

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

Matthews Hall Fore Street Topsham EXETER EX3 0HF
Registered Charity No 1162973

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2022 TO 31 AUGUST 2023

The Charity Commission requires all charities to submit an annual report containing details of a charity's accounts, its management, how it has complied with the objects set out in its constitution and certain other specified information. Consequently, parts of this annual report, which covers the Trust's Financial year to 31st August 2023, will replicate last year's report. However, for new members the Annual Report gives a brief synopsis of how the Trust is managed as well as the report on our stewardship of the land during the year.

In February 2015, the Topsham Community Association and the Topsham Society jointly launched a public appeal to raise funds to buy the woodland and the fields behind the Goat Walk. Over £300,000 was raised, the bid was successful and 6 acres of land between the Goat Walk and Bowling Green Road in Topsham, Devon was purchased for the benefit of the people of Topsham. In August of that year a Charitable Incorporated Organisation known as the Goat Walk Land Trust, established to own and manage the land, was registered with the Charity Commission. The Trust was established with the object, set out in its constitution, of *"the maintenance of the rural environment and heritage of the historic town of Topsham through the preservation and enhancement, without any permanent buildings, of the Goat Walk land for the quiet enjoyment and pleasure of the residents of Topsham and visiting members of the public at large"*.

The Trust's constitution provides for seven trustees to hold office for three years although they may hold office for two further three-year periods. Two trustees, Frances Nieduszynska and Jeremy Rawlings, were appointed by the Topsham Society; and two, John Bradley and Christopher Buckingham, were appointed by the Topsham Community Association Ltd. This year Jeremy Rawlings has stepped down as a Trustee. Jeremy was one of the founder members of the group that worked so hard to buy the land, and has been a Trustee ever since. The Trustees and the people of Topsham owe him a great debt of gratitude for his part in securing the Goat Walk Land for Topsham. His place has been taken by Peter Gray nominated by the Community Association's Topsham Society Planning Committee.

Three trustees are elected by the Trust's members voting at the Annual General Meeting and each year one Trustee is required to retire. At last year's AGM Roger Webster retired and Peter Gray, who had served three terms, was also required to stand down as an elected trustee. John Bryant was elected as a Trustee and Russell Osborn remained as the second elected Trustee. No other person stood to be elected by the members and a vacancy therefore occurred. The constitution allows for the Trustees to appoint a

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

Trustee to fill any vacancy until the next AGM and Peter Gray was appointed. This year Russell Osborn is retiring as a Trustee. Russell has been a great support to the Board; we are very sad to see him retire and thank him on behalf of the Trust and its members for all his work over the past years.

In 2016 the Annual General Meeting approved an annual membership fee of ten pounds on the basis that this would cover the normal annual running costs of the Trust. This year, as anticipated, the cost of the maintenance of the land increased significantly and the Trust made a small loss. However, the Trustees have taken the view that although membership has reduced slightly, to 233, the current level of income as shown in the annual accounts annexed to this annual report is nevertheless appropriate. Taking into consideration our reserves and with some members increasing their donation, the Trustees for the seventh year have agreed that the basic annual fee will remain at £10. The Trustees are keen to attract as wide a membership as possible and believe that any increase could prove counterproductive. However, to keep the basic level at this low level and not deplete our reserves it will be necessary to increase our income and the Trust has, during the year registered with Paypal as a charity to enable donations to be made more easily. However, the Trustees have, once again, agreed to ask members to review their contributions and have suggested that a contribution of £15 would be appropriate.

The Trust was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with a Membership Scheme which not only provides the income to fund the work of the Trust but also enables the community to become more involved in its organisation and governance. A Management Committee was set up by the Trust to deal with the day-to-day management of the land and the development of a long-term strategy to achieve the Trust's aims and objectives; namely that the land should be accessible, sustainable, rural in nature, simple to manage and for the quiet enjoyment of all. Members are appointed to the Management Committee by the Trustees to whom they are responsible.

Once again the land has proved its value to the community by providing a place for quiet enjoyment of the countryside, with many visitors throughout the year. Our fields continue to be a joy to the people of Topsham and further afield, providing somewhere for quiet exercise, away from public roads. This was the object of the Trust when it was established, and it has been greatly appreciated by the community. The native trees and local varieties of apples which were planted at the start of the Trust are now established and have formed a natural extension of the woodland. The variety of wildflowers continues to increase; a second species of orchid being a notable newcomer.

Our problems with contractors not being available to cut the meadows have continued for another year. In order that the wildflowers are able to form viable seeds we need to wait until late summer to cut the grass. Unfortunately, this is often when the contractors are most busy cutting hay crops. The small size of our land and the reducing fertility mean that the hay crop is no longer sufficiently valuable for most agricultural contractors to undertake the work. At the beginning of the year of this report (autumn 2022), our contractor managed a late cut of the grass. However in 2023, by the time our usual contractor advised he was unable to cut the meadows, the long grass was too

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

wet to cut or remove the crop. Experience over the past two years indicates that the Trust will not only have difficulty in arranging for the grass to be cut at the right time, but that this can only be done on a commercial basis, rather than in exchange for the crop, which we were able to do in earlier years.

