



Charity no: 1107926

**Annual Report and Financial Statements
Year Ending 31st December 2024**

Legal and administrative information

Registered Charity Number – 1107925

Trustees

Chair – Michael Lewington

Treasurer – Tim Lewis

Secretary – Carl Moffat

Trustee – Jane Imbush

Trustee - Nathan Boyd

Trustee – Duncan Strutt

Trustee – Dave Cavanagh

Trustee – Vacancy

President – Vacancy

Examiners / Auditors

Mr Stephen Sherman

9 Ebner Street

London

SW18 1BT

Bankers

Lloyds Bank

33 Old Broad Street

London

EC2N 3AH

CAF Bank

25 Kings Hill Avenue

Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent

ME19 4JQ

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
- The FoR is concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these features and their maximum appreciation by the public.
- To 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 (35 miles), Cranborne Doves Way (51 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. The FoR is also 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 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.

- 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 way marking.
- We communicate with our members and the general public through our website, social media and newsletter.

Chairs Report

Dear Friends,

In 2024 Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) continued to work with the Ridgeway Partnership, including providing financial support. We welcomed the new Ridgeway National Trail officer Ian Black who succeeded Sarah Wright.

In October, in partnership with the Icknield Way Association the Great Chalk Way (GCW) was officially launched. This was the culmination of an concept started in 2007 and 10 years later the first meeting of the GCW Working Group took place. The 400-mile GCW is the sum total of six established long-distance paths that stretch along chalk hills between the English Channel at Lyme Regis, Dorset and the North Sea at Holme-next-the-Sea in Norfolk. Ten information boards, example below will be placed along the route between Lyme Regis and Holme-next-the-Sea.



We continue to support the Historic England project launched in October 2023 which covers the Ridgeway from Asbury in the west to Wallingford. It is largely funded by Historic England, with match contributions from the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB), Oxfordshire County Council and The Friends of the Ridgeway.

In 2024, volunteers from Wallingford Green Gym cleared vegetation from around the trig point along a section of Grims' Ditch near Mongewell in south Oxfordshire; the views across the Berkshire Downs and the Chiltern Hills had become obscured. Historic England had previously put this stretch of Grim's Ditch on their Heritage at Risk Register.

The Thursday Night Crew from Ridgeway Cycles in Wantage cut back dogwood growing around the Lord Wantage Monument, which conceals a Bronze Age Barrow. This work part of the Historic Ridgeway Project, aims to reveal hidden ancient monuments like the Bronze Age Barrow.

On the 75th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949, a team of Ridgeway National Trail volunteers, with Hayley Gray from the Historic Ridgeway Project and Sophie Aziz the National Trail's project coordinator, repaired the Trail's surface at the entrance to Scutchamer Knob. The area is now visible to view from the trail rather than being hidden under significant low level growth. In 2025, it is intended to improve disabled access to the site and erect an information board. Dan Bashford (Historic Ridgeway Project Manager) has given a number of lectures and presentations covering all aspects of the historic Ridgeway

The first phase of the Arts Council England Ridgeway Photo 50 project is complete. The production of the display boards should be completed in 2025 and FoR is contributing just under £3,500 to the display boards. The second phase is organised by the Sharp Shots Photo Club who offer teens and kids photography courses and workshops. Two Workshops were run at Ivinghoe Beacon where children photographing the landscape, sheep, frosted grasses and each other for the Ridgeway50 photo project, inspired by the Matt Writtle photos. In addition to the twenty five photos by Matt, a further 25 taken by the children will also be selected for the display boards.

The Friends of the Ridgeway was set up to protect the Ridgeway National Trail from being damaged by off-road vehicles. After 25 years of campaigning, the Friends of the Ridgeway's objective for the Ridgeway to be free of recreational vehicles (including motor cycles) was achieved for Oxfordshire in 2006. Local highway authorities closed most of the remaining byway sections in Wiltshire and West Berkshire to traffic in the winter, to protect them from the worst rutting and quagmires. We continue to campaign for the winter traffic restrictions to be extended all year.

