

**Minutes of the eighty-second meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 18.00 on Thursday 7 September 2023
by videoconference**

PRESENT Phil Wadey (chairman)
Graham Bathe (vice-chairman)
Stuart Bain (treasurer) (from minute 135/23)
Chris Beney
Simon Hunt
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

APOLOGIES John Hall

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

126/23 There were no interests to declare.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

127/23 Dartmoor backpack-camping case: It was noted that the Darwalls were seeking leave to appeal to the supreme court, but we understood that there was no opportunity for the society to make representations at this stage. If the Darwalls win leave, we shall seek trustees' approval for further expenditure to seek leave to intervene. Our barristers have generously agreed to continue to act *pro bono*.

128/23 Commons re-registration successes: The trustees congratulated Frances Kerner, the commons re-registration officer, on her success in registering commons at Box Moor, Hertfordshire, and St Breward, Cornwall, following hearings at which she represented the society.

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 10 AUGUST 2023

129/23 The minutes of the meeting on 10 August 2023 were approved, and it was agreed to publish them on the website.

MINUTES OF LEGAL COMMITTEE MEETING ON 14 AUGUST 2023

130/23 The minutes of the legal committee, relating to the case at Shobley Bottom Common in the New Forest, were noted.

131/23 Graham Bathe expressed his concern that the many organisations endeavouring to defend the Forest and its commons did not work effectively together. He suggested that the society might be the catalyst for better joint working.

MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE ON 23 AUGUST 2023

- 132/23 The minutes of the general purposes committee, relating to trustee recruitment (to be discussed later in the meeting), were noted.

DELEGATED EXPENDITURE

- 133/23 Redmayne D’Abitot, Gloucestershire: Highways Act 1980 section 116
It was noted that the general secretary had approved a further sum of £1,830 in this case. The trustees had previously noted that she had approved £750 to try to prevent Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) from proceeding with the order (minute 88/23). This effort had been unsuccessful, and the further sum was half the cost (shared with the Trail Riders Fellowship) of counsel for written submissions to the magistrates’ court requesting the matter be adjourned, and GCC be required to disclose information, or that the application be refused. This intervention had resulted in an adjournment of the hearing to October, and GCC has disclosed the documents. We await advice on the next steps including costs.

EYE TESTS AND LENSES POLICY

- 134/23 The trustees approved the updated policy for the society’s financial contribution towards eye tests and lenses for visual-display units (VDU) for staff. It was noted that the payment for glasses for VDU for part-timers was on a pro-rata basis, assuming full time to be 35 hours per week. It was agreed that the figures for maximum contributions should be moved to an annex so that they could be easily updated.

BUDGET 2024: DESIGNATED FUNDS

- 135/23 The trustees considered the list of proposals made by trustees and the general secretary. These were funding for (a) members’ legal cases and our own; (b) countering the definitive map cut off; (c) upgrading a certain number of path structures per year; (d) project to empower youth; and (e) our archives to be catalogued (probably longer-term). It was agreed that expenditure from a new legal fund would follow the existing processes for authorisation. After discussion it was agreed to allow a further three weeks for trustees to submit ideas, and staff would also submit proposals.

TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT

- 136/23 The trustees noted the report from the chairman setting out a process and timetable for recruiting up to two co-opted members to the board, following the discussion at the general purposes committee on 23 August.
- 137/23 The trustees approved expenditure of up to £1,000 for advertisements and other expenses for the project.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Renewals

- 138/23 Stuart Bain declared an interest in this item. The trustees agreed to renew the following for a further three years: Stuart Bain (Bridgend County Borough, Vale of Glamorgan County Borough); Peter Kidner (Somerset, South Somerset District); and Chas Townley (Gloucestershire, Stroud District).

Reduction in territory

139/23 It was noted that Maggie Thomas was giving up Blaenau Gwent County Borough and Torfaen County Borough, while retaining Caerphilly.

Reports from local correspondents

140/23 The local correspondents' reports had been circulated to the trustees, with comments from the staff. John Hall, Simon Hunt, and Chris Beney had submitted observations to the trustees. It was noted that this was a time-consuming exercise, and there was discussion about how to make it more useful to the organisation, ensuring that matters of strategic interest were brought to trustees without operational detail.

141/23 The trustees invited the staff to consider how this exercise could fit better with the case officers' work, and to make a proposal for improving the process.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

142/23 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

143/23 Lack of diversity among membership and audience threatens long-term viability of organisation (30/22 and 99/23). It was noted that there would be a presentation on digital marketing at the November meeting. Stuart Bain and Graham Bathe would discuss diversity before then.

144/23 Appoint consultant for Finance Act 1910 project (173/22). It was noted that we had commissioned a researcher who had carried out research for Berkshire and hoped to complete collation of the data by mid-September. Depending on the output of this pilot study we would consider expanding the project to cover other valuation districts.

145/23 Finance committee to design policy for assessing staff salaries (175/22). Stuart Bain and Simon Hunt had spoken and would develop a proposal.

146/23 Climate crisis (182/22). We were in the process of gathering information.

147/23 Legal cases report, legal committee to add reflection on outcomes (89/23). The legal committee would meet in October or November to discuss this and other issues.

148/23 Professional advice on deposit and investment strategy (113/23). Stuart Bain was pursuing this.

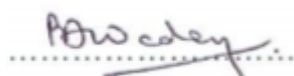
REVIEW OF MEETING

149/23 The trustees were content with the meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

150/23 5 October 2023 at 6pm.

The meeting ended at 19.04.



Phil Wadey
Chair of Trustees