



Charity no: 1107926

Annual Report and Financial Statements

Year Ended 31st December 2023

Legal and administrative information

Registered Charity Number – 1107925

Trustees

Chair – Michael Lewington

Treasurer – Tim Lewis

Secretary – Carl Moffat – Appointed April 2023

Trustee – Jane Imbush

Trustee - Nathan Boyd

Trustee – Duncan Strutt

Trustee – Dave Cavanagh

Trustee – Vacancy

President – Vacancy

Examiner

Mr Stephen Sherman

9 Ebner Street

London

SW18 1BT

Bankers

CAF Bank

25 Kings Hill Avenue

Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent/

ME19 4JQ

Lloyds Bank

33 Old Broad Street

London

EC2N 3AH

Website – <https://www.ridgewayfriend.org.uk>

Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheRidgeway>

Friends of the Ridgeway Mission Statement

The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) is an independent charity 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.

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 objectives 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.

Constituent trails of the Great Chalk Way from the Dorset to Norfolk coasts: Wessex Ridgeway (66 miles), Sarsen Way via Salisbury (34.5 miles), Cranbourne Drovers Way (16.5 miles), the Ridgeway National Trail (87 miles), Icknield Way (110 miles), and Peddars Way National Trail (49 miles).

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 also concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these objectives 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 local 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, 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 2023

Dear Friends,

In 2023 Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) remained active on several fronts, including the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize; working with the Ridgeway Partnership, including providing financial support. We have commitments to contribute just under £3,500 to the Arts Council England Ridgeway Photo 50 project towards the display boards, and £5,000 for the information boards to the Historic England project. We contributed financially to the 50th celebrations on Coombe Hill, sponsoring the sword-making event and some logistic supporting requirements. The water fountain to which we had previously contributed is due to be fitted on the Ridgeway at Sparsholt Firs later this year. We continue to work with a variety of organisations including the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) to achieve a Ridgeway completely free of recreational motor vehicles.

The 2023 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, attended by over 250, people was an outstanding success with 49 artists and almost 100 pieces of work, with more works sold than in previous years. This year the theme for the arts prize is 'Signs and Symbols along the Ridgeway'. This includes aspects of the natural world, people and man-made things, and of course the Ridgeway has an ancient history of its own with signs and symbols of peoples' long past who have left indelible inspiration on or near the trail.

I do hope that you can come along to the exhibition at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington on 27th and 28th April. I would ask you to spread the word to encourage your friends to attend. As always there will be tea and cakes available.

2023 was the 50th Anniversary of the trail. The launch event was a walk led by Mary-Ann Ochota, our 50th Anniversary Patron, from Avebury to the Sanctuary at Overton Hill.



Photo: Courtesy Mary Tebje

Throughout the year we published on social media and on the National Trails website the weekly Ridgeway Top 50, a **year-long treasure hunt revealing the rich history, wildlife, art, farming, sport and landmarks of The Ridgeway**. It was designed to offer something new and free for everyone to enjoy online and to inspire ideas for days out and longer trips to the Trail during 2023 and beyond. The Top 50 provided facts and information on a range of topics - **the oldest monument, the rarest flower, the famous writers, the mysterious druids and more**.

The Ridgeway Spotter was a series of monthly challenges free of charge and easy to do; it only required a visit to the trail to see what you can spot. The year started in January with Stone Stories, through to April with the arrival of birds and the singing Ridgeway through to December with winter secrets.

50 years ago on 29th September 1973, people gathered on Coombe Hill near Wendover in Buckinghamshire for the formal opening of The Ridgeway as a National Trail. Therefore it was fitting that the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Event was held on the 29th September 2023 at Coombe Hill.



Photo: Courtesy Mary Tebje

We closed off the year in December, meeting at Ivinghoe Beacon to form a “50” captured from above by a drone and a walk along the Ridgeway for lunch to the village. You can view the short video made by Hedley Thorne on YouTube. Type “The Ridgeway Volunteers on Ivinghoe Beacon: 50th Anniversary” into your search engine.