The 2024 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, attended by over 250, people was an outstanding success with 49 artists and over 110 pieces of work. For 2025, the theme for the arts prize is 'Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway'

Membership

Membership stands at 323 life and annual members plus 17 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.

Friends of the Ridgeway

Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024

Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
Income	£	£
Subscriptions	1,540	2,417
Donations	5,241	2,929
Gift Aid received	522	522
Swire Arts Prize Day sales commission	326	740
Interest earned	1,338	890
Other income	20	-
Total	8,987	7,498
Expenditure		
Ridgeway Partnership support	-	2,186
Swire Arts Prize Day costs & prizes	2,526	2,803
50 th anniversary expenses	-	1,214
Great Chalk Way official opening (net)/expenses	1,596	-
GCW information boards/other expenses	2,949	752
Annual report	163	249
Insurance	151	151
Website/IT costs	29	-
Prizes for scout endurance event	-	98
Ridgeway mugs	210	-
Meeting expenses	118	138
Donations	-	130
Bank charges	60	78
Publicity	55	-
Affiliation fees	36	36
SumUp charges/purchase of machine	23	52
Other	43	11
Total	7,959	7,898
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	1,028	(400)
Fund balances brought forward	61,987	62,387
Fund balances carried forward	63,015	61,987

Friends of the Ridgeway

Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
Current assets	£	£
Bank accounts		
Lloyds bank account	15,126	29,536
CAF bank account	329	6,226
Deposits with United Trust Bank	47,560	26,225
Net assets	63,015	61,987
Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted – General Fund	38,118	34,170
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	15,450	14,225
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	6,828	9,377
Restricted – Great Chalk Way	2,619	4,215
	63,015	61,987

Independent Examination

The balance sheet that the accounts were approved by the Independent Examiner Stephen Sherman 3 February 2025.

Treasurer's report for the year ended 31 December 2024

As can be seen, we made a surplus in 2024 of £1,028, compared with a deficit of £400 in 2023. This is due to a number of factors.

Subscriptions were down by £877, which is attributed to the unusually high number of new life members in 2023, and natural wastage/non-renewal of subscriptions. Donations were hugely inflated by the donation by Tim Lewis of £2,949 to cover the cost of three GCW information boards. Without this, donations would have been down by £637, explained by the fact that we did not receive a donation from the Swire Trust in 2024.

Swire Arts Prize Day commission was less than half the previous year's amount, which had been a record for the event. This was more than made up for by an increase in interest earned of £488, which was due to better interest rates and the addition of another £20,000 to the amount on deposit.

On the expense side, we made no donations to the Ridgeway Partnership this year (£2,186 in 2023), and did not have the expense of the 50th anniversary celebrations (£1,214 in 2023). The Friends shared the costs of the official opening of the Great Chalk Way in October with the Icknield Way Association (£1,596 after the IWA had paid its half share of the costs) and the cost of constructing the information boards (£2,949), compared with GCW related costs

last year (waymarks and info board expenses) of £752. The Swire Arts Prize Day costs decreased by £277. Other variances were negligible.

These variances have led to an increase in the General Fund of almost £4,000, and a decrease in the Swire Arts Prize Day restricted fund of approximately £2,500. The decrease in the GCW restricted fund of £1,600 was partially compensated for by an increase in the Ridgeway restricted fund of roughly half that amount.

The FoR has committed, £5,000 to the Historic England project for information boards and £3,500 for the Ridgeway Photo 50 project.

Friends of the Ridgeway AGM Minutes held on 1 May 2024 (subject to approval)

1 **Apologies:** Apologies were received from eight members

2 **Minutes:**

2.1 The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall Uffington on 23 April 2023 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.

4 **Election of President and Vice-Presidents**

4.1 The position of Our President is vacant 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 President and Vice Presidents

APPROVED by all

5 **Election of Officers and Committee Members/Trustees**

5.1 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, Jane Imbush, Tim Lewis (Treasurer), Mike Lewington (Chair), Carl Moffatt (Secretary) and Duncan Strutt.

5.2 To Approve those standing for election

APPROVED by all.

6 **Other Business**

6.1 There being no other business, the AGM was declared closed and the Chair thanked everyone for their participation.

7 The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.