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**Minutes of the thirty-first meeting of the Board of Trustees of  
the Open Spaces Society held at 12 noon on Thursday 28 September 2017 at  
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ**

**PRESENT** Graham Bathe (chairman)  
Diane Andrewes  
Jean Macdonald  
Mary Traynor  
Phil Wadey  
Steve Warr

**IN ATTENDANCE** Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

**APOLOGIES** Hilary Hunt and John Lavery

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

89/17 Phil Wadey declared that he knew one of the protagonists in the Ramblers' potential legal case at High Ham (minutes 98-100/17). The general secretary declared an interest in minutes 98-100/17 as she was a trustee and vice-chair of the Ramblers.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 8 June 2017**

90/17 With the addition that Phil Wadey chaired the meeting, the minutes were approved as a correct record and for publication on the website.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6 July 2017**

91/17 The minutes were approved as a correct record and for publication on the website.

## DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE LAST MEETING

- 92/17 It was noted that trustees had endorsed the recommendation of the legal subcommittee to grant £6,000 from the legal fund to the Moorside Fields village green case in the Court of Appeal.

## FINANCIAL MATTERS

### Minutes of finance committee meeting on 8 June 2017

- 93/17 These were noted.

### Oral report of finance committee meeting on 28 September 2017

- 94/17 The treasurer reported that the finance committee had approved a plan for the 2018 budget. The trustees and staff were invited to identify any projects requiring additional expenditure (which could be longer term than just 2018) by 8 November, in time for the finance committee meeting on 22 November and then consideration by the trustees in December. It was recognised that some projects have a long lead-in, but agreements in principle to draft proposals would enable them to be worked up for future consideration.

### Management report to 31 July 2017 and treasurer's commentary

- 95/17 These were noted. The trustees expressed their gratitude for the helpful commentary. The treasurer reported that the cash position was satisfactory. We were doing well on receipts from donations and legacies (to the end of July these totalled £48,953). On the operating costs, spending was a bit less than budget.

### Investment and cash summary at 31 July 2017

- 96/17 The report was noted.

### Subject for autumn appeal

- 97/17 Trustees suggested that the topic might be paths under threat and the work of our local correspondents, or the re-registration of commons.

### Request from Ramblers for financial contribution towards two cases

- 98/17 The general secretary explained that the Ramblers had asked the OSS and British Horse Society for a financial contribution towards two cases which were in accordance with our aims. Because the general secretary was a trustee of the Ramblers she did not consider it appropriate to make a recommendation.

- 99/17 The requests were as follows.

- 1 A contribution towards the estimated cost of £20,000 of obtaining counsel's opinion. This was on whether to challenge an inspector's decision to confirm the deletion of part of a footpath at High Ham in Somerset. The Ramblers considered that this decision conflicted with case law on the determination of a deletion order.

- 2 A contribution towards the estimated cost of £16,000 for an expert road-safety witness to appear at a public inquiry in Essex. This was in opposition to Network Rail's Transport and Works Act 1992 closure of 38 level-crossings over the mainline railway, forcing people to use dangerous roads instead. This was the first of many public inquiries and was therefore likely to form a precedent for future proposed closures by Network Rail.

- 100/17 After discussion the trustees agreed unanimously to contribute £5,000 to each case, taking the money from reserves. They wished to see the counsel's opinion and the submissions to the Network Rail inquiry so that we could learn from them, and they wished our support to be publicly acknowledged.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Membership figures at the end of August 2017**

- 101/17 The trustees noted the membership figures at the end of August 2017 and that membership had gone up by six in the last year, which was an improvement on previous years when we suffered a net loss of members.

### **Membership recruitment and retention**

- 102/17 The trustees considered a paper from the office manager and agreed that the membership working party should meet as soon as possible to consider implementation of proposals from our expert advisers for converting social media users to membership and other ideas. They thanked the office manager for the paper.

## **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)**

- 103/17 The trustees noted the paper from the general secretary explaining that we need to ensure that we are compliant with the GDPR when it becomes law on 25 May 2018, but that the interpretation was still unclear. We were liaising with similar organisations to share information and experience. The trustees noted that we were considering writing to all our members to ask them to contact us if they wish to change the mailing preference we hold for them. The trustees advised that such a letter should be as simple and as brief as possible and should explain that we never buy nor sell information about people. They felt we should wait until we know more about the GDPR before sending the letter.

## **COMMITTEES, SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES**

- 104/17 The trustees reviewed the terms and reference and membership of committees, subcommittees and working parties.

### **General purposes committee**

105/17 The terms of reference were amended so that the committee comprises the chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer and one other. It was agreed that Mary Traynor would serve on the committee.

### **106/17 Finance committee**

The finance committee had recommended a change so that one of the quorum of two must be the chairman or treasurer of the board of trustees. However the trustees felt this might fetter the ability of the committee to function and so the trustees decided to retain the original wording. It was agreed to ask Hilary Hunt if she would like to be a member.

107/17 The trustees adopted the addition proposed by the finance committee to add 'To review the choice of the independent examiners at least every five years and to make a recommendation to the trustees and thence to the AGM.'

108/17 The trustees approved the financial policies and practices subject to updating of names and in annex 1 replacing all mentions of £75,000 with £85,000 as the current maximum investment which is protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. It was agreed to amend para 3.3 to add 'and the Consumer Price Index' after 'Retail Prices Index'. It was noted that staff contracts refer to the RPI and it was agreed that CPI should be added to any contracts for new staff.

### **Legal subcommittee**

109/17 It was agreed that the legal subcommittee should advise the trustees on *all* legal issues affecting the society's charitable objectives. It was agreed to add Steve Warr as a member.

### **Membership working party**

110/17 It was agreed to add Hilary Hunt and Mary Traynor as members. Steve Warr said he would like to step down after the next meeting.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 6 JULY 2017**

### **Draft minutes**

111/17 Subject to a small amendment, the draft minutes were approved for publication as a draft on the website and presentation to the 2018 AGM.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE**

112/17 The trustees noted the actions taken on the strategic plan and expressed pleasure at the progress made.

## ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

129/17 The following were noted.

### 32/15 Blue book

130/17 The general secretary had met Janet Davis and others at the Ramblers to discuss the fifth edition of the Blue Book and they were following up various matters.

### 20/16 Sustrans and misleading notices

131/17 Phil Wadey reported that one of the routes with a misleading sign was about to be confirmed as a bridleway, following his application which was unopposed.

### 22/17 Magic-lantern slides

132/17 The Museum of English Rural Life in Reading had agreed in principle to host the slides on its website, but needed to sort out copyright.

### 86/17 Trustee training

133/17 The general secretary had attended trustee training run by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and considered it was helpful. It was agreed to pay for any trustees who wished to have training, either through NCVO or another organisation, and it was noted that if we are to use NCVO it would be worth joining to benefit from the discount to members.

## REVIEW OF MEETING

134/17 The trustees considered that it had been a good and interesting meeting.

## DATE OF NEXT MEETING

135/17 This would be on Thursday 7 December at 12 noon at Friends House, London.

## DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2018

136/17 The following were agreed:

Thursday 8 March 2018 at Friends House, London (John Woolman room)

Thursday 7 June 2018 at Friends House, London (Lucretia Mott room)

Thursday 5 July 2018 (AGM) at Friends House, London (George Fox room)

Thursday 27 September 2018 at Friends House, London (George Fox room)

Thursday 6 December 2018 at Friends House, London (George Fox room)

The meeting closed at 15.30 pm.



