



The Friends of The Ridgeway
Preserving the Spirit of The Ridgeway

Annual Report 2018



About Us:

Our Mission:

- To **preserve** The Ridgeway as a unique environment;
- To **enable** quiet enjoyment of its many special features;
- To **promote** greater awareness of its value to the whole community.

Our Aims: The preservation of The Ridgeway, securing quiet enjoyment of its essential atmosphere and environment, and its many special features. Our aspiration is for the whole of the ancient Ridgeway, from coast to coast, to be recognised, valued, protected and promoted as a pre-eminent facility for walkers and other users.

Our Vision for The Ridgeway:

- A special environment whose landscape, history and wildlife are fully appreciated by the local and wider communities;
- A place where people can exercise, enjoy their special interests and a memorable day out, respecting the Countryside Code;
- Properly maintained, with excellent access, signage, facilities and information, not over-used or abused, benefiting everyone.

Our Role: To campaign for the protection of the whole length of the ancient Ridgeway, and to promote its value to the whole community as an essential part of everyone's life and heritage.

We work with the Ridgeway Partnership and others to ensure that The Ridgeway National Trail is properly maintained and protected as an essential facility and a vital element in the national network of recreational trails. We also seek to engage people living near to and using The Ridgeway in activities that spread knowledge and appreciation of its historic, artistic and environmental features.

From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Once again it is time to reflect on the past year and the issues facing our beloved trail. In a previous review I wrote “..... *as the seasons came and went, issues relating to the Ridgeway have come and gone, some threatening the trail, some offering hope in new activities*”. A similar sentence could be written again this year; regrettably the same issues keep reappearing. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just enjoy our trail without having to continually be on guard to protect it.



When I first became your Chairman, the Ridgeway Partnership had just been formed and the NERC 2006 Act passed; with this background there was a very real debate as to whether there was any further work of the Friends of the Ridgeway to do. Since that time, in every Chairman's Letter, I have written there have been issues relating to motorised vehicles on the trail to report. These incidents continue.

Incidents over the past year included a group of 4x4s reported driving west along the trail, just to the west of the Sparsholt Firs car park on Sunday morning 20 January 2019. They were very obviously off roading and travelling fast with much mud and spray. A toddler on her 'bike' with her father was seen having a wonderful time paddling through the puddles; Father and daughter enjoying the Ridgeway as it should be. They continued on their way either up the drive to Hill Barn or round the corner along the trail just before the 4x4s sped through. The 4x4 drivers were noted to be obviously having difficulty keeping the vehicles under control. This incident has been reported to the Police.



Regrettably there were other incidents but no evidence which could be submitted to the Police.

Protection against damage by cross-country vehicles to much of The Ridgeway and other green paths was achieved with the passing of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, and the application of Restricted Byway status to most of The Ridgeway National Trail south of the Thames. However, the remaining sections in Wiltshire (which include important ancient pavements in the sections approaching Avebury) are not so protected at present and we continue to campaign to get them protected.

Nationally the Motoring Stakeholder Working Group having failed to reach any conclusions, has been suspended. It was very apparent that the wishes of trail riders and 4x4 off-roaders are very different to those who wish to preserve the lanes. Given the present political situation it is very unlikely that there will be any further legal protection for green lanes.

There were a significant number of responses to the consultation carried out by Oxfordshire County Council regarding 32 applications to upgrade certain routes, currently recorded as Restricted Byway, to Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs). The council has recently announced that 31 of these applications have now been determined against all the applications on the basis that any rights for mechanically propelled vehicles were extinguished by the NERC Act 2006. One application remains to be determined. Following determination there is a 28 day period in which applicants can appeal the decisions to the Secretary of State; we do not have any information as to whether an appeal has been lodged.

Also of concern was an article in the recent newsletter of the Institute of Advance Motorists entitled '*On the trail of riding fun*' which promotes the activities of the Trail Riders Federation; the article can be read on line at <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/my-dashboard/my-benefits/magazine> Various objections to the article, including from ourselves, have been sent to the IAM expressing disappointment that the Institute is supporting motorised off-road activities.



Just to complete the litany of issues facing the Ridgeway, illegal fly-tipping has been reported continuing; the wood at the top of the hill above East Hundred has had some campers/parties in the wood by the car park leaving lots of rubbish including two plastic chairs and some cooking pans. Why oh why do people behave like this?



And other issues impacting on the Ridgeway continue. Although the situation is improving, the Ridgeway Partnership still lacks financial stability, arousing concern

about its long-term maintenance commitments. Various development schemes that impact upon the Ridgeway continue to be promoted.

We must be vigilant if we are to protect the Ridgeway. The objective of the Friends of the Ridgeway has been and remains to *'preserve the ancient Ridgeway paths along the chalk downs of Southern England'* in particular from the ravages of motor vehicles. If you see motorised vehicles on the trail, please photograph them showing the number plate to provide evidence that we can use.