Photo: Courtesy Mary Tebje

Membership

Membership stands at 336 life and annual members plus 18 organisations. We continue to derive our income from membership subscriptions and donations.

Risk Policy

We have continued to develop our risk register ensuring that all risk assessments 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 satisfied and 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 magazine and emails which are kept to a minimum and sent directly to each Friend.

The Great Chalk Way

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. As a result of a private donation we have the funds to order the first eight initial boards. The final proofs are almost agreed and the initial information boards will be installed at:

Relevant long distance trail	Location
Peddars Way National Trail	Under discussion
End of Peddars Way NT Start of Icknield Way Path	Knettishall Heath
Icknield Way Path	Dunstable Downs Visitors' Centre
End of Icknield Way Path Start of Ridgeway National Trail	Ivinghoe Beacon car park
End of Ridgeway NT Start of Sarsen Way	Overton Hill car park
End of Sarsen Way Start of Cranborne Doves Way	Tarmac path off Crane St., Salisbury
End of Cranborne Doves Way Start of Wessex Ridgeway	Ashcombe estate, next to Win Green
End of Wessex Ridgeway	Lyme Regis sea front, next to map of Jurassic Coast

This is a great achievement and the steering committee is planning to hold the launch event in September 2024. We are very fortunate to have Bill Bailey, musician, comedian and actor, and member of the Ridgeway Hall of Fame, as Patron.



Great Chalk Way Report for FoR AGM 2023

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).

The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) played a prominent role in the formation of the GCW. In recent years our treasurer, Tim Lewis, has taken the project forward on behalf of the FoR, including waymarking sections of it (the Cranborne Doves Way and the Sarsen Way). He will be walking the Wessex Ridgeway in the summer to check on any problems, and to check that the waymarking and the directions on the website are still accurate.

Tim has worked with Abby George to design information boards for the termini of each of the several trails that form the 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. They will act as an introduction to the next component trail of the GCW. Progress on this has unfortunately been slower than anticipated but the aim is to have the initial boards in place by the middle of 2024. The intention is to place additional information boards at strategic places along the GCW if adequate funding to do this can be raised.

Bill Bailey has agreed to have a ceremonial role as Patron of the GCW. We aim to open the Great Chalk Way officially later in 2024 at the Dunstable Downs Visitors Centre, but this may prove to be optimistic.

The GCW has its own dedicated website, www.greatchalkway.org.uk, from which the map of the trail was used as the starting point of the information board shown above. The website was created by Tom Chevalier, Chair of the Icknield Way Association, one of the partners of the FoR in the creation of the GCW. The other partners are Norfolk County Council (for the Peddars Way National Trail) and Dorset Council (for the Wessex Ridgeway).

2023 AGM Minutes

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 3 pm on Sunday 23 April 2023

- 1 **Apologies:** No apologies were received.
- 2 **Minutes:**
 - 2.1 The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 3 April 2022 had been circulated to members.
 - 2.2 To approve the Minutes of the last AGM
There were no comments on the Minutes which were APPROVED by all.
 - 2.3 **Matters Arising:** No matters arising were raised.
- 3 **Treasurers Report and Annual Accounts:**
 - 3.1 The accounts had been circulated to all members as part of the Annual Review by post and by email attached to the notification of the AGM.
 - 3.2 To approve the accounts set out in the Annual Review. - APPROVED by all.

