

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 07846516 (ENGLAND AND WALES)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1144840

Report of the Trustees and
Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

for

The Open Spaces Society

Villars Hayward LLP
Chartered Accountants
Chartered Tax Advisers
Registered Auditors
Boston House
Henley-on-Thames
RG9 1DY

The Open Spaces Society
(Registered Company Number: 07846516)

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for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

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The Open Spaces Society
(Registered Company Number: 07846516)

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

The Trustees, who are also directors of the Charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, are pleased to present their annual report together with the financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2023 and confirm that they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity Number:	1144840
Registered Company Number:	07846516
Principal and Registered Office:	25A Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2BA
Independent Examiner:	Nicholas M Smith, BFP, ACA, CTA Villars Hayward LLP, Boston House, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1DY
Bankers:	<i>Barclays Bank plc</i> Mid-Thames Group, PO Box 1, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2AX <i>CAF Bank Ltd</i> 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME18 4JQ <i>Flagstone Group Ltd</i> Clareville House, 26-27 Oxendon Street, London, SW1Y 4EL
Solicitors:	Richard Buxton Office A, Dales Brewery, Gwydir Street Cambridge CB1 2LJ Mercers 50 New Street Henley-on-Thames RG9 2BX
Surveyors:	Severage Greaves Limited 9 St Mary's Street Wallingford OX10 0EL

Directors and Trustees

The directors of the charitable company (the Charity) are the Trustees for the purpose of Charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as Trustees.

The Trustees serving during the year and since the year end were as follows:-

Dr P D Wadey – Chairman
G M Bathe – Vice Chairman
S Bain (Treasurer)
C B N Beney
J Hall
T-J Sutcliffe
S Hunt

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, the memorandum and articles of association, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

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Report of the Trustees (continued)
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (continued)

Governing Document (continued)

The charity is the successor to the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society (registered charity number 214753) which was established by a trust deed dated 6 December 1963, originally having been founded in 1865. It was registered as a company limited by guarantee on 14 November 2011.

Recruitment and appointment of Trustees

Trustees are appointed by the members of the company, in accordance with the memorandum and articles of association.

Related party disclosures

During the year one trustee sold books to the Society with a value of £100. No other transactions have been notified by any other trustees, in relation to the year, nor any balance outstanding from previous years.

Declarations of interest

An agenda item for recording these, if any be declared, appears on the agenda for each trustee meeting. The society's insurers require a statement to be minuted at each meeting that the trustees are not aware of anything arising which might lead to a claim on the society's indemnity policy.

Risk Management

The society maintains a risk register which is regularly reviewed by trustees with practical precautions being implemented by officers and staff.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

Section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 requires the charity trustees to comply with their duty to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.

The trustees are mindful of this obligation and have been referring to the guidance when reviewing their aims and objectives and in planning their future activities. In particular, they have considered how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT

Summary of the charity's objects and strategy for achieving them

The objects of the society are campaigning to create and conserve common land, village greens, open spaces and rights of public access in town and country, in England and Wales. These objects are furthered both locally and nationally. The society is building up a network of local correspondents who can make site visits where problems arise and submit appropriate representations regarding, for example, proposed changes to the public-path network. The society also secures the registering of new village greens, resists encroachments on common land, and defends common land and greens against deregistration.

At a national level the society's unique expertise is its accumulated knowledge in the complicated case law and common law that apply to common land and its user rights. Bodies such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Welsh government, the National Trust, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales acknowledge the society's primacy in this area. The society is a mandatory consultee for certain applications for works on common land and for changes to public rights of way.

The society also endeavours to improve the law for the benefit of the public. By challenging unacceptable proposals—through the courts if necessary—and more generally by seeking media attention and lobbying parliament and local authorities, it protects places of beauty and interest, and achieves better public access throughout England and Wales.

The Open Spaces Society
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Report of the Trustees (continued)
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT (continued)

Summary of main achievements during the year

These are challenging times for the two nations in which we work, with continued squeeze on public funding, and the cost-of-living crisis. However, this means that people value their open spaces and paths more than ever, keeping us busy in helping them to defend their rights of access there. We focused on legal work, with the appointment of a new post of case officer (enforcement), and we shall target laggard local authorities who evade their legal duties. We established our new legal-action fund and were delighted that our members gave so generously, with a year-end total of £31,682. With the Westminster election on the horizon, we took steps to prepare our manifesto.

