

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

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

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

FOR THE YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 TO 31 AUGUST 2025

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 31 August 2025, 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 (GWLT), 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. The current trustees are Lynn Onyett, Simon Briscoe, Jenny Jones, John Harwood, John Bryant and Kathryn James. John Bryant is stepping down as trustee at the 2026 AGM. We are very grateful for his expert input on the natural environment and diverse plant life inhabiting our land and his beautiful photographs, many of which illustrate our website.

The constitution provides for three trustees to be elected by members. Each year, one of these – the longest standing – must retire but is welcome to stand again for election. John Harwood is therefore due to stand down but has agreed to stand again. The Trustees are pleased to support his application. If John Harwood and Kathryn James remain as the elected trustees, this leaves a vacancy for a further elected trustee and applications are welcome.

At the last 2025 AGM Peter Gray retired from his trustee role but has continued to diligently manage the administration of the membership and subscriptions. He is handing that task over to Simon Briscoe going forward and the Trustees wanted to

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record their gratitude for his hard work and dedication over the years to support the GWLT and to help further its aims.

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 example, as members of the working parties.

Due to the significant work of the Trustees and our members in embracing social media and in highlighting the existence of the land and the Trust at various local events, for example the “Join the Club” event, in addition to numerous leaflets being hand posted through many letterboxes, we were pleased to see that our efforts to boost membership to help cover the rise in costs has been successful. We currently have around 280 members, a rise of 15% over the year. We will continue our drive to recruit new members in this coming year.

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. John Harwood is the Chair of this Committee, and the Trustees are extremely grateful for all the work that he and the members of the Management Committee do. Without their efforts it would not be possible to manage the land as effectively as it has been.

Ten years ago, at the 2016 AGM an annual membership fee of £10 was approved on the basis that this would cover the normal annual running costs of the Trust. The cost of the maintenance and insurance of the land has continued to increase significantly this year. Taking into account the reserves (as detailed on the attached accounts), some stand-alone donations made to the Trust and with some members having voluntarily increased their donations to £15, the base membership fee has remained at £10. In the light of present and proposed work 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 or more. While some members already generously pay more than the recommended minimum these additional sums alone will not provide a sufficient boost to our operating funds and, in time, the trustees may have to consider an increase to the minimum annual membership fee to £15.

Management of the Land

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. It provides 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 and bring pleasure to all who see them.

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We continue to face challenges in arranging the cutting of the fields. 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 in recent years the hay crop is not sufficiently valuable for agricultural contractors to undertake the work in exchange for the crop. We contracted for the grass to be cut this year but the issue around cost remains under review.

The Trust has to date taken a cautious approach to alterations to the land and a “hands off” approach to management of the trees while taking into account the advice sought from professional tree surveyors regarding safety and prudent maintenance. Work was undertaken to deal with the fallen Turkey Oak, removing much of the leafy canopy while leaving the main trunk and larger branches of the tree where it fell in order to provide a home for a diversity of wildlife.

An issue that we have in common with other community space is the presence of one or more rough sleepers both in the copse and, on occasion, on the open areas of the land. The copse area has been actively but sensitively managed to discourage any camping there and we continue to liaise with local police and council representatives on solutions to help the rough sleeper/s find more suitable accommodation.

Further details of the work carried out by the Management Committee in the last financial year together with comment on their plans for the current year can be found in the Management Committee Report attached.

Activities

We reported last year at the AGM that the Trustees focus going forward was to raise the profile of the land and its availability to the community and its visitors for everyone to enjoy this peaceful and unspoiled space. We are delighted that the aims were furthered by two specific highlights.

In January 25 the annual Topsham Wassail took place on the GWLT land. This was the first time we have hosted the event and with the invaluable help and co-operation of the Topsham Allotments and Gardens Society (TAGS) and musical support from The Topsham Folk Club around 70 people were able to enjoy and continue the wassailing tradition around our native apple trees with an evening of music, mulled cider and treats and we are happy that this collaboration is to continue with TAGS and The Folk Club on future events.

Another stated aim of the Trust was to encourage the younger members of our community to explore and experience the land and the natural environment in a positive way. Topsham Museum requested to host its Storytelling events on the land from May 25 through to October 25 and the Trustees were delighted to agree and work with them to facilitate these sessions for the families that attended. This successful activity and collaboration with the Museum is something we will be happy to continue, and we are keen to explore other opportunities to use the land sympathetically with our community partners.

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Statements

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 August 2025. 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Onyett', written in a cursive style.

Chair of Trustees

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR ENDED 31/08/2025

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds £	Total 2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Incoming Resources					
Membership subscriptions		3657	3657	3657	3563
Donations		3145	3145	3145	500
Gift Aid		741	741	741	724
AGM bar surplus		35	35	35	13
Wayleave payment		97	97	97	90
Bank interest		653	653	653	144
Other income		100	100	100	
Total income		8427	8427	8427	5034
Resources Expended					
Web site				-497	235
Publicity				-457	15
Meadows				-1128	805
Tools and materials				0	30
Trees				-1970	
Hedges				-85	
Maintenance				-60	
Path repairs				-55	330
Insurance				-428	411
Bank charges				-60	60
<i>Governance</i>					
AGM				-34	42
Meetings room hire				-150	191
Total expenditure				-4925	2119
Surplus 24-25				3502	2915

Goat Walk Land Trust - Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2025

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Fund	Total Funds	Total Funds	
	£	£	£	£	
Fixed Assets					
Community Land	300505	0	300505	300505	300505
Current Assets					
Debtors				0	0
HMRC Gift Aid		741	741	741	724
			0		
Cash at CAF Bank		2398	2398	2398	945
Cash at Lloyds Bank		14370	14370	14370	12337
Cash at Shawbrook Bank		20000	20000	20000	20000
Liabilities					
None		0	0	0	0
Net Assets	300505	37508	338013	338013	334511
The Funds of the Charity					
Funds B/F				334511	331596
24-25	0	0	0	3502	2915
Total Funds	0	0	0	338013	334511



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

The Goat Walk Land Trust

On accounts for the year
ended

31/08/25

Charity no
(if any) 1162973

Set out on pages

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 31/08/2025

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.

Signed:

Geoffrey C. G. Wilkinson

Date: 22-01-26

Name:

Geoffrey Wilkinson

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

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.