However, despite these concerns, there is good news.

We are exploring the establishment of a coast-to-coast route along existing Ridgeway tracks from Dorset to north Norfolk; this will be called the Great Chalk Way.

As previously reported, we have investigated the potential for the Ridgeway becoming a World Heritage site. We concluded that the time was not right to

divert resources into this but to wait until we have created the bigger picture of the Great Chalk way.



For many of us, the Ridgeway is a lot more than a walking trail – it is a historic monument, an archaeological treasure and, certainly for me, it is an artistic inspiration. This perception has led to us establishing the Swire Ridgeway Art Prize. This is now recognised as an annual competition and exhibition and will again be held again in 2019.

The Vale of White Horse Local Group, established in 2009, chaired by Dr Roger Griffin, continues to cater to the interests of local members with an active programme of talks and visits. The Committee hopes to see new Local Groups launched for Wiltshire and for the Thames and Chilterns.

Moving to the administration of the Friends of the Ridgeway, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force. This new law inevitably changes the way we must organise our affairs. Members consent to the use of their data is vital and MUST be obtained. If you have not already done so, please complete the consent form, available on line, so that we may continue to keep you informed about our activities.

We are delighted to acknowledge the various donations received for the Ridgeway National Trail, including three most generous significant donations.

These amounts are included in our accounts as restricted funds for the Ridgeway National Trail or Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize as appropriate.

The AGM will be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington on Sunday 28 April 2019, as part of the Ridgeway Friends Day including the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. Definitely a date for your diary – please do come along.

And a final thought. There are regular postings on the Friends of the Ridgeway page on Facebook and numbers of messages reached has been increasing. Why not take a look and join the conversation?

Anthony Burdall

Secretary's report

The Friends of The Ridgeway is a voluntary association and a registered charity. In order to fulfil its charitable objectives, the Trustees are elected annually to run the association, sitting as an Executive committee which normally meets quarterly. As a charity we are fully committed to transparency in our decision making process and our members are updated regularly on issues and our deliberations through our quarterly newsletter. Our formal accounts and report are presented each year through our Annual Report and Annual General Meeting.

Anthony Burdall continued to serve during the year as the Chairman of the Association and John Edgerton has continued as Treasurer for another year. This is my first year as secretary. Jim Gunter, Andy Greenhalgh and Dianne Godfrey also served as members of the committee throughout the year. The committee can comprise of up to 8 members and we are actively seeking new members of the committee.

We rely on the assistance of members to recruit new supporters, in support of their efforts to raise awareness of the importance of the Ridgeway as a recreational, environmental and heritage asset, and its fragility. A substantial and increasing membership is important if we are to demonstrate public support for the preservation of the Ridgeway and to ensure that the work of the Association continues to be taken seriously by the relevant authorities. We have been pleased to see this year a continuing net increase in

membership, and we extend a warm welcome to the Association for all our new members. Subscription rates continue to be only £8 pa Individual, £15 for Family and Association membership, £80 for Life and £120 for Joint Life. We continue to publish our printed Annual Reports, and seasonal Newsletters in electronic format. Our internet web-site is also a valuable tool in communication as is our presence on social media. Members of the Committee occasionally represent the Society at various events.

To ensure financial stability the Committee seeks to maintain a minimum general reserve equal to eight calendar months' expenditure. Designated Reserves for the Ridgeway Partnership, for completion of the Great Stones Way, and other purposes are invested with the general reserve until deployed at the Trustees' discretion. The Trustees maintain sufficient funds in current account to meet short-term cash requirements, and any additional funds are invested in the CAF Bank Investment account and COIF Charities Investment Fund run by CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

And a final thought. To save administration costs, would it be acceptable to send out future Annual Reviews by email? Obviously all members not registering an email address would continue to receive a hard copy. Please let us have your views.

Alan Chater, Secretary

NOTICE OF THE 2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**To be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington,
on Sunday, 28 April 2019, at 3.00 pm.**

Nominations for the election of Officers and Trustees and items for Any Other Business should be sent in writing or by e-mail to the Secretary by 14 full days before the Meeting, i.e. by 14 April 2019. Members are urged to volunteer to ensure that the Association's work can continue uninterrupted.

Tea will be served following the conclusion of the Meeting.

The winners of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prizes will be announced and the Prizes awarded at 3:30 pm. Entries to the competition will be on display in the Hall, and light lunches may be purchased from 12.00 pm.



Treasurer's Report for the year to 31 December 2018

The year 2018 consolidated on the success of 2017, although income was substantially down, due to the significant donations from 2017 not being repeated (or expected).

A further generous donation of £5,000 was received from a Charitable Trust, to be held as restricted funds for the continuing development of the Swire Arts Exhibition and Prize giving for 2019 and subsequent years.

