

**Minutes of the thirty-second meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 12 noon on Thursday 7 December 2017 at
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ**

PRESENT Graham Bathe (chairman)
Diane Andrewes
Hilary Hunt
Phil Wadey (to end of minute 156/17)
Steve Warr

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

APOLOGIES John Lavery, Jean Macdonald and Mary Traynor

137/17 The chairman welcomed Hilary Hunt to her first full trustees' meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

138/17 There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 28 September 2017

139/17 The minutes were approved as a correct record and for publication on the website.

DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE LAST MEETING

140/17 It was noted that the general secretary had authorised the following payments:

- (a) contribution to the cost of the consultant who drafted the response for the Alliance of Welsh Designated Landscapes to the Welsh Government's consultation on the sustainable management of natural resources - £150;
- (b) membership of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations for three years - £410.

PUBLIC PATHS

- 141/17 It was noted with pleasure that we had published our fourth book, *Public Paths* by Graham Bathe, and that we were proposing to reprint 1,000 copies of *Saving Open Spaces*.

FINSBURY PARK LEGAL CASE

- 142/17 The Friends of Finsbury Park, with the society intervening, had lost the action in the court of appeal against Haringey London Borough Council. The action was to challenge Haringey's assertion that major events in public parks are authorised under section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972 and to test whether, in Greater London, the terms of the Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Order 1967 substitute a more restrictive regime. The Friends had sought leave to appeal to the supreme court.
- 143/17 It was noted that the trustees had endorsed, by email earlier in the week, the legal committee's recommendation of expenditure of £2,000 on a conference with our legal team (to be held shortly after the trustees' meeting) to consider whether there were grounds for appeal to the supreme court, whether the society should intervene, and other questions.
- 144/17 The treasurer explained that we should only apply to intervene in the supreme court if we propose to go ahead with it, with a consequent risk of costs.
- 145/17 After discussion the trustees agreed to delegate to the legal committee the decision on whether to support the Friends' application for leave to appeal to the supreme court and to approve expenditure of up to £10,000 on this. Since the quorum of the legal committee is two, and committee members Phil Wadey and Steve Warr were attending the conference with counsel, they could take the decision on behalf of the legal committee at the conference and authorise work to proceed if they felt it appropriate.
- 146/17 It was recognised that if we do proceed to the supreme court we are likely to need to commit more money. The legal committee would report back to the trustees on this with a recommendation.

COMMONS RE-REGISTRATION PROJECT

- 147/17 The trustees noted with interest the report from Tomas Hill of his work on the commons re-registration project in August and September 2017. They wished the report to come jointly from Hugh and Tomas in future, and to be sent as soon as it was available. They further noted that there was scope to extend the project if we wished to do so.

STRATEGIC PLAN, 2019-2024

- 148/17 Hilary Hunt introduced her paper setting out a process and timetable for development of the next strategic plan.
- 149/17 The trustees were content with the proposals. They agreed that the next strategic plan should be for five years (2019-2024). They agreed that there should be a one-day workshop in February or March 2018 for trustees and staff, but there were no strong feelings about whether we should employ a facilitator. It was agreed that Hilary Hunt and the general secretary would continue to take this forward. Graham Bathe, Phil Wadey and Steve Warr were willing to act as a sounding board for ideas.

AMENDMENT OF ARTICLES REGARDING ELECTION PROCEDURE AT AGM

- 150/17 The trustees considered a paper from Phil Wadey, which trustees had requested at the March 2017 meeting. The trustees had already agreed in principle to amend the articles so that voting for trustees at a general meeting will be by ballot. The trustees agreed to propose a resolution to the AGM in 2018 to replace the words in article 9.7 with:

‘a. For the election of Trustees, voting shall be by ballot.

b. For all other matters, voting at a general meeting shall be by show of hands unless a ballot of those present is demanded by either the person presiding at the meeting or by any six Members who are present. In the case of equality of votes the person presiding shall have a second or casting vote.’

- 151/17 Diane Andrewes questioned whether we should also amend subparagraph b, and she was invited to prepare a paper for the March meeting if she wished to make a specific proposal.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Minutes of finance committee meeting on 28 September 2017

- 152/17 These were noted.

