

Issue 4 Autumn 2019

Earth Trust News

Exclusive newsletter for Earth Trust Friends

Gateway to
the future
Protecting accessible
green spaces

Also in this issue...

Meet the Gateway team

River of Life II

Volunteer spotlight



Welcome

Welcome to the autumn edition of Earth Trust News.

It has been a fantastic six months since our last issue, which has seen plans for our Gateway project moving forward throughout spring and summer, and final designs for the first phase coming together ready for submission to the planning department.

This issue focusses on our Gateway project - our vision for a centre that can better manage growing visitor numbers while simultaneously caring for our green spaces.

On page 4 you can find out about the full scale of our plans, and how the multiple facets of the Gateway will help us inspire people to engage with their green spaces and understand how to care for them for future generations to enjoy. Our upcoming archaeology season is also a wonderful opportunity to uncover even more history about the local area we all know and love.

During this busy time we are working on a new partnership project: River of Life II will create wetland habitats on the banks of Thames. We recently completed a number of surveys and test digs at the locations where we're planning the wetland features, which you can read about on page 6. Ahead of planning submission we will be holding a series of consultation events where you can come and learn more about River of Life II, details of which can be found on the back page.

As always thank you so much for your continued support of Earth Trust. Please do take a look at the back page of this publication for all forthcoming events. They offer a fantastic opportunity to get outdoors, get involved and see what your support has enabled.

It goes without saying that we always value your feedback, and would be delighted to receive your help in finding and welcoming new Friends to join us as we go forward with our exciting plans. If you would like to know how you can get involved please email Laura directly (supportus@earthtrust.org.uk).

Until next time,

Jayne Manley, CEO



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Supporters' Ceremony, June 2019



Gateway plans unveiled at Supporters' Day

During June's annual Supporters' Ceremony (pictured above), Friends and other guests were offered the first glimpse of design ideas for the Gateway. Architects White Design explained how Earth Lab will be built sustainably and incorporate features for wildlife.

Earth Trust is local Councils' chosen charity

Each year, the new Chair of a District Council hand-picks up to two charities close to their heart, to raise funds for in their official capacity. We are honoured to have been chosen by the Chairs of our two local councils - Councillor David Bretherton, of South Oxfordshire District Council, and Councillor Margaret Crick, of Vale of the White Horse District Council, will be supporting us until May 2020.

12th Green Flag for Wallingford Castle Meadows

Earth Trust is delighted to announce that Wallingford Castle Meadows has received a Green Flag for an impressive 12th consecutive year; it also received Green Heritage Site Accreditation for the 5th year running. We'd like to thank our volunteers who help to look after this important green space. We're also pleased to reveal that we'll shortly be installing some new interpretation boards at Castle Meadows and other community reserves.

Our skyline has changed!

The view from the Wittenham Clumps underwent a dramatic transformation in August as Didcot Power Station's iconic cooling towers were demolished. There was a wonderful atmosphere on Round Hill, where hundreds of people came to witness the historic moment.

Introducing our new Head of Fundraising

We are pleased to welcome Lee Ann Norris to the Earth Trust team. Lee Ann says: "I am thrilled to be joining Earth Trust at a pivotal time in its history. I am an avid runner and cyclist who values natural landscapes and their important link to health and well-being. Thank you so much for supporting Earth Trust; I look forward to meeting you to learn about your passions and how we can work together to achieve more."



Our volunteers are invaluable to us and we want to celebrate them by highlighting their amazing support...

Volunteer Profile: Dave Eccles

Dave started volunteering with Earth Trust over 10 years ago, after his daughter did a traineeship with us. He can now be found with the Land Management Team every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Dave has completed training with chainsaws, scythes and in First Aid, and runs Friday group as the Lead Volunteer when Senior Warden Tim is away. He also carries out the Earth Trust Farm common bird survey every year and helps out at events like Lambing. In the winter, Dave helps to keep us all warm by volunteering to fuel the boiler. Dave is Abingdon born and bred, where he lives with his wife and son.

Look out for more volunteer profiles in future issues, on our website and our social media channels.

Gateway to protecting accessible green space

Our green spaces evoke curiosity about the natural world and the Gateway project will enable Earth Trust to engage communities in caring for our planet.

