



THE FRIENDS OF THE
RIDGEWAY

Annual Report 2022

Preserving the Spirit of the Ridgeway



Website www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/
Facebook @TheFriendsOfTheRidgeway

About us

The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) is an independent charity (registered charity no. 1107926) run by volunteers to preserve the spirit of the Ridgeway and its surroundings for maximum enjoyment by the public and protection of the adjacent natural and historic environment. Our focus is on the Ridgeway National Trail and the chalk ridges that link it to the Dorset and Norfolk coasts; together these form the Great Chalk Way.

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 Objectives

- We aim for the Ridgeway to be a peaceful, beautiful, safe amenity for the public along its whole length
- Our ambition is for the whole of the Ridgeway to be free of non-essential motorised traffic
- We promote an appreciation of the Ridgeway – for outdoor pursuits and the creative arts - and its natural and historic environment
- FoR is concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these features and their maximum appreciation by the public
- We promote the Great Chalk Way, a 360-mile series of trails along chalk ridges from the Dorset to Norfolk coasts, of which the Ridgeway National Trail is one

Achieving our objectives

1. We aim for the Ridgeway to be a peaceful, beautiful, safe amenity for the public along its whole length.
 - We have a seat on the board of the Ridgeway Partnership, influencing policy and actions
 - We communicate with our members, other related bodies and the general public

- We elicit feedback, in various ways including our website, social media, newsletter and press releases, and interact with other like-minded bodies
- We collect donations from event organisers and other donors to improve and maintain the Ridgeway

2. Our ambition is for the whole of the Ridgeway to be free of non-essential motorised traffic.

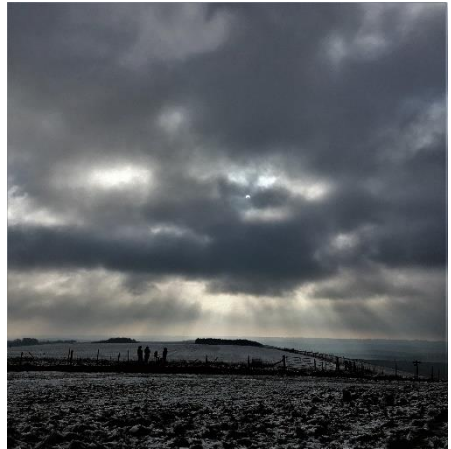
- We lobby highway authorities to extend current seasonal prohibitions of motor vehicles
- We encourage our members and the general public to report traffic issues on the Ridgeway to us, after which we inform the police, highway authorities and Ridgeway Partnership



3. We promote an appreciation of the Ridgeway and its natural and historic environment.

- We achieve this in various ways including the annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, our website, social media, newsletter and press releases

4. FoR is concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these features and their maximum appreciation by the public
 - We consider planning applications in the vicinity of the Ridgeway when these are brought to our attention, and submit comments to the respective district or county council, as appropriate
 - We selectively support other organisations and pressure groups that campaign against inappropriate developments in the vicinity of the Ridgeway
5. We promote the Great Chalk Way, a 360-mile series of trails along chalk ridges from the Dorset to Norfolk coasts, of which the Ridgeway National Trail is one.
 - We are a member of the Great Chalk Way (GCW) group, which comprises representatives of the constituent trails, and which works to promote the GCW as a whole
 - We are particularly active in respect of the Ridgeway, Cranbourne Drovers Way and the Sarsen Way, including route descriptions and waymarking
 - We communicate with our members and the general public through our website, social media and newsletter



Chair's report



Dear Friends,

In 2022 Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) was active on several fronts, including the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize; working with the Ridgeway Partnership, including providing financial support and working for a Ridgeway completely free of recreational motor vehicles; preparing for the 50th anniversary of the Ridgeway

National Trail in 2023; and continuing to develop the Great Chalk Way, for which Bill Bailey will be Patron.

During the year our President, Lord (Bill) William Peter Bradshaw, resigned. He was President for some 20 years and was of immense help when The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) was passing through Parliament and the House of Lords. Similarly he assisted the Friends of the Ridgeway when the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERCA) was progressing through both Houses. In addition, the Committee and Friends have been grateful for his wise counsel and support.

Jane Imbush and Nathan Boyd, two FoR Trustees, have succeeded Anthony Burdell as organisers of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. We thank Anthony for instigating the Arts Prize and establishing it as the major event in our calendar. We are also very fortunate to have recruited Elizabeth Turner as project manager for the exhibition, the seventh of which will be on April 22 and 23, 2023. We had over 90 entries in 2022 and expect another good raft of them in 2023. I do hope that you can come along to the exhibition and would ask you to spread the word to encourage your friends to attend. As always there will be tea and cakes available.



