



**Charity no: 1107926**

**Annual Report and Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025**

## **Legal and administrative information**

**Registered Charity Number – 1107925**

### **Trustees**

**Chair – Michael Lewington**

**Treasurer – Tim Lewis**

**Secretary – Vacancy**

**Trustee – Nathan Boyd**

**Trustee - Dave Cavanagh**

**Trustee – Wendy Tobitt**

**Trustee – Duncan Strutt**

**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**

## **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 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. 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.

## Chair's Report

Dear Friends,

In 2025 Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) continued to work with the Ridgeway Partnership, including providing financial support.

### Historic Ridgeway Project

The Historic Ridgeway project has continued to make significant progress. At least a dozen different groups of volunteers have worked at Grim's Ditch, Scutchamer Knob, Wayland's Smithy, and the Lord Wantage Monument, as listed below. Some groups have worked several 'shifts'. These include:

Ministry of Defence Staff, Shrivenham  
Vale and South Oxfordshire District  
Councils  
Faringdon Young Farmers  
Oxfordshire Young Farmers  
Ridgeway Cycles, Wantage  
Tfd Health & Fitness, Grove

Ridgeway & Thames Path Volunteers  
Cuckhamsley Scout Troop  
Ramblers Vale Path Volunteers  
Sustainability Team of Grundons  
Wallingford Green Gym  
King Alfred's School Scout Troop, Wantage

### Scutchamer Knob.

In the first quarter the major task was the clearance and access improvements to Scutchamer Knob. Although the entrance is only a few metres from the Ridgeway, it was very easy to walk past it without noticing that it is there. This is in part because the Knob was covered in scrub.

It is one of the Historic Ridgeway Project’s objectives, funded by Historic England, to remove the scrub by continually cutting it back to a short grass sward to what it would look like if sheep grazed it.

A couple of days before the clearance Hayley, Sophie Aziz, coordinator of the Ridgeway and Thames Trail National Trails Volunteers, represented by Martin and Roger on the day and Friends of the Ridgeway trustee Dave Cavanagh, completed the task of filling depressions in the Ridgeway with crushed limestone. These were at the entrance to the Knob, in the parking area, and in between. The Vale of White Horse Ramblers has spent nine sessions cutting down vegetation on and around the Knob, and will continue doing so. The new interpretation board funded by the FoR has been completed and will be installed in the near future.



**Wayland’s Smithy**

Over a six-month or so period the approach from the Ridgeway to the ancient long barrow at Wayland’s Smithy was transformed by removal of 300 metres of the hedgerow, so that Wayland’s Smithy and its surrounding woodland is now clearly visible. The remains of the hedgerow were used to construct a dead hedge, providing habitat for wildlife. This was achieved by the hard work of over a hundred volunteers led by Hayley Gray, the Historic Ridgeway Project volunteer coordinator. 1500 hedging whips have been planted in front of the dead hedge, and will be maintained by volunteers.



The Friends of the Ridgeway awarded the ‘Best Dead-Hedge’ trophy to the girls’ team of Skye, Grace, Tara, Ivy, Annie and Eloise from Faringdon Junior Young Farmers’ Club.

Earlier in the year groups from Ridgeway Cycles and tfd Health & Fitness in Grove made excellent impact on the shrubs growing around the Lord Wantage Monument. The work was completed by the Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteers.

A group from the sustainability team at Grundon, the waste management company, spent their volunteering day with Hayley on Grim’s Ditch near Mongewell carefully clearing selected sections of vegetation from the Scheduled Monument which is on the Heritage at Risk register. Another group of Ministry of Defence staff from Shrivenham spent their annual volunteering day making an impressively neat and tidy dead-hedge at Wayland’s Smithy.



Some of the Grundon team led by Toni Robinson working on Grim’s Ditch. Photo Wendy Tobitt



Ministry of Defence staff at Wayland’s Smithy. Photo Hayley Gray

**Great Chalk Way**

With the launch in 2024 the focus this year has been the installation of the information boards. These have included Overton Hill installed in January 2025, Salisbury (pictures below) and Park Copse in March 2025. Tim Lewis has published downloadable walk directions for the route from Lyme Regis to Overton Hill on the websites of the [Great Chalk Way](#) and the [Long Distance Walkers Association](#).



Tim Lewis (left) with the National Trust Rangers and the newly installed GCW information board. Photo Jim Gunter.