So many of us have an affinity with the Wittenham Clumps and surrounding landscape, and with a designated Special Area of Conservation, Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Scheduled Ancient Monument we are committed to safeguarding this unique place.

Inspiring change

The Gateway project will allow us to improve our visitors' experience, helping to increase understanding of how our ecosystems work and what we can all do to support our planet, through the variety of activities on offer. As well as enhancing our learning opportunities we will offer exciting ways for volunteers to get involved in helping us achieve our charitable aims. All of these opportunities help increase skills, improve health and well-being, and bring about long term sustainable change.

A place of discovery

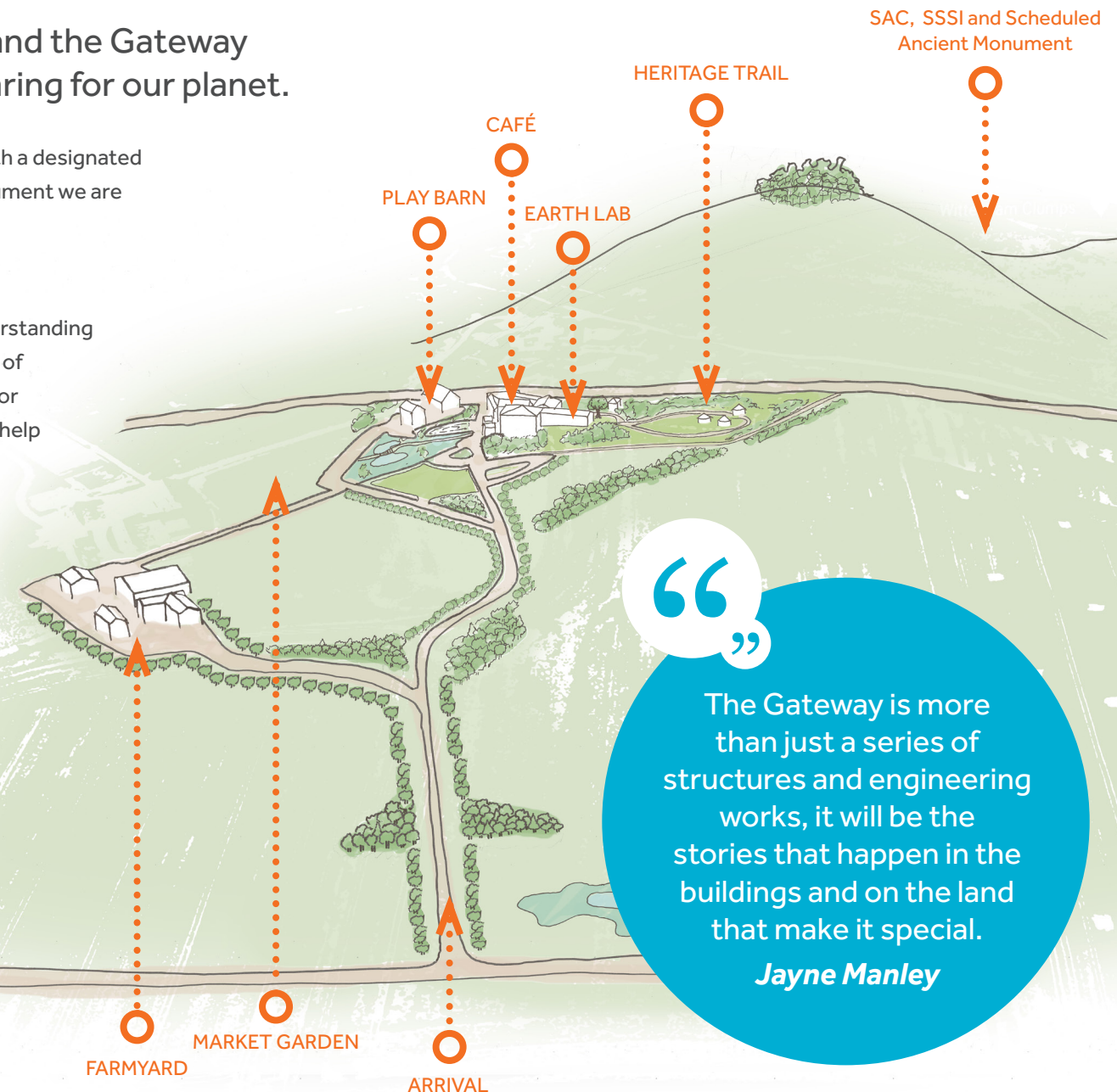
In addition to Earth Lab, our new skills and learning building, a heritage activity trail will be created featuring replica Iron Age roundhouses and Roman water play. Interactive activities throughout will help visitors explore the rich history of the surrounding landscape. A market garden will supply food to the on-site café, which includes a teaching kitchen to further explore the farm to fork journey. In our unique play barn people can deepen their understanding of our ecosystems. The Gateway project will offer numerous opportunities to help bring us together in understanding what we can do to care for our planet.