Minutes of finance committee meeting on 22 November 2017

- 153/17 These were noted.

Management report to 31 October 2017 and treasurer’s commentary

- 154/17 The report and commentary were noted.

Investment and cash summary at 31 October 2017

- 155/17 The report was noted. The treasurer confirmed that reserves were projected to be £280,000 above the minimum level required for prudent running of the society, so the proposed budget is affordable.

Draft budget for 2018

- 156/17 The trustees discussed and approved the draft budget subject to the following additions: an increase in staff salaries of 3.9 per cent (in line with the retail price index in October 2017), and the addition of £2,000 (rather than £1,000) on the strategic plan.

Litigating the duty to signpost public paths

- 157/17 The trustees discussed the paper from Hugh Craddock. They agreed unanimously to seek legal advice on enforcing the duty of highway authorities under section 27 of the Countryside Act 1968 to signpost public paths, with a view to possible legal action. This was timely since 2018 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Countryside Act 1968. It was noted that the advice, to be obtained from the Kent Law Clinic, would be pro bono and if we wished to proceed further the matter would be referred to the legal committee in the first instance.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership figures at the end of November 2017

- 158/17 The trustees noted with pleasure the membership figures at the end of November 2017 and that membership had gone up by 41 in the last year.
- 159/17 The trustees wished to know how these new members had been recruited and the treasurer said that the financial administrator was now generating more information enabling us to track the membership. The general secretary agreed to send this information to the membership working party.
- 160/17 Diane Andrewes asked what we do to encourage local groups to stay with us. She suggested that they should be enabled to communicate with other group members in their areas. It was agreed that the membership working party would consider this.

Membership working party

- 161/17 The membership working party had met, with Nichola Finan who does our social media promotion, and Laura Smith, whom we have recently appointed to do search-engine optimisation, in Henley on 15 November.
- 162/17 Mary Traynor had sent an email summarising the meeting which the general secretary read to the trustees. Mary had commented that she wondered if the conflation between the aims of the social media and the webpage and recruitment was unhelpful.

- 163/17 It was agreed that the membership working party needs to understand how the work on social media leads to recruitment, and how we can discourage people from lapsing. It was felt that the reports we receive lack analysis and conclusion; we need to be clear what we are learning from the work we are commissioning. We need to know how much it costs to recruit a member. We should also consider whether we need a social media policy. The general secretary said that the membership working party would meet every quarter in 2018 in time to feed in to each trustee meeting.
- 164/17 It was agreed to appoint Mary Traynor as chairman of the working party. It was noted that Phil Wadey no longer wished to be a member.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Reappointments

- 165/17 It was agreed to reappoint the following for a further three years: Chris Meewezen (Cheshire East) and Lucy Wilson (Cornwall, former North Cornwall district).

Resignation

- 166/17 It was noted with regret that the following had resigned: Malcolm Lees (Chelmsford, Essex), Jacqueline Merrick (Cornwall, former Kerrier district) and Chris Smith (Brighton and Hove, though retaining Lewes in East Sussex).

Reports

- 167/17 Chris Beney and Peter Newman had studied the reports and sent some notes, on which the general secretary gave an oral report.

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS BY MEMBERS

- 168/17 The trustees agreed to amend the guidance for local correspondents so that for applications made on behalf of the society we review three sequential applications (rather than one) for definitive map modification orders which are based on historic evidence. The trustees further agreed to allow non-local correspondent members of the society to make applications in the society's name provided (a) each application is checked, (b) we establish in each case why the application is being made by the society, (c) we determine our obligations in relation to the case and (d) we keep a log of all applications made in our name, noting the potential timing and the liability imposed by each, in staff time and potential costs. The trustees would receive an annual report of cases which have been made in our name. We did not intend to advertise this service.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

- 169/17 The trustees were not aware of any new claims or circumstances or problems which may give rise to a claim.

ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 170/17 The trustees noted the matters arising and agreed to delete the long-standing items on which there had been no progress.

REVIEW OF MEETING

- 171/17 The trustees had mixed views on whether the agenda should start with more interesting items (as at this meeting) or with financial matters. The chairman and general secretary would discuss this.

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 172/17 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 3 pm.

f m B. 21