The main achievements during the year are listed below under headings which reflect the four main objects in our constitution.

1. To protect commons, greens and other open spaces

We responded to calls from members for advice on protection and management of at least 182 commons, 87 registered greens and 252 other open spaces. Many more cases and disputes came to us from consultations from official bodies or were dealt with by our local correspondents.

Our re-registration officer, Frances Kerner, funded by the generous legacy from Jack Candy, continued her work on applications, submitting four in North Yorkshire and one in Pembrokeshire. She also pursued and defended applications we had already made in other English counties before their registers closed to new applications on 31 December 2020. During the year we celebrated the addition of six commons to the registers, covering 17 hectares, thanks to our efforts: in Cornwall at St Breward, The Bunny Hill near Truro, and Predannack Downs near Mullion; in Hertfordshire at Hudnall Common near Little Gaddesden, and Bury Wood at Boxmoor; and in Kent, at Radfall Road near Blean. We were disappointed that a further application at Farway in Devon was rejected.

In January, a High Court judge ruled that there was no right to backpack camping on the Dartmoor commons under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985. The Dartmoor National Park Authority, with our intervention, successfully challenged this in the court of appeal. However, the Darwalls (the landowners who brought the case) have sought leave to appeal to the supreme court and, shortly after the year's end, we learnt that leave had been granted.

We were delighted with the outcome at Blackbushe aerodrome on Yateley Common. Here we had intervened in the High Court and Court of Appeal in support of Hampshire County Council which had refused to deregister nearly half a square kilometre of the common. That decision was upheld in the Court of Appeal and the matter was returned to the planning inspector. He has ruled that only the land occupied by the terminal building and café, 500 square metres, should be deregistered, the outcome we wanted.

We helped to save two pieces of common land from deregistration, at Hurtwood Common in Surrey, and Knighton Heath in Dorset.

Applicants for works on, or exchange of, common land notified us of 76 cases. We raised objections to 31 of them.

Of the 52 statutory applications for works which were determined during the year, 21 were granted with no objection from us, and 21 were granted despite our objection. These included a substation at Hawridge and Cholesbury Common, Buckinghamshire; an extension for a further 15 years of fencing for tree-planting on Caldbeck and Uldale Commons, Cumbria; flood-prevention works on Gooseholme and New Road commons, Cumbria; temporary enclosures for events on Clapham and Streatham Commons, London Borough of Lambeth; an access track across Burn Moor common, North Yorkshire; 15-years fencing on Marsden Moor, Kirklees, and on Kenfig Common, Bridgend; and an access road across Picket Mead common, Swansea.

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Report of the Trustees (continued)
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

1. To protect commons, greens and other open spaces (continued)

Approved with our objection also were applications for the deregistration of common land or village green, either with inadequate or no exchange land, for road-widening at Brockeridge Common, Gloucestershire; a cycle path at Bury Mead, Hertfordshire; and an access way on Longhorsley village green, Northumberland, among others.

Three applications were rejected following our advice. These were two electricity substations on Chailey Commons in East Sussex, vehicular access ways on Sneedham Green, Gloucestershire, where our local correspondent Chas Townley represented us at a public inquiry; and an access road on Dunsfold Common, Surrey. Two others were withdrawn after we had objected: works in connection with sand and gravel extraction at Lower Cow Pasture, Gloucestershire, and a community hub at Chale Green common on the Isle of Wight.

We published an information sheet for local councils to advise them of their powers to protect commons, greens, other open spaces, and public paths. Our case officers Hugh Craddock and Nicola Hodgson delivered more training packages on commons and greens, both online and in person. We participated, with the Friends of the Lake District, in training on planning and commons for members of the Royal Town Planning Institute in the north of England.

2. To protect and enhance public rights of way and public access

The Henley office dealt with 378 requests for advice on paths, and our local correspondents pursued many others.

