

# GOATWALKLANDTRUST

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

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 TO 31 AUGUST 2024

The Charity Commission requires all charities to submit an annual report containing certain information including details of a charity's accounts, its management and compliance with the objects of the charity. Accordingly, the format of this annual report, which covers the Trust's Financial year to 31st August 2024, is similar to the reports of previous years and for the benefit of new members, it includes a brief synopsis of how the Trust is managed as well as the report on our stewardship of the land during the year.

### The Trust's origins

In February 2015, a successful, joint appeal by the Topsham Community Association and the Topsham Society raised over £300,000 to purchase the Goat Walk Land, being 6 acres of land between the Goat Walk and Bowling Green Road in Topsham, for the benefit of the people of Topsham. A Charitable Incorporated Organisation known as the Goat Walk Land Trust, was established to own and manage the land 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 Trustees

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. Three trustees, Chris Buckingham, my predecessor as chair, Frances Nieduszynska and John Bradley stepped down as trustees in the summer of 2024. They have served the Trust with dedication and enthusiasm and we are very grateful for their strategic and "hands-on" efforts to ensure the Goat Walk Land continues to provide the open and natural environment envisaged by the members of the Trust. Three new Trustees have replaced them: Lynn Onyett, nominated by Topsham Society Planning Committee, and Simon Briscoe and Jenny Jones, both nominated by TCA.

The constitution provides for three trustees to be elected by members. Currently there are only two such member Trustees, John Bryant and John Harwood. Each year, one of these – the longest standing – must retire but is welcome to stand again for election: John Bryant was elected at the AGM in 2023 so must stand down but has decided to stand again. Kathryn James was co-opted as a Trustee in September to fill the one vacancy for an elected trustee. As a co-opted trustee, she must also stand down at the



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AGM, but is willing to stand for election. Kathryn brings valuable expertise in fund raising, community partnerships and social media. The trustees are pleased to support these applications.

At this AGM Peter Gray is retiring as a Trustee having served his full term. He 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 – the new Trustees are especially appreciative of his support as they found their feet in recent months.

## Membership

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 and voting rights but also enables the community to become more involved in the management of the land by volunteering for, for example, the working parties.

A Management Committee was set up by the Trust to deal with the day-to-day management of the land and to help the trustees to develop a strategy which delivers the Trust's aims and objectives 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. In 2016 the Annual General Meeting approved an annual membership fee of £10 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 but taking into account the reserves (as detailed on the attached accounts), some stand-alone donations made to the Trust and some members increasing their donations to a suggested £15, the base membership fee remained at £10. In the light of work undertaken this year and potential work which will be required in the coming year, as detailed in the report from the Management Committee, the trustees would encourage existing members who have not already done so, to increase their standing orders or other form of payment to the recommended £15. In time, the trustees may have to consider an increase to the minimum annual membership fee to £15.

The Goat Walk Land continues to provide value to the community by ensuring an open, natural environment for the enjoyment of the people of Topsham and for many visitors throughout the year, providing green space for quiet exercise, away from public roads. 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 this 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 its evolving fertility mean that the hay crop is no longer sufficiently valuable for most agricultural contractors to

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undertake the work in exchange for the crop. Our contractor has managed a cut of the grass this year but the issues around cost and the availability of timely help will need further consideration.

The Trust has to date taken a cautious approach to alterations to the land and a “hands off” approach to management of the trees. 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. Trustees are, however, acutely aware that two of the larger trees on the land fell during the last year – with the largest, the Turkey Oak between the two fields, falling in October – and another small tree fell onto neighbouring land. We will be seeking advice on how best to manage the trees appropriately balancing our desire to see the land used more frequently by more people while also taking steps to reduce the risks to people and property. Further details of the work carried out by the Management Committee in this financial year together with comment on their plans for 2025 can be found in the Management Committee Report attached. 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, 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 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024. 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.

Lynn Onyett



Chair of Trustees



**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR ENDED 31/08/2024**

	<b>Restricted Funds £</b>	<b>Unrestricted Funds £</b>	<b>Total Funds £</b>	<b>Total 2022-23 £</b>
<b>Incoming Resources</b>				
Donations/subscriptions	0	3563	3563	2886
Gift Aid	0	724	724	592
AGM bar surplus	0	13	13	18
Wayleave payment	0	90	90	88
Donation from Repair Cafe	0	500	500	0
Contribution to memorial sto	0	0	0	700
Contribution to Path repair (MHT)		0	0	1000
Bank interest	0	144	144	97
<b>Total income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5034</b>	<b>5034</b>	<b>5381</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>				
Web site	0	235	235	195
Publicity	0	15	15	0
<i>Charitable Activities</i>				
Meadows	0	805	805	2210
Tools and materials	0	30	30	0
Trees	0	0	0	0
Memorial stone	0	0	0	1848
Path repair		330	330	1194
Insurance	0	411	411	366
Bank charges	0	60	60	60
<i>Governance</i>				
AGM	0	42	42	62
Meetings room hire	0	191	191	87
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2119</b>	<b>2119</b>	<b>6022</b>
<b>Surplus 23-24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2915</b>	<b>2915</b>	<b>-641</b>

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Accounts 2023-24

**Goat Walk Land Trust - Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2024**

	Restricted Funds (note 2)	Unrestricted Fund	Total Funds	2022-23
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed Assets</b>				
Community Land	300505	0	300505	300505
<b>Current Assets</b>				
Debtors	0	0	0	0
HMRC Gift Aid	0	724	724	592
Cash at CAF Bank	0	945	945	2315
Cash at Lloyds Bank	0	12337	12337	8184
Cash at Shawbrook Bank	0	20000	20000	20000
<b>Liabilities</b>				
None	0	0	0	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Net Assets</b>	300505	34006	334511	331596
<b>The Funds of the Charity</b>				
Funds B/F	300505	31091	331596	332237
23-24 surplus	0	2915	2915	-641
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Total Funds

300505

34006

334511

331596





Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/  
members of

Charity Name

The Goat Walk Land Trust

On accounts for the year  
ended

31/08/24

Charity no  
(if any)

1162973

Set out on pages

4 - 6

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/08/2024

Responsibilities and  
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 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:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records
- 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 order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

*Geoffrey Wilkinson*

Date:

03/12/2024

Name:

Geoffrey Wilkinson

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

Address:

2 Tresillian Gardens, Topsham,

**Section B**

**Disclosure**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight 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.**

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