

GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

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

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2016

Following the public exhibition and consultation, the Management Committee has been reviewing all the responses that were received and considering how your views can be put into effect. [Details of all the responses are on our web site www.goatwalklandtrust.org] The Committee and our volunteers have also been busy undertaking the day-to-day management of the land and some urgently required maintenance.

Fortunately, there was broad consensus on most of the issues that we set out in the consultation. However, we were keen that the Trust should not rush into making a final definitive plan for the land but implement any changes gradually. We also do not have the resources to do everything at once. The Committee therefore decided to concentrate initially on a plan for the lower field. We were also aware that we needed to spend time and money on some urgent maintenance particularly to some of the existing trees and to the wall that bounds the Goat Walk.

The suggestion of a grass meadow for the lower field was generally welcomed and the Committee is therefore progressing with this proposal. For the short term, at least, the upper field will also be laid to grass meadow. The perennial weeds have been killed with glyphosate and harrowing and seeding will proceed later this autumn. For this we must express our thanks to the Dart brothers who have again provided advice and practical help. We have also planned to extend the woodland a little and, following advice from our experts, to thin some of the trees in the woodland and allow the remaining trees to grow unhindered. Tree planting will, however, need to wait until winter.

The solution we have proposed for dogs is to allow dogs on the upper, but not the lower field. Therefore, there needs to be better separation of the two fields, so that dogs can be kept from straying on to the lower field. This will be achieved by extending the hedgerow, but, in the short term, we will be installing a paling fence with gates for access between the two fields. This will also help protect the new hedgerow once planted.

One of the suggested improvements was the creation of two scrapes, in areas that are waterlogged during much of the winter. [The plans are still on our web site if you have not seen them]. The flooded area extends to the five bar gate onto Bowling Green Lane, causing problems with access at this point, and the flow of water onto the lane. These issues will be resolved by creating two scrapes - one in either field - and using the excavated soil to build up the area in between them and the gate. By combining this work with improvements to the existing ditch and drainage at the side of the field there

GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

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

should be dry access through the gate all year, and no flood water running onto the lane.

The position of the scrape in the lower field will differ from that shown at the exhibition since it cannot be placed under the canopy of the large oak at the end of the central hedge. It will now be excavated adjacent to the tree's canopy. Once this work is complete work on the fencing to separate the two fields will be able to start.

Whilst the Management Committee has been meeting with contractors and advisors on projects for the future, much effort has also been expended on the day-to-day maintenance of the land. We received reports from two experts on the condition of the wall adjoining the Goat Walk. Our volunteers under Eliot Wright have been clearing the undergrowth and had commenced repointing the wall, but the experts advised that the winter damage to the capping of the wall over the last few years needed urgent attention. The Committee therefore agreed to employ a walling contractor with experience of lime-mortared walls to undertake the urgent repairs to the wall. Fortunately the contractor was happy to work with volunteers and this has helped keep the costs down.



On 22nd August work started on the wall. Peter Gray and Eliot Wright had organised a rota of volunteers to clear the undergrowth, clean out the joints in the stone and ensure that people could use the Goatwalk safely or pass through the fields. Some of volunteers already had experience of building stone walls and others soon learnt the basics, so work has proceeded well.

The stone capping of the higher section of the wall, which was more exposed to the weather and more seriously damaged, has now been completed and much of this section of the wall repointed. Capping of the lower section of the wall by our volunteers has already started and the whole wall already looks well able to face another winter.

There is still more work on the wall to be done, so even if you have not been able to help so far, please contact the Trust at [info@goatwalklandtrust.org] and let us have your details so we can keep you up to date on volunteer days. We will also be having another **Meet the Team on Saturday 22nd October from 10 am until 12.00 noon** when you will have the opportunity to find out what has been happening over the last six months. We will be emailing all the members that we have addresses for with the details.

[email – info @goatwalklandtrust.org.uk]

GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

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

The other major item of news is the First Annual Meeting of the Trust. Much has happened in the year since the Goat Walk Land Trust was established and the Annual Meeting is the opportunity for members of the Trust to hear what has been happening and ask questions of the Trustees. Members will also be able to vote for three Trustees. The Annual Meeting will be in the **Matthews Hall at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 14th November** and all members are invited to attend and vote. Formal notice of the meeting will be given in due course but this is an early warning to keep your diaries free.

Chris Buckingham - Chairman of the Trustees