- 3.3 To approve reappointment of Steve Sherman as independent examiner
APPROVED by all.
- 3.4 A question was asked from the floor about the omission from the AGM papers of the independent examiner's report on the accounts. The Treasurer replied that its omission was an oversight.
- 4 Election of President and Vice-Presidents**
- 4.1 We currently do not have a President and the Vice Presidents are MPs through whose constituency The Ridgeway National Trail runs. These are Robert Buckland MP (South Swindon), Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury), Laura Farris MP (Newbury), John Howell MP (Henley), David Johnston MP (Didcot and Wantage), Danny Kruger MP (Devizes), Gagan Mohindra MP (South West Hertfordshire) and Greg Smith (Buckingham).
- 4.2 To approve election of the Vice Presidents. - APPROVED by all
- 5 Election of Officers and Committee Members/Trustees**
- 5.1 Ed Peveler had stood down as a member of the committee. The following were standing for election as Executive Committee Members/Trustees. As the number of candidates was equal to the maximum number of trustees allowed they were proposed as a single slate of candidates to be voted in. The candidates were (in alphabetical order): Nathan Boyd, Dave Cavanagh, Jim Gunter, Jane Imbush, Tim Lewis (Treasurer), Mike Lewington (Chair), Carl Moffat (Secretary) and Duncan Strutt.
- 5.2 To Approve those standing for election - APPROVED by all.
- 6 Other Business**
- 5.3 The Chair thanked Wendy Tobitt for her extensive posting on Facebook, including promotion of the Friends activity #RidgewaySpotter and the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. He also thanked Nathan Boyd, Jane Imbush and Elizabeth Turner for their work on the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize this year.
- 5.4 There being no other business, the AGM was declared closed and the Chair thanked everyone for their participation.

The AGM for 2023 meeting closed at 3.15 pm 23rd April 2023

Friends of the Ridgeway
Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023
Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
Income		
Subscriptions	2,417	1,681
Donations	2,929	1,625
Gift Aid received	522	706
Swire Arts Day sales commission	740	205
Interest earned	890	208
Total	7,498	4,425
Expenditure		
Ridgeway Partnership support	2,186	1,124
Swire Arts Prize set up & prizes	2,803	2,039
50 th anniversary expenses	1,214	-
Annual report	249	345
Insurance	151	345
Race for the Stones entry fee	-	196
Website/IT costs	-	25
Prizes for scout endurance event	98	-
Great Chalk Way	752	-
Meeting expenses	138	70
Donations	130	
Bank charges	78	81
Publicity	-	133
Affiliation fees	36	36
SumUp machine	52	-
Other	11	10
Total	7,898	4,404
Deficit/surplus for the year	(400)	21
Fund balances brought forward	62,387	62,366
Fund balances carried forward	61,987	62,387

Friends of the Ridgeway
Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023
Balance Sheet at 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
Current assets		
Bank accounts		
Lloyds bank account	29,536	-
CAF bank account	6,226	37,108
Deposits with United Trust Bank	26,225	25,279
Net assets	61,987	62,387
Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted – General Fund	34,170	30,658
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	14,225	16,076
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	9,377	12,186
Restricted – Great Chalk Way	4,215	3,467
	61,987	62,387

Independent Examination

The balance sheet and the accounts were approved by the Independent Examiner Stephen Sherman on 16 February 2024.

Treasurer's report for the year ended 31 December 2023

As can be seen, 2023 was a more active year than 2022, with both income and expenditure almost doubling and managing to produce only a small deficit. Subscriptions were swollen by 7 new life or joint life members. Donations would have been similar to last year, but we were fortunate to benefit from a £1,500 donation from the Adrian Swire Foundation to help pay for information boards along the Great Chalk Way. It was our best year to date for commission on paintings and sculptures sold at the Swire Arts Prize exhibition, which seems to be gaining in popularity every year. And interest earned on our deposits with the United Trust Bank made a very worthwhile contribution to our coffers.

Donations to the Ridgeway Partnership returned to a more normal level, with funds being provided for new signage, and a water fountain at Sparsholt Firs. The 50th anniversary expenses were clearly a one off, and they were incurred mainly on the sword-making event and portaloos. The Great Chalk Way expenses were for amending the design of, and buying photos for, the information boards, together with the creation of waymarks for the Sarsen Way.

Our total reserves have only decreased by £400, as evidenced by our deficit for the year, although of course the individual reserve balances have changed, with decreases in the Ridgeway National Trail and Swire Arts Exhibitions reserves being almost compensated for by increases in the General Fund and Great Chalk Way reserves.