

**Minutes of the seventy-ninth meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 18.00 on Thursday 13 April 2023
by videoconference**

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

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

50/23 There were no interests to declare.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

51/23 It was noted with regret that the Woodcock Hill Village Green Committee had lost its case in the high court against the decision for exchange of part of the green under section 16 of the Commons Act 2006. We had given £3,000 from the legal fund. The committee was considering whether to appeal.

52/23 It was noted with pleasure that the Dartmoor National Park Authority has been given leave to appeal to the court of appeal in the backpack-camping case. The society has been invited by the court of appeal to apply to intervene, and is doing so.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

53/23 The minutes of the meeting on 16 March 2023 were approved, and it was agreed to publish them on the website.

54/23 The minutes of the meeting on 27 March 2023 regarding the North Yorkshire rights-of-way case were approved.

55/23 The minutes of the legal committee on 21 March 2023 were noted.

FINANCE MATTERS

56/23 The draft minutes of the finance committee meeting on 4 April 2023 were noted.

57/23 The treasurer spoke to his commentary on the 2022 accounts. We celebrated the large legacy of £782,438 from Ronald Smith. The deviations of expenditure compared to 2021 were due to an increase in staff salaries following the

benchmarking in January 2022, and to the drop in legal costs. The net surplus for the year was £486,748, a substantial increase on 2021 mainly due to the large legacy.

- 58/23 There was a brief discussion about the future allocation of reserves and it was agreed that the finance committee would consider whether the four-year operating margin should be combined with the provision for wind-up costs should this prove necessary.
- 59/23 The trustees unanimously approved the independently-examined accounts for 2022 and agreed to sign the letter of representation from the independent examiner.
- 60/23 It was agreed not to have a spring appeal but to have a full discussion in September about an autumn appeal.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022

- 61/23 The trustees approved the annual report, with the addition of a footnote to explain that the government had, since the year end, reversed its decision with regard to the cut-off for historic rights of way and now proposed that it be 1 January 2031.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS

- 62/23 It was agreed that Simon Hunt would propose, and Tara-Jane Sutcliffe would second, the election of Diane Andrewes, David (Lord) Clarke, Mike Clarke, Roger de Freitas, and Richard Mabey as vice-presidents at the AGM.

NATIONAL TRUST STRATEGY

- 63/23 Tara-Jane Sutcliffe, the society's appointee on the National Trust council, explained that the National Trust was updating its strategy. She would have the opportunity to feed in at the end of June but would like to have comments from trustees to inform her, and to ensure that there was alignment between the trust's strategy and our own. The general secretary had been invited to participate in a workshop about the strategy at the end of April.
- 64/23 It was agreed that trustees should send comments to Tara-Jane by 4 May, so that she could then produce a draft paper on which trustees would be invited to comment.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Appointment

- 65/23 It was agreed to appoint Ken Sharp for West Lancashire district in Lancashire, and Knowsley, Liverpool City, St Helens Borough Council, and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council in former Merseyside, for one year in the first instance.

Reports

- 66/23 It was agreed that Simon Hunt would take Chris Beney's place as a scrutineer of the reports. The trustees thanked Chris for his work on this.

RAMBLERS' GENERAL COUNCIL, 1 APRIL 2023

- 67/23 The trustees noted the report from Phil Wadey who had represented the society at the Ramblers' general council annual general meeting. Phil reported on the election of Amar Latif, a blind walker and adventurer, as president, which was an inspirational appointment. He also noted that the process at the meeting for members' input to the Ramblers' strategy was similar to our own.

TRUSTEE SUCCESSION

- 68/23 Phil Wadey apologised for not yet having followed up on action from the previous meeting, due to illness, but he would do so in the coming week and inform trustees of the results.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

- 69/23 Trustees agreed to plan for a face-to-face meeting, probably in the autumn, which would be an opportunity for discussion rather than a formal board meeting, and would involve staff. Topics might include our financial processes, trustee succession, and freedom to roam and other policy issues.

- 70/23 It was agreed that the chairman and general secretary would draft some proposals for consideration by trustees.

REVIEW OF MEETING

- 71/23 The trustees were content with the meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 72/23 The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 11 May at 6pm. It was unlikely to be needed but it was felt prudent to hold the date for a little longer in case it was.

The meeting ended at 18.49.



Phil Wadey
Chair of Trustees