The Ridgeway National Trail is managed and promoted by the Ridgeway Partnership, described elsewhere in this report. As FoR Chair I represent FoR on the Board of the Partnership, and am a member of its Development Group. I have been liaising with Sarah Wright, the Partnership's Ridgeway Officer, on the 50th anniversary celebrations in 2023 of the Ridgeway National Trail's official opening in 1973.

The Friends conceived an activity, the RidgewaySpotter, which was developed further by Sarah Wright and Mary Tebbe of the Partnership. The essence of RidgewaySpotter is 12 topics or themes, one each month, that we encourage visitors to the Trail to embrace, to raise their awareness of what is about them. We paid a designer to produce a guide which is available via our and the Partnership's websites. We were fortunate that Wendy Tobitt, a volunteer with the Thames Path



National Trail, and a life member of FoR, offered to lead promotion of RidgewaySpotter using Facebook. We encourage people to take photos of what they see and to post them on social media with the hashtag #RidgewaySpotter. That will enable us to detect those posts so that we can respond to them and share photos and comments to the Friends' Facebook page and newsletter.

Details are at www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/ridgeway_anniversary2023

In addition to funding the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize and the RidgewaySpotter guide, FoR has part-funded, with Natural England, a people counter at Aldbury Nowers near the northern terminus of the Ridgeway. In addition we have contributed to the cost of recycled plastic finger arms that the Ridgeway Volunteers will be attaching to fingerposts along the Trail, and have committed financial support to an Historic Ridgeway project along with the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Historic England. Lucy Duerdoth, coordinator of the Ridgeway and Thames Trail Volunteers, raised £750 on behalf of FoR by seeking sponsorship for her run in the 100 kilometre 2022 Race to the Stones. It was oppressively hot on that weekend and Lucy's time of 14 hours 5 minutes placed her 49th



overall and 17th for women, which was very impressive.

Membership stands at 331 individuals plus 19 organisations. We continue to derive our income from membership subscriptions and donations.

Recently the Partnerships of all the National Trails in the UK got together to form the charity National Trails UK (NTUK). The Ridgeway Partnership's Chair, Simon Kearey, is a trustee of this. It is hoped that this organisation will have more clout than any of the Trail Partnerships on their own. This is an important step as we continue to work to achieve our objective for the whole of the Ridgeway to be free of non-essential motorised traffic.

Trustee Tim Lewis has continued working on the Great Chalk Way (GCG) steering committee, and has driven the design of an information board, to be placed at various points along the Way. The Swire Trust has kindly granted £1,500 towards the cost of purchasing and installing the boards and waymarks, and additional funding is being sought. The GCG is very fortunate to have Bill Bailey, musician, comedian and actor, and member of the Ridgeway Hall of Fame, as Patron.

The FoR trustees continue to meet quarterly at the Court Hill Centre, above Wantage, just 500 metres below the Ridgeway. We have committed to supporting the Whitehorse Hill Action Group against the potential development of Britchcombe Farm, Uffington, into a year-round static caravan park on the lower slopes of Whitehorse Hill. There has been no new information about this in the public domain for some time.



Duncan Strutt and several other trustees have worked with webmaster Ricky Cunningham to refresh our website. During the year, the 40th anniversary of the founding of FoR, our newsletter looked back, with the help of press cuttings from our archive, at our long fight to get recreational vehicles banned from the Ridgeway, which resulted in a large measure of success in the noughties. We also use Facebook to keep members abreast of Ridgeway matters.

Risk Policy

We have continued to develop our risk register ensuring that all relevant risks have been considered to assist us with our resilience.

Public Benefit

The Trustees confirm they have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the Friends of the Ridgeway. The trustees are confident that the charity's activities directly further its charitable purposes and provide clear benefits to its beneficiaries.

The Friends membership is open to all members of the public and enables us to ensure everyone can enjoy the experience and freedom of the Trail and the countryside. Friends are also kept up to date on news of the Trail through the quarterly newsletter and emails. These are kept to a minimum and sent directly to each Friend.



Notice of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

To be held at the village hall (Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall)
Uffington

On Sunday 23rd April 2022 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 (davecavanagh1000@gmail.com) by 14 full days before the AGM i.e. by 8 April.

Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize awards

The winners of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prizes will be awarded their prizes immediately after the AGM, which is 3.00 pm, on Sunday 23rd April. Entries to the competition will be on display in the hall from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd April. Refreshments, including drinks, sandwiches and cakes will be available on both days, and a complementary cream tea after the AGM and prize-giving.