We were dismayed when the (then) environment secretary, Thérèse Coffey, overturned Richard (Lord) Benyon's decision of February 2022 and decided to implement the 2026 deadline for historic-path applications, while setting it back for five years to 2031. The deadline was commenced in November, ahead of any regulations listing the circumstances in which those rights would be excepted from extinguishment. This piecemeal action has broken the hard-won consensus of the stakeholder working group (SWG) that these measures would be introduced as a package.

Furthermore, Dr Coffey also ruled that the exception for unrecorded historic paths in use would not be introduced at all, despite this being a core proposal (26) of the SWG's 2010 report, *Stepping Forward*.

Kate Ashbrook continued to serve on the SWG, supported by Helen Clayton and Hugh Craddock who are also members of SWG task forces.

We submitted comments to the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee which considered the regulation to set back the cut-off to 2031, challenging Defra's statement that there was no significant impact on voluntary or public bodies, or anyone else. The committee, while disagreeing with us, noted that local authorities were likely to receive a significant number of new applications, and suggested that parliament might wish to raise the resourcing issue with the minister.

We were disappointed when the Westminster government introduced its guidance on diverting and extinguishing paths through private dwellings, gardens, and industrial or commercial premises. This had been brought to the SWG for consideration, and we sought to minimise its effect making it clear that we (and other user group members) did not support it. We have assured our local correspondents and others that this does not affect the legal tests for diversions and extinguishments, so in practice there should be no change.

We commissioned a consultant, Adrian Parry, to undertake some pilot research on records in Berkshire on the effect of the Finance Act 1910 on applications to record routes; this has proved useful and we are considering the results and next steps.

With the British Horse Society and Ramblers we discussed legal action against surveying authorities which are failing to carry out their duties in relation to definitive map modification order applications, and at the end of the year were actively pursuing a first case.

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Report of the Trustees (continued)
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

2. To protect and enhance public rights of way and public access (continued)

At Redmarley D'Abitot in Gloucestershire, with the Trail Riders' Fellowship and Ramblers, we saved an unclassified road from closure in the magistrates' court. The road is illegally obstructed, and the next task is to persuade the county council to reopen it.

In Wales we continued to work with the cross-party group for outdoor activity, and to press the Welsh government to test some of the proposals in its access-reform package on its own land. We worked with Wales Environment Link to seek improvements to the Agriculture (Wales) Bill, which became law in August, to secure payments for new and improved access beyond the statutory duties of local authorities and landowners.

Our general secretary secured the reopening of four blocked paths in Tetsworth, Oxfordshire, after serving notices on the county council under section 130A of the Highways Act 1980. Our local correspondents defended paths with considerable success. For example, Lucy Wilson served notice on Cornwall Council under section 130A, with the result that unlawful gates on a footpath at St Ervan were removed. Other correspondents served notices and we are gearing up for action in the magistrates' court. Jess Tyler, our new case officer (enforcement), prepared briefing material and is ready to support legal action.

We drafted amendments, with Living Streets and the Ramblers, to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to keep pavements free for the public. The government proposed in the bill to make permanent the changes it had introduced during the pandemic, streamlining the procedure for allowing consumption of food on public pavements, thereby obstructing pedestrians. Our proposals were rejected in the house of commons and we were unable to reintroduce them in the house of lords. We shall look for other opportunities to remedy this unsatisfactory situation.

We participated in two round-table meetings to discuss greater access to the countryside, and with other organisations we produced Outdoors for All, a document setting out our aspirations for access and its benefits for health and well-being, nature, and the economy.

Our general secretary spoke at the 91st anniversary celebration of the Kinder Scout mass trespass, the Blue Earth Summit in Bristol, and at meetings of various organisations such as the Gower Society.

3. To secure the creation of new public paths and open spaces

Seven definitive map modification applications were made in the society's name by one of our Sussex local correspondents, Chris Smith. Two of his previous applications were confirmed. In Norfolk, local correspondent Ian Witham achieved the upgrading of a footpath to restricted byway at Mundesley.

We continued to encourage local authorities and other landowners voluntarily to register their land as town or village green, thereby giving local people rights of recreation there and protecting it from development. We were pleased to learn of registrations at Stoke Lodge playing fields in Bristol; Quantock Drive at Ashford in Kent; Llwyneinion Woodland, Wrexham; and a voluntary registration (secured by our local correspondent Rodney Whittaker) at Stokes Field, Long Ditton, in Surrey. We were pleased that our call for new greens was included as one of ten asks in A More Natural Capital coalition's manifesto for the London mayoral election in 2024.

We advised more than 76 members and other inquirers about claiming greens.

4. To protect the beauty of the countryside

Our case officer Nicola Hodgson worked on the detail of planning measures in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which received royal assent in October. Through the Better Planning Coalition, we helped to win some useful amendments, and were pleased that government conceded to strengthen the duty on public bodies to protect national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty (now known as national landscapes), among other improvements.

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Report of the Trustees (continued)
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

4. To protect the beauty of the countryside (continued)

In January the Westminster government pledged that everyone should live within a 15-minute walk of 'green or blue' space. While we welcomed the commitment and proposed the dedication of new greens as part of the solution, we were disappointed by the lack of progress.

We objected to plans by Skyline for a massive tourist development on Kilvey Hill, north-east of Swansea, which disregarded unrecorded access rights and public-access land. We continued to support the Campaign for National Parks and the Alliance of Welsh Designated Landscapes. Our general secretary attended a seminar organised by Tirweddau Cymru (Landscapes Wales) on Gower.

ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

We now have 47 local correspondents. In 2023 we appointed Jon Brierley (Malvern Hills District, Worcestershire), Mick Freer (Dudley Borough), Richard Price (part of Ceredigion), Ken Sharp (Knowsley, St Helens, and Sefton Metropolitan Boroughs, Liverpool City, and West Lancashire District), and Nicholas Whitsun-Jones (former West Dorset District).

We updated our guidelines for local correspondents, and arranged a get-together for them in the Lickey Hills, Worcestershire, in July, which was both valuable and enjoyable.

We held our annual general meeting in London with an online option. In total 41 members attended, and others participated by proxy. Voting was undertaken online, with 60 votes cast. Tara-Jane Sutcliffe was re-elected to the board of trustees after her first three-year term. We presented Ian Witham with the Eversley Award for Outstanding Achievement, for his many years of work on public paths and commons in Norfolk.

We issued 52 press releases and published three editions of our magazine Open Space. Staff and members appeared at least nine times on the radio, and twice on television. We continued to improve our website, and at the year's end had commissioned a review. Our digital marketing and content manager, Abbie Cavendish, led a forensic exercise to experiment with new audiences, and develop contact with the more receptive ones, increasing our influence and reach, and therefore our campaigning clout.

On 31 December, membership stood at 2,342, a net increase of 23. This number is comprised of 1,745 individuals, and 597 organisations and local authorities. We welcomed 317 new voting members and 37 members who had lapsed and rejoined; 22 members died during the year and a further 309 lapsed.

In June we appointed Jane Abey as our membership secretary, a job-share with Lucie Henwood who now focuses on financial matters. In August we appointed Jess Tyler as our case officer (enforcement), a new post to reflect our enthusiasm to use the courts to resolve intransigent issues.

Our dedicated staff, Jane Abey, Kate Ashbrook, Abbie Cavendish, Helen Clayton, Hugh Craddock, Sarah Hacking, Lucie Henwood, Nicola Hodgson, Frances Kerner, Lucy McKean, and Jess Tyler have had another busy year. We thank them warmly for their commitment and success in furthering the work of the society.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial operations

In 2023 the society's income was primarily split across investment returns, membership subscriptions, and donations.

Membership subscriptions nominally increased, and investment returns have been positive with an increase of £20,520. This was due to improved returns on cash and investments as well as an increase in reserves following a large legacy in the previous year. Budgeted increases in expenditure during the year were planned to maximise our surplus from the previous year, with recruitment to further our charitable objectives.

The Open Spaces Society
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Report of the Trustees (continued)
for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

In November, the society made an appeal to members for funds to support legal action where required and to back our members in fighting their legal battles. The appeal was very successful, and funds continued to be received for many months. We thank all members for their contributions with £31,682 raised (to 31 December 2023) to fund some of the essential legal work to protect our commons, open spaces, and paths.

Legacies recognised in 2023

Edgar Aveling, Dennis Basten, Henry Elsey Cooper, Patrick Darnes, Olive Entwistle, Ronald Smith, Hazel Mary Thorpe.

We are grateful for all legacies and donations, and your gift to the society will help to ensure that future generations will enjoy commons, open spaces, and paths, in towns and countryside throughout England and Wales.

Please see our website: <https://www.oss.org.uk/what-you-can-do/legacies/> for more information.

RESERVES POLICY

The reserves policy has been kept under close review throughout the year by trustees to ensure it was flexible enough to respond to external economic pressures and remained fit for purpose.

Strategic reserve fund: the society's recurring revenue is not sufficient to meet all running costs so it is the policy of the trustees to maintain a strategic reserve fund sufficient to cover the expected net outgoings of the society for 48 months. Following a review of the budget for 2024, anticipating an overall deficit, the strategic reserve fund was updated to £948,059 for January 2024.

The applications reserve fund, set up in 2019, currently stands at £226,000. The figure is kept under review annually, based on experience and analysis of the costs actually incurred by the society as a result of commons and rights-of-way applications. Trustees acknowledge this reserve is essential since the costs associated with taking applications to completion are unknown and variable, but can be considerable and can run over a long period.

CONCLUSION

Once again we have had a good year in challenging wrong legal decisions and asserting and protecting the public's rights by recording commons and paths and via our other casework, a sample of which is described above. We are really pleased to see the surge of member support for our legal appeal which will help us take on more deserving cases, especially now that we have employed our enforcement officer.

We hope earnestly to see the regulations for the path extinguishment day exemptions now that Dr Coffey has moved on as secretary of state and will continue to assist the Stakeholder Working Group and DEFRA in ensuring that the new regulations are as well written and as useful as possible.

I thank, once again, our dedicated staff, increasing number of local correspondents, and members, and all who have helped in support of the society and its activities. I commend this report to our members.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD:

.....
Dr P D Wadey – Chairman, on behalf of the Trustees

Date: 2024

The Open Spaces Society
(Registered Company Number: 07846516)

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of
The Open Spaces Society

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the financial statements of the company for the year ended 31 December 2023 set out on pages nine to sixteen.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's financial statements as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the '2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's report

Since the company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the financial statements do not accord with those accounting records; or
3. the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the financial statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Nicholas Smith BFP, ACA, CTA

Nicholas M Smith BFP, ACA, CTA
Villars Hayward LLP
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditors
Chartered Tax Advisers
Boston House
Henley-on-Thames
RG9 1DY

Date: *24 May*.....2024

The Open Spaces Society
(Registered Company Number: 07846516)

Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure Account)
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Income and endowments from:						
Donations (inc. Gift Aid) and legacies	2	65,257	-	-	65,257	819,924
Charitable activities						
Subscriptions		80,055	-	-	80,055	79,071
Appeals	3	28,276	-	-	28,276	525
Other trading activities						
Sale of publications, Trusts, Royalties etc.	4	6,683	-	-	6,683	9,619
Investments	5	55,202	29,874	1,791	86,867	59,444
Other income	6	-	-	-	-	300
Total		<u>235,473</u> =====	<u>29,874</u> =====	<u>1,791</u> =====	<u>267,138</u> =====	<u>968,883</u> =====
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Other publications costs		450	-	-	450	5,001
Charitable activities						
Staff salaries and related costs	7	286,408	-	-	286,408	246,377
Premises costs	8	16,501	-	-	16,501	14,546
Administration costs	9	35,504	-	-	35,504	27,461
Local correspondents		6,636	-	-	6,636	4,043
Open Space and website		15,737	-	-	15,737	12,783
Other costs	10	76,491	3,964	-	80,455	107,948
Governance costs	11	15,491	-	-	15,491	12,470
Total		<u>453,218</u> =====	<u>3,964</u> =====	<u>-</u> =====	<u>457,182</u> =====	<u>430,629</u> =====
(Loss)/Gain on investment assets	12	(7,730)	(12,210)	(580)	(20,520)	(51,506)
Net (expenditure)/income		<u>(225,475)</u>	<u>13,700</u>	<u>1,211</u>	<u>(210,564)</u>	<u>486,748</u>
Transfers between funds		<u>31,665</u>	<u>(29,874)</u>	<u>(1,791)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>(193,810)</u>	<u>(16,174)</u>	<u>(580)</u>	<u>(210,564)</u>	<u>486,748</u>
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		2,045,318	254,654	24,689	2,324,661	1,837,913
Total funds carried forward	13	<u>1,851,508</u> =====	<u>238,480</u> =====	<u>24,109</u> =====	<u>2,114,097</u> =====	<u>2,324,661</u> =====

