



OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

Constitution

Name and Status

1. The name of the Society, which is registered as a charity, shall be "The Oxford Fieldpaths Society" (founded in 1926 as "The Oxford and District Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons Preservation Society")

Area of Operation

2. The area of operation of the Society shall be the County of Oxfordshire and immediately adjoining parts of neighbouring counties.

Objects

3. The objects of the Society shall be:
 - (1) to ensure the preservation for proper public use of all existing rights of way;
 - (2) to make appropriate representations on proposals for extinguishment or diversion of such rights of way, and on proposals which would significantly affect the enjoyment of the countryside by users of such rights of way;
 - (3) to encourage where appropriate the creation and dedication of new rights of way;
 - (4) to secure the restoration of rights of way extinguished under Defence or other Regulations;
 - (5) to secure the inclusion of all public rights of way in the definitive maps as from time to time revised;
 - (6) to ensure the preservation for proper public use of existing access, and to encourage the establishment of new rights of access, to village greens, commons, open spaces and manorial waste.

Methods

4. The methods by which these objects shall be pursued include:
 - (1) securing observance of all legislation relating to public rights of way and public access;
 - (2) pressing for improved legislation, the regular revision of definitive maps and the expeditious processing of claims for new rights of way;
 - (3) instituting legal proceedings or, where appropriate, seeking redress through any statutory means;
 - (4) publishing maps, guides and other information;
 - (5) arranging organised walks and other similar activities;
 - (6) fostering voluntary efforts for the improvement of rights of way and access to open space;
 - (7) co-operating with national and local authorities and with other charitable organisations in pursuance of the Society's objects.

Membership

5. There shall be four classes of membership, appointment to which shall be subject to the approval of the Executive Committee
 - (1) Annual members
 - (2) Existing life members
 - (3) Corporate members
 - (4) Honorary life members

No further subscriptions for life membership shall be accepted. The appointment of Honorary Life Members shall be approved at the Annual General Meeting following their election.

Expulsion of Members

5.1 Members of the Society whose conduct is inappropriate or prejudicial to the Society shall be called before the Executive Committee and, failing a satisfactory explanation, shall be cautioned, required to resign or expelled as the Committee shall determine. An appeal may be made under clause 14(3) of the Constitution.

Data Protection Act

5.2 Membership of the Society and acceptance of these rules shall be deemed to constitute consent to holding by the Society of the member's name, address, telephone number and e-mail address as personal data for the purpose of the Data Protection Act.

Executive Committee and Trustees

6. The affairs of the Society shall be managed by an Executive Committee meeting not less than six times annually. A quarter of the members, or four members if this is greater, and including one or more of the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-Chairman shall constitute a quorum. The Committee shall comprise:
- (1) not more than eighteen elected members, one-third of whom shall retire annually in rotation at the Annual General Meeting and shall be eligible for re-election;
 - (2) such persons as may be co-opted by the Executive Committee on account of the special assistance which they can render, co-opted membership to confer no right to vote and to lapse at the Annual General Meeting; provided that total membership of the Executive Committee shall not exceed twenty persons.

The Chairman shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. If a re-elected Chairman is also one of those retiring under paragraph (1), the re-election shall be deemed to satisfy paragraph (1) also.

Nominations for election to the Executive Committee, and to the position of President, which shall be seconded and carry the candidate's consent, shall reach the Secretary not less than seven days before the Annual General Meeting.

If, after the election of duly nominated persons to the Committee, there remain vacancies, up to four such vacancies may be filled by the election at the Annual General Meeting of members indicating a willingness to serve and nominated and seconded by other members present, and elected by a simple majority of those present.

The Executive Committee shall be Trustees of the Society, and the appointment or election to the Executive Committee of any person who is found to be disqualified from being a Trustee under the Charities Acts shall be null and void.

President and Vice-President

7. The Society may have a President and Vice-Presidents, who shall be appointed by the Executive Committee and approved at an Annual General Meeting. The President shall have the right to attend meetings of the Executive Committee.

Officers

8. The Executive Committee shall annually, at the next meeting after the Annual General Meeting, elect a Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, and shall appoint such Assistant Secretaries and other Officers as they consider desirable. In the event of a vacancy arising during the year the Executive Committee shall as soon as convenient make an interim appointment. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall not normally continue in office for a consecutive period exceeding four years but the Executive Committee may for special reasons extend the period by one year.

