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18 November 2020

## Saving our lockdown spaces

During this virus-ridden year local green spaces have been more vital than ever to our health—physical and mental. They have kept us fit, and often they have brought cheer when we were a prey to loneliness and depression. Essential though these spaces are they are undervalued. They face countless threats: from lack of local authority funds to maintain and manage them, from prowling developers, and most recently the Westminster government's schemes to destroy the planning system as we know it—to name a few. It is no surprise that this year our small society has received more pleas for help to save open spaces than ever before.

In response to this crisis we launched our charters for open spaces in England and Wales. We called on government, local authorities and communities to act to save them.

We urged the Westminster and Welsh governments to introduce national plans and standards for open spaces, laying a duty on local authorities to ensure that everyone has good-quality green space within a short and easy walk of home; we urged the authorities to adopt robust policies and budgets for the acquisition, management and protection of open spaces, and to dedicate land as town and village greens, and we urged communities to get involved in their local planning processes at an early stage.

But in England the government's new planning white paper, *Planning for the Future*, puts open spaces at risk, by excluding community involvement after the local plan-making stage; it conflicts with the provisions in the Environment Bill and the 25-year environment plan in which government has pledged to leave the environment in a >>



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better state than it found it.

For the society this brings a deluge of new work, some of which is spelt out below.

- We shall endeavour to change the planning proposals so that open spaces are protected and created, and their provision is levelled up to remove the gross inequality between communities and regions. This will involve much parliamentary activity, briefing MPs and Peers.
- We shall create a new toolkit to help those working for green spaces, whether or not we achieve changes to the planning proposals. Our aim is to put the power of professional campaigners in the hands of anyone with a local battle on her or his hands.
- Whenever and wherever we need to commission research and professional advice on how best to tackle these complex issues, we shall do so.
- We shall work with like-minded organisations to form a powerful coalition against the government's plans.
- And, of course, we shall continue to help our members to save their local spaces for all to enjoy.

All this work will cost us more money and more staff time. If you or your friends and family have ever found pleasure, comfort or relief in green space, please give to our Lockdown Spaces appeal. You will be enabling us to continue our fight to protect those spaces which we treasure and need—now more than ever.

Yours sincerely

*Kate Ashbrook*

Kate Ashbrook  
General Secretary

**PS:** *We are pleased to accept donations to this appeal as follows:*

1. *Online at <https://www.oss.org.uk/how-you-can-help/appeals/>*
2. *By bank transfer to Account: 00100021 Sort Code: 20-39-53*
3. *By cheque in the post using the enclosed envelope.*

Thank you



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