Those who cannot get to Uffington for the Exhibition will be able to view all the artworks on the Friends of the Ridgeway website by Saturday 22 April.
<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2023/>

Treasurer's report for the year to 31st December 2022

The miniscule surplus this year could be considered to be evidence of the skilful managing of our resources, but in fact is due to a combination of other factors. Subscriptions returned to a more normal level after last year's surge of 80% due to new members joining, many of whom took out life membership. Donations also dropped considerably due to the absence of a donation from our major source of funding, but were swollen by the £750 contributed by Lucy Duerdoth's Race to the Stones' sponsorship. Gift Aid received was vastly in excess of last year's figure due to the change in accounting policy explained in last year's report, and the 80% increase in subscriptions last year.



Expenses incurred on the Swire Arts Prize returned to more or less the level they were at pre-Covid as we were delighted to be able to return to holding a physical exhibition this year, as well as a virtual one. Our support of the Ridgeway Partnership consisted of a grant of £1,124 for the installation of electronic counters at

the Ivinghoe Beacon end of the National Trail. Other expenditure did not change a lot from the previous year.

Tim Lewis *Treasurer*

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2002

	2022	2021
Current assets		
Bank accounts		
CAF bank current account	37,108	37,261
Deposits with United Trust Bank	25,279	25,105
Net assets	62,387	62,366
Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted – General Fund	30,658	28,456
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	16,076	16,218
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	12,186	14,225
Restricted – Great Chalk Way	3,467	3,467
	62,387	62,366

**Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31
December 2022**

	2022	2021
Income		
Subscriptions	1,681	2,875
Donations	1,625	3,333
Gift Aid received	706	14
Swire Arts Day sales commission	205	457
Interest earned	208	105
Total	4,425	6,784
Expenditure		
Ridgeway Partnership support	1,124	-
Swire Arts Prize set up & prizes	2,039	1,209
Newsletters/Annual report	345	272
Insurance	345	345
Race for the Stones entry fee	196	-
Website/IT costs	25	312
Great Chalk Way information board design	-	280
Meeting expenses	70	33
Bank charges	81	96
Publicity	133	105
Affiliation fees	36	36
Other	10	15
Total	4,404	2,703
Surplus for the year	21	4,081
Fund balances brought forward	62,366	58,285
Fund balances carried forward	62,387	62,366

Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

In 2017, following a generous donation from Sir Adrian Swire, the Friends of the Ridgeway created the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, an event held annually since then. The theme of the competition this year is 'Spirit of the Ridgeway'. It celebrates and draws attention to the artistic inspiration of the Ridgeway.

There are separate classes for

- wall art (including painting, drawing, etching, textile pictures and wall hangings, and mosaics)
- sculpture (including ceramics)
- photography (including digital art)
- writing (poetry or prose)

Each category winner receives a keeper prize plus £100. The overall winner receives a keeper prize plus £250 and a trophy.



This year the exhibition of the artworks is on the 22nd and 23rd of April in Uffington village hall (Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall) from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. Prizes will be awarded after the AGM which starts at 3.00 pm on Sunday 23. Most of the artworks, which will also be exhibited on the Friends website, are for sale.

www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2023/

The Ridgeway National Trail

The Ridgeway National Trail, which is 87 miles long, was officially opened as a National Trail in September 1973. Starting at Overton Hill, near Avebury in Wiltshire, the Trail runs along the North Wessex Downs, drops down to the Thames at Streatley, then continues north-eastwards through the Chilterns, rising to finish at Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire. Walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and disabled people using mobility scooters are drawn to the Trail's viewpoints, prehistoric monuments, nature reserves, pubs and more.



The phenomenon of off-road driving by motor vehicles and motor-bikes for recreational purposes during the 1960s led to wide-spread damage to unsurfaced tracks across the country, including the Ridgeway trail south of the Thames (Wessex section) which was particularly badly affected. Campaigning by Friends of the Ridgeway and others resulted in an Act of Parliament (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) which resulted in protection for some green lanes, including much of the Ridgeway, from non-essential motor traffic. All of the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire is banned to non-essential motor vehicles. The situation of the Ridgeway in Wiltshire is complex: a two-mile section above Bishopstone, to the north-east of the M4, is completely open to motor traffic. On the south-west side of the M4 one section of the Ridgeway is closed to four-wheeled vehicles, but not motor

bikes, for 12 months of the year, and others are closed to all non-essential motor vehicles for six months ('winter'). There is also a section in Berkshire that is closed to motor vehicles for six months.

An illustrative map showing the status of the various sections of the Ridgeway with respect to non-essential motorised traffic can be seen on two leaflets available on the Ridgeway National Trail's website www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/

In meetings of the Ridgeway Partnership (described below) Board during 2022 we in FoR argued in favour of escalating the Ridgeway's motor traffic problem up to National Trails UK (NTUK). This is a charity recently formed by the Partnerships of all the National Trails in the UK. The Ridgeway Partnership's Chair, Simon Kearey, is a trustee of NTUK. It is hoped that this umbrella organisation will have more clout than an individual Trail Partnership. NTUK will deliver its charitable objects "through advocacy, liaising with government and working with relevant departments on long-term policy and strategy for the National Trails." Our aim is that NTUK will take up the issue of unnecessary vehicles on some of the National Trails with a view to it lobbying government. As a first step, the Ridgeway Partnership's Trail Officer will contact her counterparts to find out which other Trails have sections of 'byways open to all traffic', and then seek to work in concert with them.

