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**Minutes of the forty-third meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 12 noon on Thursday 5 March 2020 at
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ**

PRESENT Chris Beney (chairman)
Graham Bathe
John Hall
Chris Meewezen
Phil Wadey
Steve Warr

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

ATTENDANCE

1/20 It was noted with regret that neither of the new trustees Stuart Bain and Simon Hunt, was present, and it was subsequently discovered that this was due to an IT malfunction. It was agreed that heartfelt apologies should be made to them both for this mishap.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2/20 There were no declarations of interest.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3/20 It was noted with sadness that our vice-president Paul Clayden had died on 1 January 2020. The general secretary had spoken at his funeral. His family had generously asked that donations from his funeral should be made to the society, and as a result we had raised over £1,300.

4/20 It was further noted with regret that our office manager, Ellen Froggatt, was retiring on 9 April after nearly ten years in post.

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 5 DECEMBER 2019

5/20 The minutes were approved as a correct record and for publication on the website.

DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE LAST MEETING

Rollright footpath 7 diversion, Oxfordshire, statutory challenge in the high court

6/20 It was noted that the trustees, on the recommendation of the legal subcommittee, had agreed to challenge the inspector's decision, following a public hearing into this diversion at which we were represented by our local correspondent Chris Hall. The society's decision was subject to obtaining costs protection, so that our likely costs would be £45,000 if we lose. The case challenges the interpretation of the Young judgment in relation to section 119 of the Highways Act 1980. The hearing is to take place in the high court on 7 April.

Appointment of Mike Clarke as local correspondent for Bedford Borough

7/20 The trustees had agreed this appointment.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Minutes of finance committee meeting on 19 February 2020

8/20 These were noted.

Management report to 31 December 2019 and treasurer's commentary

9/20 The report and treasurer's commentary were noted. The treasurer reported that we had received a legacy in January of £50k which the accountants had initially put in the 2019 accounts. The finance committee had considered the timing of this, and had asked the accountants to put it in the 2020 accounts.

Accounts for 2019 and letter of representation

10/20 The treasurer drew attention to the change in the statement of financial activities which is now showing the Candy and Creech Jones funds in restricted funds, and the Buxton fund in the endowments column. The trustees approved the independently-examined accounts and authorised the treasurer to sign the letter of representation on their behalf. The trustees thanked the treasurer for all his work on these.

Spring appeal topic

11/20 It was noted that we are planning to mail a legacy leaflet in the spring, when the legacy video goes live. It was agreed that we should send an appeal separately, provided a suitable topic emerges. The trustees would approve the topic by email.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024: OPERATIONAL PLAN

12/20 Phil Wadey said that he liked the structure and the way it was set out. He felt that for several items there had been more progress than was recorded. For example, under 1.4 we should report the numbers of applications for re-registration of commons and the numbers of successful applications.

13/20 It was also considered that it was confusing to have different colours for 2019 and 2019-20.

14/20 It was agreed to add a new item 8.3, a project activity of providing the best up-to-date information.

RISK REGISTER

15/20 It was noted that the general secretary had added scores for the risks post mitigation. These were agreed. It was considered that we might be able to reduce the risk score for C3 (volume of work, stress-related illness and/or external abuse lead to loss of staff enthusiasm and motivation) once we have all staff in post, including the new rights-of-way case officer.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

Agenda and minutes

16/20 The trustees approved the draft agenda and agreed to invite the chair or, failing him, the vice-chairman to chair the AGM. The vice-presidents would be proposed by Chris Meewezen and seconded by Phil Wadey. The treasurer would propose the independent examiners.

17.20 It was agreed to consider at the next meeting whether to elect any new vice-presidents at next meeting.

18/20 It was agreed to invite members to talk about their campaigns in the afternoon. It was agreed that the meeting should end at 3pm with the trustees' meeting starting at 3.15pm.

Draft annual report

19/20 The annual report was approved for presentation to the AGM.

20/20 It was agreed that the finance committee would consider whether we should increase the membership subscription rates.

MEMBERSHIP TO END DECEMBER 2019

21/20 The membership figures were noted.

AUTHORITIES' DUTIES ON EQUALITY ACT 2010 AND OSS'S PUBLIC PROVISION AND PROMULGATION OF SUCH INFORMATION

22/20 Chris Beney and Chris Meewezen introduced their discussion paper.

Authorities' obligations under the Equality Act

23/20 It was agreed that the staff should produce a paper (which might be an information sheet for our website) on the requirements of the Equality Act for all aspects of our work, with recommendations for policies.

OSS's provision of information

- 24/20 It was agreed that Nichola Finan, whom the trustees agreed does a fabulous job on the website, should be invited to our next meeting to discuss the website and the mechanisms that may allow different forms of access to the technical and legal content that we have, as well as consideration of further widening of the material that can be accessed. It was noted that if trustees have items they would like added to the website, they can raise this with the office at any time.
- 25/20 Chris Beney said that he would have a preliminary discussion with Nichola ahead of the meeting.
- 26/20 It was agreed that in future, where an item is for informal discussion, this should be flagged on the agenda and the paper.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Reappointments for three years

- 27/20 It was agreed to reappoint Chris Hall (Oxfordshire).

Reports

- 28/20 The correspondents' reports had been circulated to the trustees, and John Lavery and Chris Meewezen had collated comments. The general secretary had followed up a number of them. The trustees thanked John and Chris for their work.
- 29/20 It was agreed to have an update on the Stoke-on-Trent definitive map modification orders for the next meeting.
- 30/20 Phil Wadey offered to write a note on deposits under section 31A of the Highways Act 1980.

Issue with a local correspondent

- 31/20 The chairman reported that one of our local correspondents had been suspended by the county council on grounds of inappropriate behavior. We had asked to see the evidence before considering whether any action was appropriate.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

- 32/20 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

- 33/20 The trustees noted the list of matters arising.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

General secretary's appraisal

- 34/20 It was agreed that the vice-chairman would do the general secretary's appraisal and that she would pass him the papers from last year.

Coronavirus

35/20 It was agreed that if, due to the Coronavirus, we could not hold the June trustees' meeting we would carry out essential business by video or telephone conference. It was further agreed that we would decide in May whether we should proceed with the AGM on 9 July, postpone it for up to three months, or have the option of a video or telephone conference for essential business.

REVIEW OF MEETING

36/20 The trustees were satisfied with the meeting and had enjoyed the informal sessions

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

37/20 Thursday 11 June 2020 at Friends House, London (John Woolman room)

The meeting closed at 3.10 pm



3 April 2020