The photo shows Tim, left, with Mark Annetts (Parks Officer for Salisbury Council) alongside the new GCW information board on the path beside the river Avon between Crane Bridge and the Kings Head pub in Salisbury – one end of the Sarsen Way.

**Ridgeway 50 Photos**

The Ridgeway 50 Photos project was devised by professional photographer Matt Writtle with Sarah Wright, who was then the Ridgeway National Trail officer, as part of the Trail’s 50th anniversary. Matt took hundreds of photos of the landscape along the Ridgeway

National Trail, many of them were used by the children in the workshops. He later published a photobook 'Pathways: "A Photographic Journey Along The Ridgeway"' and chose 25 photos to be displayed along the Ridgeway. Thirteen of the twenty five photo boards have been installed. Roger Baker the trail volunteer co-ordinator has been doing great work with the volunteers, and we are continuing to see the installations progress across the Trail.

The Chilterns Society has installed the board at Whiteleaf Cross. Funding was secured for the printing costs for the children's photos thanks to a generous donation by the Friends of the Ridgeway.



One of Matt's photos. This one is located at the parking area where the Ridgeway crosses the road that leads to East Hendred just 100 metres or so from Scutchamer Knob, the Iron Age National Monument.

The culmination of the free school workshops led by Lillian Spibey, of Sharp Shots Photo Club was a 3-week exhibition from 19th October to 9th November 2025 at the Queen's Park Arts Centre in Aylesbury. Photographs of particular merit were chosen by Lillian, Matt Writtle and the patron of the Ridgeway National Trail, Mary-Ann Ochota. The young photographers attending the opening received certificates and a goody bag from the online outdoor retailer - Alpkit who generously donated some rucksacks and outdoor kit for the children.



**The award winners with Lillie Spibey, professional photographer Matt Writtle and Mary-Ann Ochota. Photo Lillie Spibey.**

**The Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteers.**

The Oxford University project between Bury Down and Scutchamer Knob led by plant scientist Prof Lindsay Turnbull from the Dept of Biology continues. Its purpose is to assess the

effectiveness of different management of plots which have been sown with chalk grassland species. Some plots are mown and raked, others just mown, and others left with no management.



**Mowing and raking the experimental wildflower plots alongside the Ridgeway National Trail in September. Photo Wendy Tobitt**

**Water Bottle Filling Stations.** The water bottle filling station donated by the Friends of the Ridgeway has been installed at the National Nature Reserve at Aston Rowant to replace the current water tap. The tap at Sparsholt Firs has been excavated to well below the frost line, insulated underground and replaced with an insulated timber housing to keep the cold out and ensure supply throughout the winter.

In 2026, The Ridgeway Officer is looking to reinstate the watering point just east of the A34, thought to be on the Dyson Estate. Once we have landowner permission and we can confirm the water supply is functioning, a similar housing to that at Sparsholt Firs will be installed.

#### **4x4 Vehicle Access**

In partnership with the Green Lane Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) the FoR continues to campaign to prevent recreational 4x4 access to the trail. In 2025, West Berkshire Council installed a 1.6m width restriction on the west entrance to the A34 underpass to restrict access by vehicles along the route which is known to be used for criminal activity. National Trails UK have agreed to lobby government to implement a National Trails wide ban on 4x4 use and have stated their support of our cause in July 2025. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature called for evidence. Their response can be found here: <https://www.nationaltrails.uk/news/ntuk-responds-to-appg-call-for-evidence>. Freddie van Mierlo, MP for Henley and Thame secured a debate in Westminster on the funding and lack of legal protection afforded to the National Trails.

We limited our response to just one of the APPG's questions: [how to] Enable more people to make use of existing access opportunities (including open access and public rights of way). The thrust of our remarks was that we believe that a change in the law is required to keep recreational motor vehicles off all National Trails and, indeed, off all byways on which their

use is currently legal, including Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) and unsealed unclassified roads. We were disappointed with the APPG's comments and recommendations regarding recreational motor vehicles on National Trails and other public rights of way. The full report can be found at <https://outdoors.inparliament.uk/outdoors-all-report>.

### **Circular Pub Walks.**

The GPX files have been uploaded and are now available on the National Trail website. These can be found at [https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/the-ridgeway-circular-and-linear-walks/](https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/the-ridgeway-circular-and-linear-walks/). Thank you to Tim Lewis (FoR Treasurer) for the work to secure permissions to reproduce the walks and in checking the routes.