Chairman and Vice-Chairman

9. It shall be the duty of the Chairman, and of the Vice-Chairman when acting with the Chairman's authority and on his behalf:
 - (1) to ensure that the Constitution of the Society is observed and that the decisions of the Annual General Meeting and of the Executive Committee are duly carried out;
 - (2) to exercise general supervision of the work of the officers;
 - (3) to propose to the Executive Committee such measures as appear to him to be conducive to the welfare of the Society;
 - (4) to act if occasion arises in the name and on behalf of the Society and to report such action to the Executive Committee.

Secretary

10. The Secretary shall be responsible to the Chairman and to the Vice-Chairman acting on the Chairman's behalf, for the execution of the decisions of the General Meetings and of the Executive Committee.

Treasurer

11. The Treasurer shall be responsible:
 - (1) for the proper maintenance of the Society's accounts;
 - (2) for the presentation of the annual accounts at the Annual General Meeting;
 - (3) for advising the Executive Committee on financial matters.

He shall be authorised to sign cheques up to an amount determined by the Executive Committee, who may also require that such cheques be countersigned by another authorised member of the Committee.

General Meetings

Annual

12. The Annual General Meeting shall be held each financial year not later than four calendar months from the end of the financial year on a date to be determined by the Executive Committee, of which not less than fourteen days' notice shall be given to members by an Agenda setting out the business of the meeting.
13. The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be:
 - (1) to receive and, if accepted, to approve the Annual Report of the Executive Committee and to approve an abstract of accounts of the previous year;
 - (2) to elect, in accordance with the Constitution, the Chairman and such members of the Executive Committee as are required to fill vacancies;
 - (3) to appoint an Independent Examiner;
 - (4) to approve any newly-appointed President, Vice-Presidents or honorary Life Members;
 - (5) to consider such resolutions concerning the affairs of the Society as shall have been brought forward at the Executive Committee and stated on the notice convening the meeting, and any further resolutions submitted by members to the Secretary not less than seven days before the meeting which shall have been approved by the Executive Committee.

Special

14. A Special General Meeting, of which not less than fourteen days' notice shall have been given to members, may be called at any time:
 - (1) by the President;
 - (2) by the Executive Committee;
 - (3) by not less than ten members of the Society by letter addressed to the President, Chairman or Secretary specifying the business to be discussed.
15. No business other than that specified in the notice shall be transacted at such a meeting.

Other Committees and Working Parties

16. The Executive Committee may appoint such other committees and working parties as it may consider desirable, and may make supplementary rules for the conduct of their affairs. All acts and proceedings and committees and working parties shall be fully and promptly reported to the Executive Committee.

Accounts

17. The financial year shall run from 1st January to 31st December. As soon as possible after the end of the financial year the Treasurer shall prepare and make up the annual accounts and balance sheet which he shall produce to the Executive Committee for their inspection and acceptance.

Independent Examination of Accounts

18. The current (as of 2024) Charities Commission guidelines for the independent examination of the accounts of charities, recommends that those with a gross income of less than £25,000 are not usually required to arrange an independent examination of their annual accounts. Thus for any year in which the Society's gross income is less than £25,000, no independent examination will be undertaken, unless one is requested by the Society's officers. For any year in which the Society's income exceeds £25,000, an independent examination will be arranged by the appointment of an appropriate Independent Examiner. The Independent Examiner shall make reports to the members on all accounts examined by him and laid before the members in General Meeting, for which purposes he shall have right of access to the books, accounts and vouchers of the Society and he shall be entitled to require from the officers such information as he thinks necessary for performance of his duties as Independent Examiner.

Subscriptions

19. The rates of subscription shall be those prescribed from time to time by the Executive Committee. - Subscriptions shall be payable on joining the Society and thereafter on 1st January in each year. Members joining after 1st September shall be deemed to have paid the subscription for the following year.

Affiliation

20. The Society may affiliate to other societies with objects similar to those in clause 3 of the Constitution.

Alterations to Constitution

21. This Constitution may be rescinded, supplemented or altered by resolution passed at any General Meeting of the Society at which the intention to propose such resolution has been specified in the notice convening the meeting but not otherwise. No amendments shall be made which would cause the Society to cease to be a charity at law.

Dissolution of Charity

22. If the Executive Committee decides that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the charity it shall call a meeting of all the members of the charity, of which not less than 21 days' notice (stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed) shall be given. If the proposal is confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, the Executive Committee shall have power to realise any assets held by or on behalf of the charity. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institutions having objects similar to the objects of the charity as the members may determine or failing that shall be applied for some other charitable purpose.

Amendments from the 2004 edition.

April 2005. Articles 5.1 Expulsion of Members and 5.2 Data Protection Act added.

April 2011. Article 5.2 to be expanded to include – e-mail address.

June 2024 Article 18 amended so that Independent Examination requirements align with Charities Commission rules.