The Open Spaces Society
(Registered Company Number: 07846516)

Statement of Financial Position
as at 31 December 2023

	Note	31.12.23 £	31.12.22 £
Fixed Assets:			
Tangible fixed assets	14	5,610	4,535
Investments	15	852,685	873,205
Long term deposits	16	270,296	7,237
<i>Total fixed assets</i>		<u>1,128,591</u> =====	<u>884,977</u> =====
Current Assets:			
Debtors	17	35,700	3,595
Short term deposits	18	934,904	1,465,524
Cash at bank and in hand		24,999	13,582
<i>Total current assets</i>		<u>995,603</u>	<u>1,482,701</u>
Liabilities:			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	19	(10,097)	(43,017)
<i>Net current assets</i>		<u>985,506</u>	<u>1,439,684</u>
Total net assets		<u>2,114,097</u> =====	<u>2,324,661</u> =====
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted funds:			
Strategic reserve fund		948,059	910,313
Applications reserve fund		226,000	435,000
Legal action fund		23,059	-
General fund		654,390	700,005
Restricted funds:			
Candy fund		196,203	211,360
Creech Jones fund		42,277	43,294
Endowment funds:			
Buxton fund		24,109	24,689
Total charity funds		<u>2,114,097</u> =====	<u>2,324,661</u> =====

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The members have not required the charitable company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- (a) ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records which comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- (b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small charitable companies and with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on..... 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

.....
Dr P D Wadey - Chairman

.....
S Bain - Treasurer
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Notes to the financial statements
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation for uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

(a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic Of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The Open Spaces Society meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

(b) Income recognition policies

Items of income are recognised and included in the financial statements when all of the following criteria are met:

- the charity has entitlement to the funds;
- any performance conditions attached to the item(s) of income have been met or are fully within the control of the charity;
- there is sufficient certainty that receipt of the income is considered probable, and
- the amount can be measured reliably.

Legacies

For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earliest of:

- the date on which the charity is aware that probate has been granted;
- the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the charity that a distribution will be made; or
- when a distribution is received from the estate.

Receipt of a legacy, in whole or in part, is only considered probable when the amount can be measured reliably and the charity has been notified of the executor's intention to make a distribution.

Other voluntary income

Voluntary income received by way of subscription, donations and appeals is included in the financial statements when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity.

Donated services

The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included in these financial statements.

Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

(c) Expenditure and Irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

Expenditure on Charitable activities comprise those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them. Governance costs include those costs associated with the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the independent examiner's fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

The Open Spaces Society
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Notes to the financial statements (continued)
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

(d) Fixed Assets

Fixed assets (excluding investments) are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided so as to write off the asset over four years.

Investments held as fixed assets are revalued at mid-market value at the balance sheet date and the gain or loss taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

(e) Fund Accounting

General fund - This is an unrestricted fund which is to be invested for the benefit of the society but remains available to the trustees to be used for the objects of the society or for making allocations to the Strategic Reserve fund.

Strategic Reserve fund - This is an unrestricted fund derived from allocations from the General fund. It is the policy of the trustees to keep 48 months' reserve in this fund, so that it should hold sufficient to cover the society's following 48 months' net outgoings, and to allow for an orderly closure of the society thereafter, should this become necessary. In line with this policy, the fund stood at £948,059 at 31 December 2023. This fund is to be invested for the benefit of the society but remains available to the trustees to transfer back to the General fund in case of need.