Subscription income was down by 40%. Although the financial position of the Charity is now the strongest it has been for many years, the Friends are keen to maintain and increase membership levels, in order that we can show a strong and united front when lobbying for change.

The total of funds available is now £51,241 (up from £48,029), of which £34,554 is restricted (for the purposes of the Great Stones Way, the Ridgeway National Trail and the Swire Arts Exhibitions). A sum of £16,687 (up from £13,638 last year) is available for purposes approved by the Friends' Committee in relation to the protection, upkeep and promotion of the Ridgeway. Any utilisation of the restricted funds must be for a purpose that is deemed by the Friends' Committee to also be for the benefit of the Ridgeway.

A Gift Aid claim of £367 was made to the HMRC in respect of qualifying membership fees and donations received in 2018 which has since been paid.

A second Arts Prize Exhibition and Prize giving was held as a prelude to the 2017 AGM, held in April 2018. The Friends were able to benefit from a modest sum paid by way of commission on works of art sold by their creators at the Exhibition. This has led the Committee to repeat the event in 2019. We hope it will prove to be equally, if not more, successful.

J Edgerton, Treasurer

The Friends of the Ridgeway

INCOME	2018	Notes	2017
	£		£
Subscriptions	1,733		2,877
Donations	6,907	1	25,208
Interest - COIF Funds	2	2	21
Gift Aid tax recovered	367	3	683
Miscellaneous	0		62
Swire Arts Prize day sales - commission	774		651
	9,783		29,502
EXPENDITURE	2018	Notes	2017
	£		£
Newsletters/Annual Report	648		695
Meetings expenses	190		414
Insurance	345		325
Website admin	78		0
Office costs/leaflets	108		112
Local & group events	0		577
Affiliation fees	86		51
AGM expenses	43		337
Sundries	0		20
Bank charges	60		60
Ridgeway Partnership support	2,000	4	3,247
Swire Arts Prize setup/prizes	3,013		2088
	6,571		7,926
Surplus for year	3,212		21,576
Fund Balance b/f	48,029		26,453
Fund Balance c/f	51,241		48,029
CURRENT ASSETS	2018		2017
	£		£
Bank balances: Lloyds	582		347

CAF Bank Current a/c	40,095	37,306
COIF Deposit a/c	197	9,693
CAF Bank Investment account	10000	0
	50,874	47,346
 Gift aid Recovery	 367	 683
	51,241	48,029

REPRESENTED BY FUNDS:

Restricted - Great Stones Way	4,194	4,194
Unrestricted - General Fund	16,687	13,638
Restricted - Ridgeway National Trail	23,516	30,197
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	6,844	0
	51,241	48,029

Notes

- 1 One donation of £5,000 received from a Charitable Trust
- 2 Large withdrawal made from CCLA in order to invest with CAF Bank
- 3 Smaller number of significant donations attracting Gift Aid
- 4 Support to Ridgeway Partnership for specified project



inspiration of the Ridgeway. Following strong support over past years, the Competition is being held again this year. Separate classes are open to works of painting, photography, sculpture (including ceramics) and writing (poetry or prose). Prizes will be awarded for each category as well as to an overall winner, each winner receiving a cash sum and a keeper prize.

There will be an exhibition of entries over the three days culminating in the Ridgeway Friends Day and Annual General Meeting. This year's event will be held in the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall in Uffington, from 27 to 28 April 2019. The Exhibition will be open to the public between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm each day, and the Prizes will be awarded at 3:30 pm on Sunday 28 April.



The Ancient Ridgeway: An ancient trade route, perhaps our oldest road, dating back 4,000 years at least to the civilisation that built Avebury and Stonehenge, the ancient Ridgeway follows the edge of the chalk escarpment across the South of England, from The Wash to the coast of Dorset. Coupled with the Icknield Way lower down the slope, just above the spring line, the well-drained and lightly wooded track, above the marshes and thick woods of the Vales, linked Seahenge and Grimes Graves in Norfolk, to Avebury and Stonehenge. Burial mounds and hill-forts, and hill figures carved in the chalky turf, may be traced along the route, and armies have marched and fought along it. Its powerful atmosphere and its glorious countryside still today inspires and stimulates artistic creativity.

Representatives from The Friends of The Ridgeway and the Icknield Way Association are working to establish a multi-user recreational route along the line of the ancient paths between Dorset and Norfolk, under the name of The Great Chalk Way. The route, like the original braided tracks, would include alternatives. Starting in Lyme Regis the route will follow the follow the

Wessex Ridgeway, into a Cranbourn Link, then the Great Stones Way past Stonehenge, leading into the Ridgeway National Trail and Icknield Way along the chalk escarpment, then the Pedders Way finishing in Hunstanton. The route should be mapped and a concept established this year.