Over the past years maintenance of our trees by tree surgeons has been undertaken regularly and they also check to see if any further work is required. Additionally, a full report on the trees was obtained last year and whilst regular inspection of our trees is recommended, no immediate surgery was required. As reported last year the large holm oak in the hedge between the two fields is suffering from a bracket fungus and will need some work in the near future. The elm trees in the northern hedge suffer from Dutch Elm Disease which will result in their demise in due course. Fortunately, new growth emerges from the substantial underground root system of the elms. The dead trees do not presently pose any danger but will be monitored. As a whole, the trees on our land are prospering and it is pleasing to report the substantial growth of the small whips planted as an extension to the wood in the first years of the Trust. Many of these are 15 feet (5m) or more which means that the path now passes through open woodland rather than across the meadow. The apple trees are also establishing and received pruning during the year to encourage their proper development. We are planning to thin some of the small saplings in the older wood to allow more light to the woodland floor.

There have been only a limited number of working parties needed this year; the thistles, ragwort and docks being much reduced after previous years' efforts by volunteers. Most of our effort has concentrated on edging the path, restricting the encroachment of brambles from the hedges and the removal of barbed wire. During the year, a substantial donation from the Market House Trust has enabled the path to be renewed. Volunteers re-cut the edges and a new layer of aggregate was laid. A new compacted surface, which will complete the path, will be undertaken later in the year (completed in 2023).

The Trust has to date taken a cautious approach to alterations to the land. The objective of the Goat Walk Land Trust is to keep the land as rural fields with an area of woodland. Consequently, no significant changes were undertaken during the year.

The Trust is required as part of its annual return to the Charity Commission to include details of any serious incidents during the year. The Trustees are able to confirm that there have been no issues relating to fraud or financial crime; no unverified or suspicious donations; no significant financial losses; no safeguarding issues, nor any issues relating to terrorism or any other serious incidents. The Trust has no paid employees or advisors and does not make grants to individuals or other organisations.

This is a report of the Trust's activities for the year to 31st August 2023. The woodland and meadows continue to thrive, and any changes will be gradual and consistent with the Trust's objects and principles. The Trustees remain committed to keep the Goat Walk Land a place of quiet enjoyment for the people of Topsham and its visitors.

Chris Buckingham
Chairman of the Trustees

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

REGISTERED NUMBER 1162973

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR ENDED 31/08/2023

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds £	Total 2021-22 £
Incoming Resources				
Donations	0	2886	2886	2925
Gift Aid	0	592	592	589
Interest on Gift Aid (20/21)	0	0	0	1
AGM bar surplus	0	18	18	0
Wayleave payment	0	88	88	86
Contribution to memorial stone	0	700	700	0
Contribution to path repair	0	1000	1000	0
Bank interest	0	97	97	117
Total income	0	5381	5381	3718
Resources Expended				
Web site	0	195	195	184
Publicity	0	0	0	0
<i>Charitable Activities</i>				
Meadows	0	2210	2210	390
Tools and materials	0	0	0	0
Trees	0	0	0	535
Memorial stone	0	1848	1848	0
Path repair	0	1194	1194	0
Insurance	0	366	366	358
Bank charges	0	60	60	93
<i>Governance</i>				
AGM	0	62	62	0
Meetings room hire	0	87	87	0
Total expenditure	0	6022	6022	1560
Loss 22-23	0	-641	-641	2157

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

Goat Walk Land Trust - Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2023

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Fund	Total Funds	2021-22
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets				
Community Land	300505	0	300505	300505
Current Assets				
Debtors	0	0	0	0
HMRC Gift Aid	0	592	592	589
Cash at CAF Bank	0	2315	2315	2950
Cash at Lloyds Bank	0	8184	8184	8193
Cash at Shawbrook Bank	0	20000	20000	20000
Liabilities				
None	0	0	0	0
Net Assets	<u>300505</u>	<u>31091</u>	<u>331596</u>	<u>332237</u>
The Funds of the Charity				
Funds B/F	300505	31732	332237	330080
22-23 loss	0	-641	-641	2157
Total Funds	<u>300505</u>	<u>31091</u>	<u>331596</u>	<u>332237</u>

GOATWALKLANDTRUST



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Goat Walk Land Trust

On accounts for the year ended

31/08/2023

Charity no
(if any)

1162973

Set out on pages

4 and 5

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/08/2023

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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 accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Geoffrey C. G. Wilkinson

Date: 08/11/2023

Name:

Geoffrey Wilkinson

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

IER

1

Oct 2018

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

Address: 2 Tresillian Gardens

Topsham

Exeter EX3 0BA

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.