### **Membership**

Membership stands at 323 life and annual members plus 17 organisations. We continue to derive our income mainly 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 our 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 2025

#### Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2025

	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Subscriptions	1,494	1,540
Donations	1,795	5,241
Gift Aid received	1,081	522
Swire Arts Prize Day sales commission	620	326
Swire Arts Prize Entry fee	590	
Interest earned	2,330	1,338
Other income	27	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,937</b>	<b>8,987</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Ridgeway Partnership support	3,528	2,526
Swire Arts Prize Day costs & prizes	1,934	-
50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary expenses	2,406	1,596
Great Chalk Way official opening (net)/expenses	-	2,949
GCW information boards/other expenses	936	163
Annual report	-	151
Insurance	151	29
Website/IT costs	60	-
Ridgeway mugs	160	210
Meeting expenses	160	118
Bank charges	60	60
Publicity	-	55
Affiliation fees	36	36
SumUp charges/purchase of machine	43	23
Other	23	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,337</b>	<b>7,959</b>
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(1,400)	1,028
Fund balances brought forward	63,015	61,987
Fund balances carried forward	61,615	63,015

**Friends of the Ridgeway**  
**Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025**  
**Balance Sheet at 31 December 2025**

	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Current assets</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bank accounts		
Lloyds bank account	17,955	15,126
CAF bank account	50	329
Deposits with United Trust Bank	49,072	47,560
Net assets	<b>67,077</b>	<b>63,015</b>
<b>Represented by Funds</b>		
Unrestricted – General Fund	43,284	38,118
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	15,450	15,450
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	5,724	6,828
Restricted – Great Chalk Way	2,619	2,619
	<b>67,077</b>	<b>63,015</b>

**Independent Examination**

The accounts were approved by the Independent Examiner Stephen Sherman on 26 January 2026.

**Treasurer’s report for the year ended 31 December 2025**

The deficit for the year of £1,400 was caused by the funding the Friends supplied for the Historic England Project (£3,528) and the Sharp Shots Exhibition (£1,934) at the request of the Ridgeway Partnership. Both projects had been ongoing for several months, hence the lack of any payments made to the Ridgeway Partnership in 2024, but they concluded late in 2025.

The marked decline in donations received, from £5,241 to £1,795 was largely due to donations received last year to fund the construction of three Great Chalk Way (GCW) information boards, amounting to almost £3,000. This was a one off expense which was covered by the donations.

Another significant figure in this year’s accounts is interest received of £2,330. This is almost £1,000 up on last year’s figure because we now have three deposits with the United Trust Bank totalling £49,072. The increase in our unrestricted General Fund of £3,232 was more than cancelled out by the decrease in the restricted Ridgeway National Trail fund of £3,528.

This year we have not suffered the GCW official opening expenses of £1,596, and GCW information boards and associated expenses have gone down by £2,013. Further our commission on the sale of art at the Swire Arts Prize exhibition almost doubled (from £326

to £620) We also received a surprising £590 from the £5 entry fee for each exhibit, which was the first time we had charged such a fee. And finally Gift Aid received more than doubled. This was due in large part to Gift Aid received on the one off donations.

**Friends of the Ridgeway 2025 AGM Minutes held on Zoom at 18.30 on 10 June 2025  
(subject to approval)**

1     **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Richard Duggan, Brian Worrell, Jean Louden, Carl Moffatt and CPRE.

2     **Minutes:**

2.1    The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Zoom on Wednesday 1 May 2024 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 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. To approve election of the President and Vice Presidents. These are Danny Kruger MP (East Wiltshire), Heidi Alexander MP (South Swindon), Charlie Maynard MP (Witney), Olly Glover MP (Didcot and Wantage), Olivia Bailey MP (Reading West & Mid Berkshire), Freddie Van Mierlo MP (Henley and Thame), Greg Smith MP (Mid Buckinghamshire), Victoria Collins MP (Harpenden and Berkhamsted), and Laura Kyrke-Smith MP (Aylesbury).

**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 body of candidates to be voted in. The candidates were (in alphabetical order): Nathan Boyd, Dave Cavanagh, Tim Lewis (Treasurer), Mike Lewington (Chair), Carl Moffatt (Secretary), Duncan Strutt and Wendy Tobitt.

5.2 The Chair thanked Jane Imbush who was standing down for her contribution to the Friends of the Ridgeway and in particular her significant dedication in the organisation and running of the Annual Swire Art Exhibition

5.3 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 18.50.

MH Lewington  
Chair  
Friends of the Ridgeway