

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF OPEN SPACES SOCIETY**
(limited company number 7846516, charity number 1144840)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at
Friends House, Euston Road, London
on Tuesday 8 July 2014

PRESENT

Mr Paul Clayden	(vice-president)
Mr Tim Crowther	(chairman)
Mr Graham Bathe	(vice-chairman)

and 39 other members of the society, five members of staff and one guest.

Apologies were received from 98 members.

WELCOME BY THE AGM CHAIRMAN

- 14/1 The AGM chairman, Paul Clayden, welcomed members to the meeting. He began by talking about the government's Local Green Space (LGS) designation which appears in the National Planning Policy Framework but about which there is little information. Although the government had offered LGS as mitigation for removing the ability to register land as greens, it was in fact no substitute. It gave no rights of access to local people and was unlikely to be secure. It was a great shame that government had attacked the greens registration process on the basis of poor evidence.
- 14/2 Paul encouraged local councils to apply voluntarily to register their land as greens and he commended Henley-on-Thames Town Council in Oxfordshire and Downley Parish Council in Buckinghamshire, both of whom had registered land as a green in 2009.

APPROVAL TO LIMIT SPEECHES

- 14/3 It was agreed that speeches on resolutions (other than the adoption of the annual report and accounts) would be limited as follows: proposers of motions maximum five minutes, others maximum three minutes.

APPOINTMENT OF TELLERS AND SCRUTINEERS

- 14/4 It was agreed to appoint Ellen Froggatt and Christine Hunter as tellers and scrutineers.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 16 JULY 2013

- 14/5 It was agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 14/6 **13/28 Local correspondents' forum**

Paul Brown said that, following his resolution to the AGM last year, he was pleased to be part of the group who are organising the local correspondents' weekend in October. He said that if members had material suitable for use in a forum, he would be pleased to have it. While what was proposed in response to the resolution was not quite what he had intended, he hoped at the local correspondents' weekend to steer the society towards getting a forum underway.

VOTING BY SHOW OF HANDS

- 14/7 The chairman asked those present whether they were willing to vote by show of hands rather than a ballot since there appeared to be nothing controversial on the agenda. This was agreed.

ADOPTION OF TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2013

- 14/8 Tim Crowther (chairman) proposed the adoption of the trustees' report for 2013. He talked about the society's preparations for the 150th anniversary in 2015 including an open day at Bursledon, Hampshire, a picnic with the High Wycombe Society and an event in Burnham Beeches, both in Bucks.

- 14/9 This was his last year as chairman of the society and it had been a great honour and privilege to serve as chairman for the past few, eventful years. He quoted the concluding paragraph of the annual report: 'with a firm grip on our finances, a strong five-year strategic plan in place and the exiting prospect of celebrating our 150th birthday, we can face the future with a degree of confidence that has not always been apparent in previous years'. He felt that we were now well-placed to concentrate on what the society does best, campaigning on all the issues and causes about which we care so passionately.

- 14/10 He also referred to our manifesto for the 2015 election and commented that he welcomed in particular the ideas promoted under the heading 'space close to home' which he considered were crucial. He felt that the planning laws were under threat and hoped that some of the reforming spirit of the late 1940s could now be re-awakened.

- 14/11 The trustees' report was seconded by John Lavery.



- 14/12 The general secretary, Kate Ashbrook, spoke to the trustees' report. She talked about our unique role in celebrating and defending all commons and expressed her pleasure that Natural England had appointed a Principal Specialist for Common Land, Pippa Langford, who was here today and would be speaking to us.
- 14/13 She spoke of our developing campaign to promote Local Green Space (LGS). No one else was pursuing this and there was a clear vacuum for the society to fill. We needed our members to tell us of their experiences in designating LGS so that we could put together a toolkit for others. As Paul Clayden had said, this was no substitute for village greens registration and we were still defending greens. Defra's recent survey of greens registrations showed that the numbers had not increased despite its claim that greens had been used to stop development. The society was endeavouring to be notified of all the landowner statements which were deposited, which challenged use of land and allowed only one year in which to register it as a green. When we received these, we sent them to local members follow up. Since 1 October, we had received 84 statements, sent out 53 and had 7 responses. Our appeal to raise money for additional staff time on this project had produced a staggering £12,000.
- 14/14 We were concerned that Wales was copying England in wanting to change the law on village greens, similarly with no evidence of the need to do so. The case officer was meeting the Minister for Housing and Regeneration the following day to explain this to him and to counter the case-studies he had provided.
- 14/15 On rights of way, the Deregulation Bill was now in parliament and we were briefing MPs and peers to oppose any amendments to widen its scope. In particular, we opposed any moves to create a presumption in favour of diverting or closing paths which run through gardens or farmyards. So far, the government was holding firm.
- 14/16 We are a tiny organisation which is very dependent on a few people. One member whom we particularly missed was Pat Wilson, our former vice-president and local correspondent, who had died aged 97 in April. For over 60 years, she had championed paths, open spaces, commons and greens in Kent, Medway and beyond.
- 14/17 The general secretary ended by thanking the outgoing chairman for his guidance and support over the last three years, trustees, local correspondents, other volunteers, staff and members.
- 14/18 In the discussion which followed, a number of members raised concerns that public open spaces were being used for private events, despite protective legislation, and that green spaces were being commercialised. The suggestion was made that we might consider drafting a Private Member's Bill to prevent this from happening.
- 14/19 The annual report was carried unanimously.



ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2013

14/20 The adoption of the annual accounts was proposed on behalf of the board of trustees by Steve Warr (treasurer) and seconded by Chris Beney.

14/21 The adoption of the annual accounts was carried unanimously.

ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Vice Presidents

14/21 Phil Wadey proposed and Diane Andrewes seconded the election of the following vice-presidents: Lord Clark of Windermere, Len Clark, Mike Clarke, Paul Clayden, Roger de Freitas, Tony (Lord) Greaves, Richard Mabey, Edgar Powell, John Riddall and Ronald Smith. This was carried unanimously.

Trustees

14/22 Chris Beney and Peter Newman were standing down having reached the end of their three-year term but were eligible for re-election and were both standing again.

14/23 Since there were insufficient candidates for a ballot, both were automatically elected.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS FOR 2015

14/24 It was proposed by Brian Reader and seconded by John Lavery that Villars Hayward, chartered accountants and registered auditors of Henley-on-Thames, be appointed independent examiners for 2015.

14/25 The meeting ended at 12 noon.

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The following took place outside the AGM:

Pippa Langford spoke on her role as Principal Specialist on Common Land for Natural England.

Beverley Penney presented her report to the AGM in her capacity as our appointee to the National Trust council.

Chris Beney, trustee and local correspondent, spoke on 'Getting decent widths in path orders'.

Chris Smith from group member The Friends of Coldham's Common, Cambridge spoke about protecting Coldham's Common.

Brian Lewis, member, spoke on unrecorded rights of way in Warwickshire.



Will French from group member The Friends of Haven Green, spoke about protecting Haven Green Common in the London Borough of Ealing.

Dave Ramm, local correspondent, spoke about the Thames Path missing link at Maidenhead Bridge.

The afternoon session closed at 3.40 pm.

Paul Clayden  
9 July 2015



**The Open Spaces Society 25a Bell Street Henley-on-Thames RG9 2BA**



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