Applications Reserve Fund - This is an unrestricted fund derived from allocations from the General Fund. The funds within this reserve are to be used to see through to completion applications to register rights of way or common land where the application has been made in the name of the Society. Some applications are determined quickly and without significant cost, but for some there may be many years between an application being made and its conclusion. The Trustees consider that it is appropriate to hold a reserve for this purpose so that protracted applications can be supported.

Crech Jones fund - The income from this restricted fund may be used for the objects of the society that would not normally be met from the General fund.

Candy fund - This is a restricted fund to be used only for the general charitable purposes of the Open Spaces Society. It is not to be used for administrative expenses.

Buxton fund - The income from this fund is transferred to the Society's General fund.

2 DONATIONS (INC. GIFT AID) AND LEGACIES	31.12.23	31.12.22
	£	£
Legacies	42,437	792,918
Donations	7,545	14,544
Gift Aid	15,275	12,462
	<u>65,257</u>	<u>819,924</u>

3 APPEALS AND GIFT AID

Funds raised by appeals over the year also generated related income via Gift Aid.

Appeal	Donations	Gift Aid	Total
	£	£	£
Autumn 2023 appeal	28,276	3,406	31,682
	<u>28,276</u>	<u>3,406</u>	<u>31,682</u>

4 INCOME FROM OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	31.12.23	31.12.22
	£	£
Sales of publications	1,208	5,041
Special projects and training	4,647	3,640
Trusts, royalties, commission etc.	828	938
	<u>6,683</u>	<u>9,619</u>

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Notes to the financial statements (continued)
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

5	INVESTMENT INCOME	31.12.23	31.12.22
		£	£
	Listed investments	50,805	49,319
	Cash investments	36,062	10,125
		<u>86,867</u>	<u>59,444</u>
		=====	=====
6	OTHER INCOME	31.12.23	31.12.22
		£	£
	Other income	-	300
		=====	=====
	Other income comprises sundry receipts unrelated to the operations of the charity.		
7	STAFF SALARIES	31.12.23	31.12.22
		£	£
	Gross Salaries	252,562	215,012
	Employer's National Insurance Contributions	18,892	15,862
	Employer Pension Contributions	11,701	9,911
	Recruitment Costs	3,253	5,592
		<u>286,408</u>	<u>246,377</u>
		=====	=====
	Employees with emoluments exceeding the Charity Commission reporting threshold of £60,000: Nil (2022: Nil)		
	The average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year was five (2022: five)		
8	PREMISES COSTS	31.12.23	31.12.22
		£	£
	Rent	7,925	7,800
	Light and Heat	2,518	2,109
	Repairs and Maintenance	1,149	1,641
	Cleaning	1,883	1,385
	Insurance	1,891	724
	Rates and Water	986	661
	Consumables	149	226
		<u>16,501</u>	<u>14,546</u>
		=====	=====
9	ADMINISTRATION COSTS	31.12.23	31.12.22
		£	£
	IT Costs	12,103	8,055
	Postage, Telephone and Stationery	7,881	7,910
	Travel and Subsistence	3,535	2,963
	Depreciation of Computer/Office equipment	2,602	2,888
	Printing and Photocopying	2,754	2,690
	Appeal Costs	2,357	-
	Other Expenses	4,272	1,863
	Professional Indemnity Insurance	-	1,092
		<u>35,504</u>	<u>27,461</u>
		=====	=====

The Open Spaces Society
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Notes to the financial statements (continued)
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

