

**Minutes of the eightieth meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 18.00 on Thursday 8 June 2023
by videoconference**

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

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

80/23 There were no interests to declare.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

81/23 Membership secretary: It was noted with pleasure that we have appointed Jane Abey to take on the membership administration part of the finance officer's role, working seven hours a week. The finance officer will reduce her hours accordingly.

82/23 Dartmoor backpack-camping case: It was noted with pleasure that the court of appeal had granted the society leave to intervene in the Dartmoor National Park Authority's appeal in the backpack-camping case.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

83/23 The minutes of the meeting on 13 April 2023 were approved, and it was agreed to publish them on the website.

84/23 The minutes of the meeting on 10 May 2023 regarding Shobley Bottom Common in the New Forest were approved.

85/23 The confidential minutes of the meeting on 16 March 2023 were approved.

86/23 The minutes of the legal committee meeting on 27 April 2023 were noted.

87/23 The draft minutes of the finance committee on 4 May 2023 were noted. The treasurer would be sending an amendment to minute 37/23 and the minutes would come back to trustees after the finance committee had approved them.

DELEGATED EXPENDITURE

88/23 It was noted that the general secretary had approved up to £750 for legal costs to try to persuade Gloucestershire County Council not to proceed with a Highways Act

1980 section 116 application to the magistrates' court. This is to close part of an unclassified highway at Redmayne D'Abitot in Gloucestershire, which is opposed by our local correspondent. The society shared the costs with the Trail Riders Fellowship (which is leading), and there is no further commitment. Unfortunately, Gloucestershire County Council has said it will proceed in any case, and we are in contact with TRF about next steps.

ANNUAL LEGAL CASES REPORT

- 89/23 The trustees considered the annual legal cases report which set out, over the last three years, the sums approved for each stage of each legal case, the amounts spent, and the outcomes. The report shows that we have achieved a great deal over the last three years. Trustees welcomed the report which they found helpful. It was suggested that the legal committee might provide a reflection on the outcome of each case, and whether there was anything to be learned.
- 90/23 It was agreed that this paper would be updated each year and be considered by the finance and legal committees before coming to the board before the AGM.
- 91/23 The trustees thanked everyone involved in producing the paper.

COMPLAINTS REPORT

- 92/23 The trustees noted the chairman's paper on complaints received in the last 12 months.
- 93/23 The chairman reported that in 2021 he had reported on a complaint, which he had not upheld, relating to the objection by our local correspondent to a public-path diversion. We had recently learnt that the diversion had been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate, supporting our view that our local correspondent had acted reasonably.

AGM 2023

- 94/23 The trustees noted that all the arrangements had been made.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Renewals

- 95/23 The trustees approved the renewal for a further three years of Chris Beney (Herts: Hertsmere Borough, Three Rivers District), John Hall (Coventry City), Marion Law (Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin), and Barry Thomas (Derbyshire: South Derbyshire District; Leicestershire: North West Leicestershire District). They also approved the renewal of Dave Ramm (Hampshire) for one year at his request.

Reports from local correspondents

- 96/23 The local correspondents' reports had been circulated to the trustees, with comments from the staff, and John Hall and Simon Hunt had submitted observations to the trustees. They had commented in particular on strategic issues and matters which had been raised by more than one correspondent, for instance the woeful state of local government. It was noted that staff were already following up various issues. The trustees thanked John and Simon for their work.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

- 97/23 The trustees were not aware of any new claims or circumstances or problems which may give rise to a claim.

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 98/23 Paper on Equality Act (23/20): Since this was raised more than three years ago, the general secretary requested clarification on what was required. It was agreed to close this item.
- 99/23 Diversity issues (30/22): Graham Bathe said that he and Stuart would pursue this later in the year when there was more time.
- 100/23 Trustee succession (35/23): It was noted that Graham Bathe and Tara-Jane Sutcliffe would produce a skills audit for the September meeting, and that we might then consider advertising for co-opted members.
- 101/23 Trustee face-to-face meeting (70/23): It was agreed that there was no requirement to hold a face-to-face meeting this year, and that many trustees would meet in person at the AGM and local correspondents' event.

REVIEW OF MEETING

- 102/23 The trustees were content with the meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 103/23 10 August 2023 at 6pm. The agenda might include the digital-marketing update.
The meeting ended at 18.45.



Phil Wadey
Chair of Trustees