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**Minutes of the forty-ninth meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 6.00 pm on Thursday 13 August 2020
by videoconference**

PRESENT Phil Wadey (chairman)
Graham Bathe
Stuart Bain
Chris Beney
John Hall
Simon Hunt
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe
Steve Warr

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

APOLOGIES Chris Meewezen

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

110/20 There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS ON 11 JUNE, 9 JULY AND 27 JULY 2020

111/20 The minutes were approved as a correct record. The minutes of 11 June and 9 July were approved for publication on the website. The minutes of 27 July (decision to proceed with Rollright footpath 7 case to the court of appeal) were not approved for publication because some of the material is confidential.

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST MEETING

112/20 It was noted that by email resolution the trustees had approved £2,500 from the legal fund to the Friends of the Downs, Bristol, towards the cost of a legal opinion on its campaign against the renewal of a licence, by the Downs Committee and Bristol City Council, for car-parking on the downs for visitors to Bristol zoo.

FINANCES

Management report to 30 June 2020, reserves spreadsheet and treasurer's commentary

- 113/20 The treasurer introduced the papers, explaining that we still have plenty of cash, and have made extra term deposits to reduce our exposure to Nationwide and Barclays. We had received two more legacies. The main expenses were commons reregistration and legal cases.
- 114/20 It was agreed to decide at the next meeting whether to have an autumn appeal.

SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

- 115/20 The following was agreed.

(a) **General purposes committee**

There was some discussion as to whether this committee was needed, and it was agreed that it provided a mechanism for emergency decisions. The terms of reference would be reviewed by Graham Bathe and Tara-Jane Sutcliffe.

Members: chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer

(b) **Finance committee**

The terms of reference were agreed, subject to changing 'staff costs' in paragraph 5 to 'staff salaries'.

Members: Steve Warr (chairman), Phil Wadey (ex officio), Stuart Bain and Tara-Jane Sutcliffe.

(c) **Legal subcommittee**

The decision on the terms of reference was deferred.

Chris Meewezen had expressed an interest in joining the committee. It was agreed that the number should be less than half the trustees, ie no more than four.

Simon Hunt was appointed. The chairman would speak to Chris Meewezen about potentially replacing Steve Warr, and any change would be confirmed at a subsequent meeting.

Members: Phil Wadey (ex officio), John Hall, Simon Hunt and Steve Warr.

(d) **Local correspondents' report working party**

The terms of reference were agreed.

Members: Chris Beney, John Hall and (if he wishes to continue) Chris Meewezen.

(e) **Covid-19 working party**

It was agreed to have a working party to look at the effects of the pandemic on all aspects of the society's work. The name and terms of reference would be developed by the members and presented to the September board meeting for agreement.

Members: Stuart Bain and Tara-Jane Sutcliffe with the general secretary who may involve other staff.

LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 116/20 The trustees considered the paper from the chairman in which he suggested amending the terms of reference to ensure that the trustees have a full understanding of the deliberations of the legal subcommittee before they take a decision on a legal matter, and that trustees look at the strategic aspects rather than the legal aspects of any proposal. It was felt that it would be helpful to have a framework to help the trustees make informed decisions. The principles were accepted.
- 117/20 Trustees were asked to send any further comments to the chairman by the end of August, and he would draft revised terms of reference for approval at the September meeting.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENT

- 118/20 It was agreed to appoint Jack Jennings for Sutton Coldfield unitary authority and North Warwickshire District, for one year in the first instance. John Hall offered to assist him if needed.

MEMBERSHIP FIGURES TO END JUNE 2020

- 119/20 The membership figures, which continued to increase, were noted with pleasure. As the figures had been counting joint members as only one member, membership had in fact exceeded 2000. It was noted that we would in future indicate the total number by counting joint members as two members. There was an increase in the proportion of new members who joined on monthly direct debits but it was noted that some charities had experienced a switch of people from annual to monthly direct debits because of the uncertain times, and we needed to watch out for this.

UPDATE ON STAFF APPOINTMENTS

- 120/20 The general secretary reported on staff appointments.

Office manager

- 121/20 The general secretary reported that Ellen Froggatt (who had been working part time after her planned retirement date) wished to retire completely by the end of October at the latest. The general secretary was therefore proceeding with appointing

Ellen's replacement as discussed previously. She was not proposing any changes to the job specification at this stage. Graham Bathe expressed the view that OSS should invariably review its staffing model upon the departure of key personnel. He considered that any like-for-like appointment, without any proper strategic consideration, especially in the wake of the current pandemic, was a wasted opportunity.

Rights-of-way case officer

- 122/20 With the departure of the current office manager, the caseload will increase. It was agreed to proceed with this appointment once the office manager recruitment is under way. This post is home working.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Reputational risk of lifting moratorium

- 123/20 Tara-Jane Sutcliffe noted that in minute 101/20 we had agreed to review at this meeting whether the lifting of the moratorium on commons and rights-of-way applications had had any impact on the society's reputation. The general secretary said that the society had submitted some commons applications and was not aware that there had been any problem.

Digital report

- 124/20 The trustees expressed appreciation of the digital report for July which had been circulated for information. The general secretary said that Nichola Finan would continue to provide a report for trustees every quarter, with a clear summary at the beginning.
- 125/20 It was agreed to discuss at the next meeting whether trustees would like Nichola to join a virtual meeting rather than waiting for a face-to-face one.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 126/20 The trustees discussed a paper from the chairman and agreed the following:
- (a) We continue with monthly, short (up to an hour) meetings by video conference.
 - (b) We cancel physical meeting bookings for the rest of the year and do not (yet) book facilities for next year.
 - (c) If circumstances change enough to allow a physical meeting in December, the option remains open to us and we can seek a venue should it be safe to meet, and we wish to hold a face-to-face meeting.
 - (d) Any trustee can always let the chairman and general secretary know if the trustee thinks we ought to have a face-to-face meeting on a particular subject, and if there is such a proposal, we shall then assess the circumstances and agree whether or not we need to meet.

127/20 The general secretary reported that Chris Meewezen had expressed concern that zoom was getting poor ratings. Board members commented that they had experience of many other platforms that were available, including Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex. After discussion it was agreed that as Zoom seemed to work satisfactorily we should not change for the moment, but keep other options in mind.

128/20 The following meeting dates were agreed for the remainder of 2020.

Thursday 17 September at 6pm

Thursday 15 October at 6pm

Thursday 12 November at 6pm

Thursday 10 December at 6pm

129/20 It was noted that we had planned to have a face-to-face strategy meeting with staff but that, at some point, we might need to decide whether to do this remotely.

The meeting ended at 7.22 pm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phil Wadey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal dotted line.

Phil Wadey,
Chair of Trustees