agreed some small changes; and agreed to review the responsibilities of members of the finance committee which will be considered when trustees review the terms of reference of committees.

Management report to end July 2016

- 93/16 The treasurer reported that there was nothing exceptional. We need to look at the accrual of subscriptions which are paid in advance and particularly those which are paid in December but are due in the new financial year. Donations were more than the budget. The over-expenditure was from the legal fund, where we have approved additional payments. Staff costs were lower than budgeted because we had not yet appointed the commons registration project officer.

Investment and cash summary at end July 2016

- 94/16 The treasurer reported that we have plenty of cash and have spread the deposits over several banking institutions to be within the £75,000 protection from the Financial Services Commission scheme. We have closed the CAF 30-day-notice platinum account, where the interest rate was not competitive, thus reducing our overall exposure to CAF. Our exposure on the CAF Gold account remains above the £75,000 protected limit. We still had enough cash available immediately or at short notice to cover our expenses for well over a year. We would need to reconsider our investments in May or June next year when some of the term deposits mature.

Find Our Way Fund income and expenditure

- 95/16 This was noted. Phil Wadey said that the British Horse Society's Norfolk project, to which we had contributed £500, had raised £2,000 for digitising records. Our local correspondent Ian Witham had had the first of his applications for the addition of a path to the definitive map agreed by the county council, and he has over 100 further applications to make.

Subject for autumn appeal

- 96/16 It was agreed that this should be on the topic of our campaign against the commercial abuse of open spaces.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership figures at end of August 2016

- 97/16 These were noted. Trustees requested membership forms so that they could assist with recruitment.

Membership campaign and integrated online media support

- 98/16 The trustees discussed the report and were pleased to see the increase in web sessions. They asked if in future the authors could write the document in plain English for non-technical people with a glossary of abbreviations. They asked for a breakdown of website visits, ie the numbers, which pages are popular, how long people stay on the site, and whence they come, and also for an assurance that the hits were from real people rather than from Google trying to increase the hits on our adwords. They also wished to understand whether the £569 spend was money which we had paid.

- 99/16 It was agreed that the membership working party would meet soon (electronically) to consider its terms of reference and the proposed marketing budget for 2017.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7 JULY 2016

Draft minutes

- 100/16 Minute 16/1: It was agreed to add a reference to being able to register commons only in England, in the nine pioneer areas. Subject to this, the trustees considered the minutes to be an accurate record for presentation to the 2017 AGM.

Matters arising

- 101/16 There were no matters arising.

STRATEGIC PLAN: MID-TERM REVIEW

- 102/16 It was agreed to add a note to item 23 in *Choosing Direction* to explain that different members may be interested in doing different things, including fund-raising.

- 103/16 The trustees discussed and approved the mid-term review. It was agreed that the update should be presented to trustees every six months.

OSS POLICY ON POST-BREXIT AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- 104/16 The trustees discussed the proposed policy. It was noted that cross compliance does not apply outside *Glastir* land in Wales. Phil Wadey agreed to send the office, for circulation to the trustees, a pack of information about the requirements to maintain rights of way when landowners receive grants. It was noted that in paragraph 3 of the paper, new access, we would argue for payments if a landowner offered non-eligible land as spreading room under the coastal access

arrangements, and in paragraph 4 we needed to clarify the examples of enhancement of existing access.

- 105/16 It was agreed unanimously to adopt the proposals as our post-Brexit agricultural-support policy, with the addition of the proposal that grant should be deducted after service of a fixed-penalty notice on a landowner who abused a public path.

RECRUITMENT OF TRUSTEE WHO IS A LOCAL CORRESPONDENT

- 106/16 It was noted that Chris Beney and Peter Newman, both local correspondents, would no longer be trustees after the 2017 AGM. There will be at least three vacancies. It was agreed that the general secretary would approach potential candidates from among our local correspondents. It was noted that after Chris and Peter had left the board we could still invite them to look through the local correspondents' reports and inform trustees of their findings.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Reappointments

- 107/16 It was agreed to reappoint Jo Bird (County Durham, Teesdale and Wear Valley Districts), Paul Brown (West Sussex, Mid Sussex District), Jeremy Clyne (LB Lambeth and LB Wandsworth), Paul Partington (Somerset, Taunton Deane District), Jerry Pearlman (Leeds).

Appointments already approved

- 108/16 It was noted that trustees had already approved Peter Newman to take on the Radnorshire part of Powys.

Appointments

- 109/16 The trustees approved the appointment of Malcolm Lees (Essex, Chelmsford Borough) and Mary Traynor (Cumbria, South Lakeland District) for one year in the first instance.

Reports

- 110/16 Chris Beney and Peter Newman had studied the reports and drew trustees' attention to the following issues. They asked that any late reports be circulated. They would like details of the diversions to which Brian Cowling had objected (on the grounds that they did not comply with the regulations) and which had been withdrawn. John Hall had reported that there were potentially 3000 routes to be added to the Coventry definitive map. Rail crossings were a big issue, and the general secretary said that we would be working with other user groups to oppose closures at a strategic level while local correspondents were opposing individual cases. Phil Wadey agreed to write a short leaflet about how to prepare your evidence form, how to customise it and how to present evidence, unless the Deregulation Act with its standard form came into effect first, rendering it superfluous.

Update events for 2017

- 111/16 The general secretary had sent a questionnaire to all local correspondents inviting their views on the idea of update days during 2017, with one or more to be held on commons, greens and public paths. There had been a good response and it was clear that all topics were popular. It was agreed that the office should proceed to organise the events for next year.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

- 112/16 The trustees were not aware of any claims or circumstances or problems which may give rise to a claim.

ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 113/16 The report was noted.

Minute 32/16: Ian Witham's case in the magistrates' court regarding East Ruston footpath 27/Honing footpath 15, Highways Act 1980 section 56 (out of repair)

- 114/16 John Lavery reported that he and Ian had met two representatives from Norfolk County Council on 16 September and they had come to a provisional agreement about a small diversion which would move the path over a separate bridge avoiding the need for a new bridge. However, a third party was involved because it owned the land on which the diversion would be made. Norfolk County Council had a means of encouraging the third party to cooperate since it had obstructed another part of the path with a fishing lake. Ian had written to the court asking for an adjournment to the new year.

Minute 83/16: Proposed legal action at Finsbury Park, London Borough of Haringey

- 115/16 John Lavery reported that the Friends of Finsbury Park had lodged its application for leave to appeal against the high court judgment allowing the Wireless Festival to proceed. We had written to the court indicating our desire to intervene and were awaiting the court's decision.

REVIEW OF MEETING

- 116/16 The trustees were content with the meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Coastal access in Hampshire

- 117/16 Diane Andrewes said that the Bursledon Rights of Way and Amenities Preservation Group was urging Natural England to include the River Hamble in the coastal path and access with the first crossing-point at Bursledon Bridge, the A27 road bridge.

She asked the society to support the group. It was agreed that Diane would draft a response for the general secretary to submit on behalf of the society.

Trial of self-closing bridlegates

- 118/16 Chris Beney said that the findings of the trial by the British Horse Society and Natural England at York last year would shortly be published.

Intranet

- 119/16 Some trustees expressed concerns about the operation of the intranet and were having difficulty gaining access to it. It was agreed that they should raise their concerns, with constructive ideas, with the office manager.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 120/16 This would be on Thursday 8 December at Friends House, London.
- 121/16 The 2017 meetings will be on 9 March, 8 June, 6 July (AGM), 28 September and 7 December (all Thursdays) at Friends House, London.

The meeting closed at 2.35 pm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Guy Bell', is written above a long, horizontal blue line that spans across the page.