10	OTHER COSTS			31.12.23	31.12.22
				£	£
	Legal Costs			28,617	42,806
	Marketing			34,207	28,049
	Commons Registration Project			3,965	22,295
	Subscriptions			9,945	8,903
	Donations and Grants			2,700	4,750
	Legacy mailing to the Law Society			430	860
	Conferences and Training			576	228
	Books and Maps			15	57
				<u>80,455</u>	<u>107,948</u>
				=====	=====
11	GOVERNANCE COSTS			31.12.23	31.12.22
				£	£
	Independent examiner's fees (including taxation services and underprovision for prior years)			7,865	6,143
	AGM and trustees			5,715	2,115
	Other professional fees			1,911	4,212
				<u>15,491</u>	<u>12,470</u>
				=====	=====
12	(LOSSES)/GAINS ON INVESTMENT ASSETS			£	£
	Unrealised (loss)/gain on revaluation of investments			(20,520)	(51,506)
				=====	=====
13	ANALYSIS OF FUNDS	Opening balance	Net income/ (expenditure)	Transfers	Closing balance
		£	£	£	£
	Unrestricted funds				
	Strategic reserve fund	910,313	-	37,746	948,059
	Applications reserve fund	435,000	-	(209,000)	226,000
	Legal action fund	-	-	23,059	23,059
	General fund	700,005	(225,475)	179,860	654,390
	Restricted funds				
	Candy fund	211,360	12,553	(27,710)	196,203
	Creech Jones fund	43,294	1,147	(2,164)	42,277
	Endowment funds				
	Buxton fund	24,689	1,211	(1,791)	24,109
		<u>2,324,661</u>	<u>(210,564)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,114,097</u>
		=====	=====	=====	=====

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Notes to the financial statements (continued)
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

14	TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS	Office equipment £	Computer equipment £	Total £
	Cost			
	At 1 January 2023	10,871	46,504	57,375
	Additions	65	3,612	3,677
	Disposals	-	-	-
	At 31 December 2023	10,936	50,116	61,052
		=====	=====	=====
	Depreciation			
	At 1 January 2023	10,568	42,272	52,840
	Charge for the year	185	2,417	2,602
	Disposals	-	-	-
	At 31 December 2023	10,753	44,689	55,442
		=====	=====	=====
	Net book value at 31 December 2023	183	5,427	5,610
		=====	=====	=====
	Net book value at 31 December 2022	303	4,232	4,535
		=====	=====	=====
15	INVESTMENTS		2023	2022
			£	£
	AT MARKET VALUE 1 JANUARY		873,205	924,711
	Net investment (losses)/gains		(20,520)	(51,506)
	AT MARKET VALUE 31 DECEMBER		852,685	873,205
			=====	=====
<p>There were no investment assets outside the UK. The investments are held primarily to provide an investment return for the Charity.</p> <p>The historical cost of the above investments at 31 December 2023 is £720,349 (2022: £720,349)</p>				
16	LONG TERM DEPOSITS		2023	2022
			£	£
	Flagstone		270,296	7,237
			=====	=====
17	DEBTORS		2023	2022
			£	£
	Accrued income		34,709	2,604
	Professional indemnity insurance prepaid		991	991
			35,700	3,595
			=====	=====

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Notes to the financial statements (continued)
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

18	SHORT TERM DEPOSITS	31.12.23 £	31.12.22 £
	Flagstone	681,797	254,860
	Nationwide Instant Saver Issue 3	87,741	86,658
	Furness Building Society	85,000	85,000
	CAF Gold Account	80,366	727,716
	The Charity Bank	-	90,895
	Cambridge & Counties Bank	-	90,801
	Aldermore Bank Bond	-	79,534
	Nationwide Instant Saver	-	50,060
		934,904	1,465,524
		=====	=====
19	CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	31.12.23 £	31.12.22 £
	Trade creditors	4,662	37,750
	Accruals	5,435	4,788
	Other taxes and social security costs	-	479
		10,097	43,017
		=====	=====
20	PARLIAMENT PIECE		
	The society owns this land in Kenilworth which is leased, under a 99-year lease, to Warwick District Council and managed locally. No value has been placed on this land in these financial statements.		
21	REMUNERATION OF TRUSTEES		
	None of the trustees received any remuneration (2022 - nil).		
	During the year books with a value of £100 were sold to the society by one of the Trustees.		
	An aggregate of £917 (2022: £419) was reimbursed to two (2022 - two) trustees for expenses incurred in relation to the society's activities, including attending meetings and/or acting as local correspondents.		