

# GOATWALKLANDTRUST

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022

With the lifting of the Covid restrictions life is beginning to return to normal. The decision to keep the Goat Walk Land open when the other parks in Topsham were closed has been fully vindicated and has led to a much greater use of the meadows.

At the end of January we held our sixth Annual General Meeting, by Zoom. Fewer members attended but the membership of the Trust has actually increased slightly over the year to 243. In April last year Chris Finney sadly died. He had been a valued member of the Management Committee, a Trustee and a long term volunteer. His place as a Trustee was taken on a temporary basis until the AGM by Roger Webster when the election of a Members' Trustee took place. Roger who has been Chairman of the Management Committee for the last two years was duly elected to serve for a three-year term. The financial position of the Trust is still sound with our reserves up slightly so there will be no increase in membership fees. These remain at £10 per year, the same as they have been since the start of the Trust. Thank you once again to all who did attend by Zoom. If you would like to become a member or renew your subscriptions for 2022 please see the Trust's Web Site (<http://goatwalklandtrust.org/>) or contact the Trust at our email address ([info@goatwalklandtrust.org](mailto:info@goatwalklandtrust.org)) or at our postal address, Matthews Hall, Fore Street, Topsham EX3 0HF.

Last year was the second when we were able to undertake only a limited amount of maintenance on the land. However, our removal of docks and other pernicious weeds over previous years has meant that the few working parties that we were able to organise, combined with the efforts of individuals, resulted again in two wonderful meadows for us all to enjoy during our second lockdown summer. The Management Committee are presently planning the working parties for the year ahead, when we hope to catch up on some of the maintenance that was postponed due to the Covid restrictions. It is likely that we will still need some removal of docks or thistles if we are to have an acceptable crop of hay this summer and the path needs some attention. We have a good number of volunteers, but new recruits are always welcome. Please see our website for details. No skills are required, we can find jobs for everyone.

With the number of trees on our land we often need work on one or other of the older ones and our tree surgeons routinely check for problems elsewhere in the woodland. However, during one of last year's storms a large branch fell across the Goat Walk path. As the last full survey of the trees was five years ago, the Trust commissioned a new survey which was completed in November and we were pleased that no trees were categorised as having a high hazard rating. We will, in the near future, need to have some surgery undertaken to one of the trees at the edge of the wood. The large Turkey oak between the two fields is also showing signs of age and will need some attention. The Management Committee are considering the extent of the surgery which will need to balance safety, aesthetics and the environmental benefit of having a wonderful habitat supporting dozens of species in its crevices and decaying wood.

Despite all this attention, the succession of storms in February resulted in one of the small elm trees in the northern hedge being blown down. This section of hedge

**Matthews Hall Fore Street Topsham EXETER EX3 0HF**  
**Registered Charity No 1162973**

# GOATWALKLANDTRUST

contains several small elm trees which, once they reach a certain size, become susceptible to Dutch Elm disease. Our initial idea was to remove the main trunk and “tidy up” the area where it had fallen. However, in line with our renewed focus on rewilding of the land, the Trust decided to leave the tree where it had fallen and allow it to decay naturally, so that it can provide a new habitat for wildlife.

As you will all be aware the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee is being celebrated in June and, as an enduring legacy, Her Majesty is encouraging the planting of trees across the country. Topsham’s celebrations are being coordinated by the Topsham Community Association and will include the planting of a native oak tree on the Trust’s land on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June as part of the Queens Green Canopy scheme. Please look for details in the next few weeks. Oak trees can live for four hundred years or more and grow to a considerable size. The Trust’s land was chosen as the one place in Topsham safe from development and where the Town’s tree has the chance to live that long.

Chris Buckingham  
Chairman