2023 is the 50th anniversary of the Ridgeway becoming a National Trail



It was in 1973 that the Ridgeway was recognised as a National Trail. 50th anniversary celebrations have been organised for 2023 by the Ridgeway Partnership. The Friends of the

Ridgeway devised a monthly activity, called #RidgewaySpotter, which is described elsewhere in this report.

The Ridgeway Partnership

The Ridgeway Partnership has managed and promoted the Ridgeway National Trail since its inception in 2015. The Partners include all the local authorities along the route, the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR), The North Wessex Downs AONB, the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Chiltern Society, the Ramblers, the British Horse Society, the Disabled Ramblers, the Country Landowners Association, and more. www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/about-us/the-ridgeway-partnership/



The FoR is a founding Partner and played a major role in establishing the Partnership. Indeed Ian Ritchie and Jeff Goddard, Chair and Secretary, respectively, of FoR at the time were the first to hold those roles for the Ridgeway Partnership. The current chair is Simon Kearey.

Sarah Wright, the Ridgeway Officer, energetically drives forward the Partnership's objectives, and Lucy Duerdoth manages the volunteers who do much of the maintenance work on the Ridgeway and on the Thames Path National Trail.

Natural England provides a grant towards core costs of the Partnership, alongside lesser amounts from local authorities. Donations from event organisers along the Ridgeway and others augment those funds. From time to time the Friends of the Ridgeway donates money to support specific activities.

Three of the Ridgeway Volunteers after erecting a new fingerpost



The Ridgeway is part of a much longer series of connected trails (360 miles in length) which stretch from the Dorset coast at Lyme Regis along chalk ridges to the Norfolk coast at Holme-next-the-Sea: the Great Chalk Way (GCW).

Tim is in the process of commissioning the production of the information boards, illustrated below, and discussing with the relevant landowners where they can be erected. Fundraising to pay for the manufacture and installation of the information boards is now in progress – all donations welcome!



Bill Bailey has agreed to having a ceremonial role as Patron of the GCW. We aim to open the Great Chalk Way officially in 2024 at the Dunstable Downs visitors centre.

Tim has written an introductory article on the GCW in the Winter (January) 2022 issue of our newsletter, which you can download from our website www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/about-us/newsletters/, and has recently updated the description of the GCW on our website www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/the-trail/.

The GCW has its own dedicated website www.greatchalkway.org.uk/ from which the map of the trail, created by Tom Chevalier, was used as the starting point of the information board shown above.

How you can help

JOIN US, if you are not already a member. There is a 'join us' link on the homepage of our website www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/

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 other users and is an offence.



All of the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire is restricted byway, so all non-essential motor vehicles are banned. The situation of the Ridgeway in Wiltshire and in parts of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire is complex (as described the earlier Ridgeway National Trail section of this report). The best and simplest way to see the status of each section of the Ridgeway is look at the excellent annotated map in one or other of two leaflets available on the

Ridgeway National Trail's website www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/

If you witness prohibited vehicles on the Ridgeway you can report it to the police. Alternatively you could report the incident to Friends of the Ridgeway

using the Contacts Page on our website or post on our Facebook page, and we'll pass your observations along. If you have photographs, so much the better. www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/

FLY-TIPPING is anti-social and spoils the environment. Report it to your local Council, or let us know about it, and we'll pass the message on.



Who's who in Friends of the Ridgeway

Patron	Sir Chris Bonington
President	Vacant. Lord (Bill) William Peter Bradshaw retired in 2022.
Vice-presidents	MPs through whose constituency the Ridgeway runs: Robert Buckland MP (South Swindon) Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury) Laura Farris MP (Newbury) John Howell MP MP (Henley) David Johnston MP (Didcot and Wantage) Danny Kruger MP (Devizes) Gagan Mohindra MP (South West Hertfordshire) Greg Smith MP (Buckingham)

Trustees (to 23rd April 2023)

Mike Lewington	Chair
Dave Cavanagh	Secretary and Newsletter Editor
Tim Lewis	Treasurer and Membership Secretary
Nathan Boyd	Trustee
Jim Gunter	Trustee
Jane Imbush	Trustee
Edward Peveler	Trustee
Duncan Strutt	Trustee
Webmaster	Ricky Cunningham

To contact Friends of the Ridgeway use the Contact Us page on our website
www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk

