



# Annual Review

April 2014 - March 2015





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Earth Trust  
Little Wittenham  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 4QZ

[www.earthtrust.org.uk](http://www.earthtrust.org.uk)

01865 407792

[admin@earthtrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@earthtrust.org.uk)

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Registered company no. 4381522

## Our Vision for the Future

At the Earth Trust we believe that if we all make small changes to the way we live, our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the places we love tomorrow.

In order to get involved and make changes, people need to enjoy themselves and be inspired.

Our vision is to connect people to people, people to places and people to the environment. Our ambition is to engage with the general public and to do this we need to make the things we do relevant, easy and meaningful.

This is the Earth Trust's exciting new agenda.

# An outstanding year

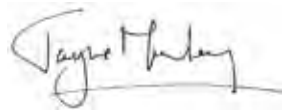
2014-2015 has been an outstanding year for the Earth Trust.

The number of people who have become involved with us, helping to look after their local environment and learn new skills has grown significantly. For years we have made it as easy as possible for people to get involved and in 2015 we spent time with many more communities than ever before reaching across and beyond Oxfordshire.

The quality of the countryside we look after is better than ever. Our big project, run with the help of the Environment Agency, to put in place the River of Life has led to the creation of a new 35ha wetland landscape, with backwater channels (connected to the River Thames), ponds, reedbeds, wet woodland and fen. The wildlife at our sites is special and diverse and habitat improvements this year have helped look after and grow these populations. Our greenspaces are renowned for their beauty, history and wildlife, and we have improved access to these natural places – both physical access as well as emotional and intellectual connections.

We pride ourselves as being a part of local communities but we know what we do is of importance at a regional and national scale. Whether the subject is farming, forestry, conservation management, outdoor learning or ash dieback, our staff, their expertise and our projects are called upon to inform, demonstrate, research and ground policy debate.

This takes some doing. The people that support us are amazing and we tell them often that all of this couldn't be done without them. People gave their time generously, and with a new volunteer support project in place, around 30% more days were volunteered – a staggering 2140 days, or the equivalent of 9 full timers. Of course we couldn't achieve all of this without the hard work and dedication of our small staff team. Many funding Trusts, Foundations and grant givers recognised the significance of our charity this year and we are grateful to the organisations and individuals who have helped us grow.



**Jayne Manley, CEO**



**Doug Hulyer, Chair of Trustees**

# Learning to live sustainably



- More people than ever before have taken the opportunity to get involved in their local environment with our help.
- The quality of the Earth Trust Farm and the other places we look after has improved.
- Special places are more likely to thrive if the way the land is managed is part of a financially stable business.

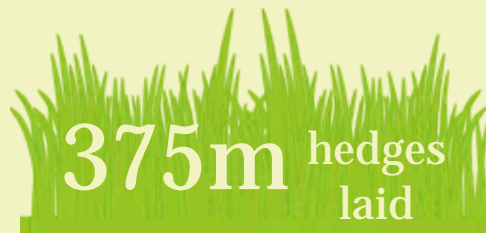


 **3,500**  
trees planted  
on 2ha of new wet woodland

 **1,800**  
trees felled in Little  
Wittenham Wood

 **12** of the Thames'  
20 fish species  
recorded in the new  
River of Life backwaters

 **3,820**  
Earth School visits

 **375m** hedges  
laid

**28,000**  
visits to  
Thrupp Lake 

**2,140**  =    **9**  
volunteer days full  
time staff

 **1,928**  
people attending  
courses & events

**3,000**   
people at Fison Barn weddings





**£383/ha**

net profit for the arable farm  
(higher than the average  
comparably sized arable farm)



**11,500**

people attending  
4 festivals



**124**  
people ran  
**10K**

23 staff  
members  
(full and  
part time),  
equivalent to

**18**

full time staff



of seed used to  
bridge the hungry  
gap for birds



**1.6km** new fences  
installed at North Farm

**1,000**

family members attending  
Sunday drop-ins



**53,364**  
web visitors

**6,000**  
pot grown reeds  
planted on 2 wetlands

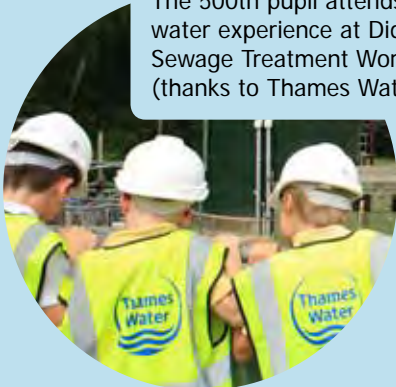




# Our calendar year

## April 2014

Summer term gets underway - the busiest time for **Earth School**. The 500th pupil attends the water experience at Didcot Sewage Treatment Works (thanks to Thames Water).



## June

River of Life is joint winner of the **Best Practice Award for Practical Nature Conservation** at the national Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Awards in Birmingham.

## May

Volunteers plant 6,000 pot grown reeds (*Phragmites australis*) on two of our new wetland features at the **River of Life**.



## August

Following on from spring phenology assessments and a paper in the Quarterly Journal of Forestry, **Living Ash Project** work continues with visits to trials around the UK to assess for evidence of ash dieback. Grassland management begins at **Bushey Bank**, the part of the farm benefitting from the country's first formal Biodiversity Offsetting agreement. Alongside a spring graze, this will provide ideal conditions for wildflowers to thrive.



## July

2,500+ people watch the demolition of **Didcot Power Station's** southern cooling towers from the Clumps. **Wallingford Castle Meadows** receives a Green Flag for the 7th consecutive year, and Green Heritage Site Accreditation for the first time. **Abbey Fishponds** management agreement signed, adding to the community nature reserves we look after in Abingdon. We also reach 1,000 followers on **Twitter**.



## September

The inaugural **Earth Trust 10K**. Forestry Research Manager Dr Jo Clark receives **Scottish Woodlands Student Excellence Award**.





## November

**Woodland Ways** is completed: 1.2km of footpath in Little Wittenham Wood has been resurfaced and path edge habitats have been improved. An **Art Exhibition and Auction**, organised by the volunteer Fundraising Committee, raises over £25,000 and we reach 750 likes on **Facebook**.



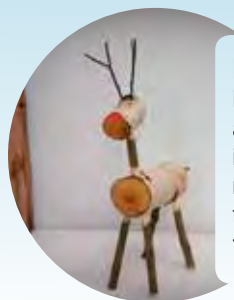
## January

A 2ha floodplain woodland at the **River of Life** is completed; volunteers plant 3,500 trees over three months. Our **Invertebrate Tales** project came to an end, outputs from which included a range of specialist ID workshops, family-friendly events and an information booklet.



## October

A detailed **soil survey** of the farm is carried out to identify particular nutrient deficiencies and provide information needed to target applications of manure and other organic products. 10ha of grassland is sown at the **River of Life**; this is the start of three years of grassland restoration work.



## December

New **Earth School webpages** are launched leading to increased bookings. Record numbers attend our Christmas festival - **Natural Christmas at the Earth Trust**.



## March 2015

For the first time satellite imagery is used to guide the application of nitrogen fertiliser in the **arable fields**. This increases the efficiency and avoids blanket rate application. The annual **tree felling** programme is completed with the greatest volume of timber removed from our woodlands for many years, including 1000m<sup>3</sup> of timber thinned from Little Wittenham Wood. 6,232 people attend our **Lambing Weekends**.

## February

Between April 2014 and February 2015, **142 students** carried out fieldwork or received training. These include undergraduate and postgraduate students from Oxford Brookes University, University of Oxford and University of Reading. Thousands of fish fry were netted in **River of Life** backwaters during an Environment Agency survey. Hundreds attend three free **Come Out & Play** sessions at the Wittenham Clumps, Mowbray Fields and Abbey Fishponds.



# Working together to make a big difference

## Working locally

The Earth Trust provides considerable **training and skilling activities** which are a significant benefit to people in Oxfordshire. Highlights this year:

- 2,900 school children improved their skills and knowledge in curriculum subjects (history, geography and biology), developing their understanding of maths, English and science through outdoor learning.
- 690 secondary school pupils received teaching that directly benefited their GCSE results and 56 started work towards an Open College Network (OCN) Countryside Skills qualification.
- Two traineeships.
- 166 higher education students gained vocational experience that contributed to their degrees.
- 84 teachers benefitted from training, improving their skills and delivery of the national curriculum.
- 24,000 children and families benefitted from accessing their local environment, increasing their skills and confidence.
- Around 200 volunteers gained skills and experience in administration, business, land management and surveying.



## Working regionally

**River of Life** is a large scale award-winning, wetland creation project which is transforming 2.5km of Thames riverbank on the Earth Trust Farm. This will be one of only a few places on the Thames, and the UK's navigable rivers as a whole, where the bankside habitat and topography are as near to 'natural' as possible.

The project is delivering a range of ecosystem services and will improve landscape quality and diversity, thereby contributing regionally to improvements in water quality, flood amelioration and fish biodiversity using practical and economically viable models. This project is supporting a wider vision for water landscapes across the region and is a demonstration that will encourage other landowners to undertake similar works.





## Working nationally



The Earth Trust undertakes **primary and collaborative research** in the following areas: Food and Farming; Water and Wetlands; Future Forests. Our research is applied, aiming to provide evidence for good practice. Most notable of the research work we lead on is the Living Ash Project. Over five years we will identify ash trees across England, Wales and Scotland demonstrating a good tolerance to *Chalara* ash dieback and secure this material for future breeding; ultimately this will ensure the continued supply of this valuable hardwood timber and products for the future.

**Earth Trust's research assets are nationally renowned.** Paradise Wood, a national research woodland, incorporates 23 forestry research trials and together the trees are a living collection (the largest in the country) of the genetic diversity of hardwood trees. Key species are ash, cherry, oak and walnut. The Earth Trust Farm is also a key asset for research and learning opportunities at all levels.

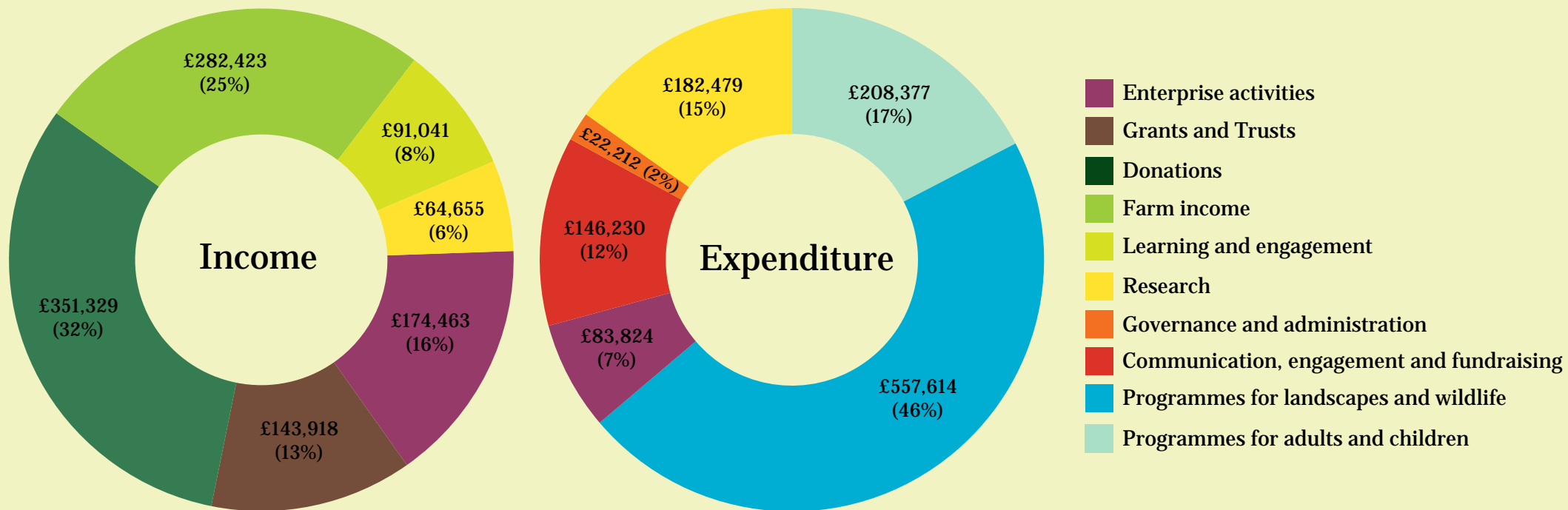
Our farm and nature reserve are of national importance due to a number of factors: their biodiversity; the way they are managed; the number of visits they attract; the ecosystem services and research opportunities they provide. They are a **socio-economic resource** where the interaction between people, biodiversity and business work together. The Earth Trust aims to support the engagement of people who do not feel the environment has relevance to them.

## Working regionally impacts with national



Our business incubator programme **Farm Step** offers individuals and communities opportunities to set up and run their own rural businesses. The Government's Future of Farming Report (July 2013) explained how the ability "to attract the best people to work in farming and then supporting them to do so, so that they have successful and rewarding careers" is critical to the UK's farming success. Farm Step is often referred to as a demonstrator of what can be achieved and in so doing the Earth Trust has put Oxfordshire on the map leading the way and encouraging innovative ways to entice new entrants into farming.

# Accounts



## Thank you

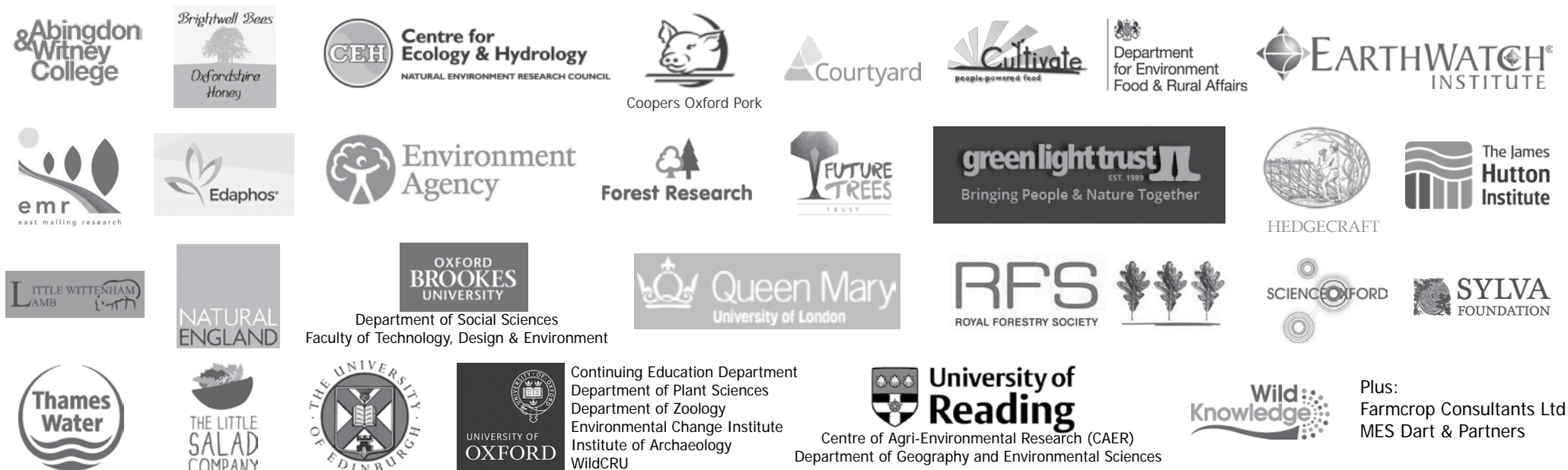
Earth Trust would like to thank our supporters for helping us make all this happen. We would particularly like to thank: our Patrons, Sir Martin and Lady Audrey Wood, for the many ways they have supported us over the years; our growing number of Friends whose contributions we rely on; our expanding team of volunteers whose donations of time are vital to our success; and to the following organisations, businesses and trusts for their continued support.

## Our Corporate Supporters





## Our Partners



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Earth Trust  
Little Wittenham  
Oxfordshire  
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