

**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 Thursday 11 July 2019 at 11am**

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**PRESENT**

Mr Chris Beney (chairman)  
Mr Steve Warr (treasurer)

and 38 other members of the society, plus seven members of staff.

**APOLOGIES** were received from 110 members.

**WELCOME BY THE AGM CHAIRMAN**

- 19/1 The AGM chairman, Chris Beney, explained that vice-president Paul Clayden, who was due to chair the meeting, had had a family emergency the previous day. He read the speech which Paul would have presented, in which he expressed concern at the threats to town and village greens. The court of appeal had recently ruled that land at Vowley View at Royal Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire could not be registered as a green because it was vaguely identified in the local plan as eligible for potential development. Two test-cases were due to be heard in the supreme court the following week to determine whether land held by public authorities could be registered. The result could be far reaching and put many greens at risk. The society would keep a close watch on these cases and trusted that the courts would uphold the rights of local people to enjoy the land they love.

**APPROVAL TO LIMIT SPEECHES**

- 19/2 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**

19/3 It was agreed to appoint Ellen Froggatt and Christine Hunter as tellers and scrutineers.

### **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 5 JULY 2018**

19/4 It was agreed that the minutes be approved and signed.

### **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

19/5 There were no matters arising.

### **ADOPTION OF TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2018**

19/6 The adoption of the annual report was proposed by Chris Beney and seconded by Steve Warr.

19/7 The general secretary, Kate Ashbrook, spoke to the trustees' report. She introduced the staff team and said that the annual report was the product of everyone's work. This year was the seventieth anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and there had been a number of celebrations, including an event in Castleton, Derbyshire, and a parliamentary reception the previous day. However, less acknowledged was the role of the act in giving us definitive maps of public paths. In the 1950s volunteers had to spread out over the country to claim paths. This was being echoed now as we endeavoured to research unrecorded ways before the deadline of 1 January 2026. We had called on the environment secretary to postpone the deadline for five years, as provided in the legislation, and hoped that it would in fact be repealed. There was some hope that in Wales the deadline would be repealed as no work has yet been done on legislation to improve the process for recording paths.

19/8 Kate also spoke about the Agriculture Bill which had stalled due to Brexit. She outlined some of the society's work on commons, greens and public paths, and paid tribute to the local correspondents who submitted impressive reports to the trustees every quarter. She mentioned two court cases in which we are engaged, at Leigh Common in Dorset and Blackbushe airfield on Yateley Common in Hampshire; she was proud that the society stood up for its beliefs and was prepared to be brave and take risks. She ended by thanking the trustees, local correspondents, other volunteers, staff and members.

19/9 The adoption of the annual report was carried nem con.

### **ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2018**

19/10 The adoption of the annual accounts was proposed on behalf of the board of trustees by Steve Warr (treasurer). Steve said that 2018 had been dominated by the most welcome legacy income, more than £720k in 2018 and £540k in 2017. We were currently in a strong financial position, enabling us to support legal action when there are points of principle at stake. We were investing in the project to reclaim commons that

were not registered in the 1960s, and were in the process of appointing a rights-of-way case officer.

19/11 John Lavery seconded the adoption of the accounts.

19/12 The adoption of the annual accounts was carried unanimously.

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

### **Vice Presidents**

19/13 Jean Macdonald had proposed and John Hall had seconded the election of the following vice-presidents: David (Lord) Clark of Windermere, Len Clark, Mike Clarke, Paul Clayden, Roger de Freitas, Tony (Lord) Greaves, Richard Mabey, Edgar Powell and Ronald Smith. This was carried.

### **Trustees**

19/14 Three people were standing for election: Graham Bathe, Phil Wadey and Steve Warr. The chairman said that Graham and Phil had had to stand down in 2018 for one year and now wished to return. Steve had completed one term of three years and was therefore eligible to stand again. In response to questions, he explained that there were six vacancies and that we had one co-opted member, Tara-Jane Sutcliffe. It was suggested that, when we advertised for trustees in spring *Open Space*, we state the number of vacancies.

19/15 After a ballot, all three candidates were elected as trustees with votes as follows (including postal and proxy votes).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Votes for</b>	<b>Votes against</b>	<b>Abstentions</b>
Graham Bathe	121	0	5
Phil Wadey	122	1	3
Steve Warr	122	2	4

## **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS FOR 2018**

19/16 It was proposed by Phil Wadey, seconded by David Allard and agreed nem con that Villars Hayward, chartered accountants and registered auditors of Henley-on-Thames, be appointed independent examiners for 2019.

## **MOTIONS**

### **Special resolution 1**

19/17 The following special resolution was proposed on behalf of the board of trustees by Steve Warr and seconded by Chris Beney.

Article 3.5.4: to replace the word 'six' with the word 'nine' in three places, so that the article reads:

*Nobody shall be eligible for election or appointment as a Trustee if at the time of the election or appointment he/she has served for nine or more consecutive years as a Trustee. This refers to election or appointment after nine years' service, not to service extending beyond nine years. After a year's break from being a Trustee, previous service shall be discounted for the purposes of this Article.*

Taking account of the postal and proxy votes the motion was carried by 118 votes for, five against and four abstentions.

**Special resolution 2**

19/18 The following special resolution was proposed on behalf of the board by Tara-Jane Sutcliffe and seconded by John Hall.

Article 9.8: delete the words 'whether in a show or hands or in a ballot.'

Taking account of the postal and proxy votes the motion was carried by 120 votes for, none against and one abstention.

**Special resolution 3**

19/19 The following special resolution was proposed on behalf of the board by Tara-Jane Sutcliffe and seconded by John Hall.

Article 9.11: delete the words 'Should nominations exceed vacancies, election shall be by ballot.'

Taking account of the postal and proxy votes the motion was carried by 120 votes for, none against and one abstention.

**PRESENTATION TO RETIRING TRUSTEE**

19/20 The chairman made a presentation to John Lavery who was required to stand down for a year. He said we had particularly appreciated his legal knowledge. Jean Macdonald, who had served as vice-chairman, had decided to stand down after three years. She was not present at the meeting. The chairman thanked them both.

19/21 The meeting ended at 11.55.



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The following took place outside the AGM:

- The commons reregistration project (Hugh Craddock (case officer) and Frances Kerner, (commons reregistration officer))
- Bridleway at Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex (Paul Brown)
- Spreading the word (Nichola Finan, digital marketing and content manager)
- The campaign for Forder village green, Saltash, Cornwall (Colin Brown)
- The National Trust council (Graham Bathe)
- Encouraging use of the National Land Access Centre (Chris Beney)
- Why I went to Lima: the conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (Kate Ashbrook, general secretary)

The afternoon session closed at 3.00 pm.



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



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