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**Minutes of the one hundred and fourth meeting of the Board of Trustees of
the Open Spaces Society held at 18.00 on Thursday 11 December 2025
by videoconference**

PRESENT Phil Wadey (chairman)
Stuart Bain
Chris Beney
James Lean
Andrew Packman
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe

IN ATTENDANCE Kate Ashbrook (general secretary)

APOLOGIES John Hall

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

162/25 There were no declarations.

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 6 NOVEMBER 2025

163/25 The minutes of the meeting on 6 November 2025 were approved and it was agreed to publish them on the website.

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 6 DECEMBER 2025

164/25 The minutes of the meeting on 6 December 2025, regarding legal case 25-06, were approved after making an amendment from Chris Beney.

MINUTES OF LEGAL COMMITTEE ON 3 DECEMBER 2025

165/25 The minutes of the legal committee meeting on 3 December 2025, regarding legal case 25-06, were noted.

DELEGATED EXPENDITURE

166/25 It was noted that the general secretary had approved a contribution of £2,000 from the legal-action fund for counsel's opinion on a case (25-07) to challenge two decisions by the same inspector in relation to the re-registration of lost commons in Cornwall.

167/25 It was noted that the general secretary had authorised £852 in relation to case 25-08.

COMPANY DIRECTOR IDENTITY-VALIDATION

168/25 It was noted that all trustees had validated their identities as directors, as required before the deadline of 18 November 2025, and had passed their personal codes to the general secretary.

FINANCE MATTERS

Draft minutes of finance meeting on 28 November 2025

169/25 The draft minutes were noted.

Draft budget for 2026

170/25 The treasurer spoke to the draft budget, which had been scrutinised by the finance committee. Trustees thanked the finance officer for such a clear presentation, and said that they found the comments helpful. It was agreed to add a further £1,000 to allow for an additional in-person meeting for trustees.

171/25 After discussion, the trustees unanimously approved the draft budget, and increment for staff salaries, as recommended by the finance committee.

Revised financial policies and procedures

172/25 The trustees approved the revised financial policies and procedures.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2027-2032

173/25 The trustees discussed the paper from staff in which it was suggested that the new strategic plan should run from 1 January 2027, and that trustees should start the process by considering 'What do you think success for the society would look like in five years' time?' Tara-Jane Sutcliffe offered to produce a political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) framework for trustees to complete. It was agreed that trustees would answer the question and return their PESTLE findings by the end of January. The material would be collated and trustees would then decide whether to hold a special meeting, or discuss this at one of the monthly meetings.

174/25 Staff would then prepare some proposed outcomes and key performance indicators for discussion at a joint meeting in the second quarter.

RISK REGISTER

175/25 The trustees approved the risk register which had been updated since the last meeting to split into two risk C1A regarding cyber security, and add a new risk, F4, relating to changing political landscape.

CLIMATE CHANGE

176/25 The trustees considered the staff comments on our strategic theme 1, climate change. They expressed their appreciation to the staff for thinking about this and coming up with ideas. It was agreed that there was a need to balance addressing climate crisis with our charitable aims. The chairman commended in particular a review of our renewables policy, the note on our website explaining the challenges and our thinking, and the need to protect open spaces as mitigation against climate change. It was agreed to review this periodically.

LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

Renewals for a further three years

177/25 The trustees approved the following renewals: Katherine Evans (Essex County), Kieran Foster (Sunderland City Council), Ralph Holmes (Dorset, former Purbeck District and Weymouth & Portland District), Dave Howerski (Herefordshire, former South Herefordshire District), and Chris Smith (East Sussex, Lewes District)

Retirement

178/25 The trustees noted with regret that Chris Meewezen, Cheshire East, was retiring after 21 years as he is moving house, and that Ashley Redsell, Spelthorne Borough, Surrey, was retiring after two years.

Reports from local correspondents

179/25 The reports and staff comments were noted. The trustees thanked the local correspondents for all their hard work, and the staff for their comments.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE

180/25 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

181/25 These were noted.

CALENDAR OF MEETING CONTENT FOR 2026

182/25 This was noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Trustees' decision-making process

183/25 Following an abstention by one colleague, trustees discussed the decision-making process in a recent legal case. Under the current process (for decision-making by electronic means) a single vote against a proposed decision triggers a meeting. It was noted that colleagues need to have the confidence to take this action. Tara-Jane Sutcliffe asked if perhaps the current process is too restrictive and if an increase to two votes against a decision might be more appropriate before a meeting is triggered for legal cases—given the pace at which the society is required to work. The chairman explained that this would require alteration to the articles and, while this could be done at the next AGM, he was hesitant to do so: there needed to be a good balance between the ability of a trustee to prevent a decision on papers and the need to make progress quickly in legal cases. It may be that legal cases are treated differently from other trustee business. Nonetheless the chairman would draft a paper for consideration in the new year.

Congratulations to Stuart Bain

184/25 The trustees congratulated Stuart Bain on receiving an award from the Pencoed Mayor for his path-clearance work.

REVIEW OF MEETING

185/25 The trustees were content with the meeting. It was suggested that we should endeavour to keep business at the December meeting to a minimum, given that we needed to spend time discussing the budget.

DATES FOR MEETINGS IN 2026

186/25 The following were confirmed (all Thursdays at 18.00):
15 January
19 February
March date to be determined (subsequently agreed Tuesday 24 March)
16 April
21 May
18 June*
(2 July AGM)
6 August
10 September*
8 October
November (subsequently agreed Tuesday 3 November)
10 December*
* Quarterly meetings

187/25 It was noted that we had still to agree dates for March and November, and the general secretary would canvass dates.

CONCLUSION

188/25 The chairman closed the meeting by thanking the trustees and staff for a really great year, and for showing that the society can make a difference.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

189/25 Thursday 15 January at 18.00.

The meeting ended at 19.15.

Phil Wadey

Phil Wadey

Chair of Trustees