The Ridgeway National Trail: It was only natural that, when the National Trails were established after World War II, The Ridgeway should take its place amongst these premier routes. Only the central section of 87 miles between Ivanhoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire and Overton Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire was so designated. However, this section of The Ridgeway brings together the best of the Chilterns and the North Wessex Downs, joined by the picturesque Thames Valley. Virtually the whole route is within either the Chilterns or the North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The Ridgeway today provides a wonderful experience not only for walkers and local residents, but for visitors and families seeking the best of rural England.

The Ridgeway Partnership: The Ridgeway Partnership was established in 2015 to take responsibility to Natural England for the management,

promotion and improvement of the Ridgeway National Trail. The partnership brings together the local authorities along the route, the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs, the Ramblers, Chiltern Society, and other stakeholder representatives. The Friends of The Ridgeway is a founding Partner, and played a significant role in setting up the Partnership. Oxfordshire County Council, as Lead Partner, holds funds and accounts, hosts a Ridgeway Officer, Sarah Wright, and other part-time staff, and supports the volunteers who, with Chiltern Society and Ramblers work teams, carry out the regular maintenance needed to ensure the high standards required of National Trails. Natural England provides a grant towards core costs, alongside lesser amounts from local authorities, and co-ordinates the National Trails network as a whole.

The Ridgeway Partnership seeks to raise awareness of the Ridgeway as an important recreational and leisure facility and of its unique heritage and environmental characteristics, and to work closely with landowners and local communities to increase economic benefits from tourism. It has identified five themes or aspects of The Ridgeway's unique appeal, namely the Natural, Living, Ancient, Sporting and Creative Ridgeway, to highlight its wild-life and bio-diversity; the superb landscape and scenery; good food, country pubs and services; sporting events and family recreation; its wealth of heritage and pre-history; and inspiration for art and literature. To walk on The Ridgeway can improve physical and mental health, as well as enjoyment of peace and quiet.

The Ridgeway Partnership is working with other National Trails to ensure financial stability for core management and maintenance costs, and to mobilise additional funding for promotion and development.



The Friends of The Ridgeway: The Facts

The Friends of The Ridgeway is a voluntary association, founded in 1983, and now a registered charity, no 1107926.

The President and Vice-Presidents: Our President is Lord Bradshaw. Our seven Vice-Presidents are all Members of Parliament whose constituencies include sections of The Ridgeway.

Volunteer Committee: The Trustees of The Friends of The Ridgeway, elected annually to run the Association, comprise an Executive Committee, which normally meets quarterly, and is supported by other volunteers, including our valued Planning Adviser. The Committee includes the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

Meetings: The Association meets in Annual General Meetings of members, at which Officers and Trustees are elected, and the Annual Accounts and Trustees' Report are considered and approved. The Accounts, prepared by the Treasurer, are scrutinised by an Independent Examiner and reported to the Charities Commission.

Activities: Our initial task was to challenge the damage being done by cross-country vehicles to The Ridgeway and other green paths, and to campaign for control of the abuse by restricting access. This was largely achieved by the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERCA), and the application of Restricted Byway status to most of The Ridgeway National Trail south of the Thames. We continue to press for the remaining sections in Wiltshire to be so classified.

Local Groups: We encourage the formation of local groups of our members within communities, undertaking activities and events of interest to residents, and relevant to The Ridgeway and its environment. The first such group in The Vale of White Horse has blazed a trail and we hope that it will be followed by others all along the line of The Ridgeway.

Communications: We operate an informative web-site, www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk, which is available to promote our own activities and those of our many associate organisations. We publish a quarterly Newsletter, now, in the face of escalating postal costs, in an electronic format. We are also making efforts to develop our presence in social media; follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

How You Can Help:

Join Us: Become a member of The Friends of The Ridgeway. Just ask for a leaflet and application form, download a form from our website or e-mail one of the Committee.

Volunteer: We're always looking for helpers. Right now we're seeking new Trustees, and the Ridgeway Partnership needs volunteers to help with maintenance and development works.

Report Abuse: Driving a 4x4 vehicle or trail-bike on the Restricted Byway sections of The Ridgeway causes damage to the surface, can harm and annoy walkers and is an offence. Please report it to the police! Fly-tipping or just leaving litter is anti-social and spoils the environment. Report it to your local Council, or let us know about it, and we'll get it collected.

The Friends of The Ridgeway

Patron: Sir Chris Bonington
President: Lord Bradshaw
Vice-Presidents: Richard Benyon MP
Robert Buckland MP
David Gauke M
John Howell MP
David Lidington MP
Claire Perry MP
Ed Vaizey MP

Trustees (to 28 April 2019):

Anthony Burdall: (Chairman): anthony.burdall@burdall.net
Alan Chater (Secretary): (alan.chater@gmail.com)
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