Demonstrating sustainability

Sustainability isn't just about the materials we choose to build with, although that is a big part of our project, it is also how we demonstrate the sustainable use of water, wood and food production through all of the green spaces we look after. Earth Trust has always aimed to engage people with caring for the places we love and this project will enable us to continue to do this in more interesting and innovative ways. We will be able to engage more people, providing experiences that inspire them to think and act differently in the future.

Improving your experience

A new access route that will help manage traffic will provide a literal 'gateway' that enables people to more easily discover our green spaces and all we have to offer. There will be increased car parking provision, improved facilities and you'll be able to relax and recharge in the cafe which will offer a locally produced menu.



“

The Gateway is more than just a series of structures and engineering works, it will be the stories that happen in the buildings and on the land that make it special.

Jayne Manley

Delve in to history...

DigVentures return in November for five months of further archaeological investigations ahead of the Gateway project. As a site of historical significance dating back to the Bronze Age, we are conducting archaeological surveys and have identified several locations that we will investigate. It is anticipated they will build on the finds and knowledge we gained from the previous dig, when evidence of our Iron Age predecessors was uncovered, helping us to build a picture of how people lived over 2,000 years ago.

Archaeological investigations will start in November this year, and we are planning an exciting programme of engagement events for adults and children alike. Any significant finds will then be hand excavated over the winter months, followed by a community dig - keep an eye out for more details coming soon!

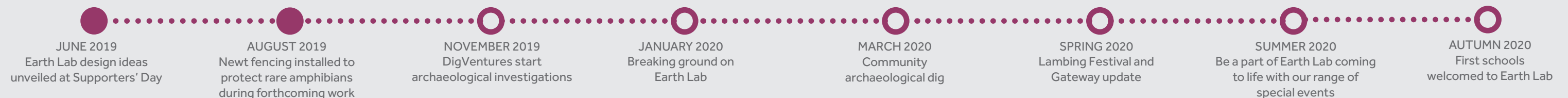
"We are delighted to be working with DigVentures, enabling us to join up these important digs with those that took place for our River of Life II project, giving a bigger picture of the lives of our ancestors across this landscape." Jayne Manley

DigVentures' Chris Caswell on site in October 2018



Progress over the next 12 months: Gateway Phase 1

We will be breaking ground in January 2020 and have a season of activities for you to get involved with. More information coming soon!



River of Life II: creating sustainable working wetlands

In March 2019 Earth Trust was awarded a Water Environment Grant to support the delivery of River of Life II.

Earth Trust is embarking on an exciting partnership project called River of Life II. Backwater channels, wet woodland, ponds, and scrapes will be created at three locations on the banks of the Thames and Thame. These will help increase biodiversity and contribute to flood alleviation. Several ponds are also proposed in Little Wittenham Wood. The wood is home to the second largest population of great crested newts in the country, and these new ponds will provide vital habitat for this internationally important amphibian.

“We need to radically rethink our approach to managing the Earth’s resources, such as water and soil, and accelerate projects that are going to sustain life on Earth.”
Jayne Manley

This project follows on from the creation of our successful River of Life I (2014); it will be even bigger, providing even more benefit and enrichment to the environment. It will provide opportunities for exploration and engagement with water for the local community, river users, walkers

and visitors – including learning about water ecosystems, engaging with history and the importance of caring for wetlands.

Over the summer, archaeologists DigVentures carried out several exploratory surveys ahead of the project starting. One intriguing find from the excavations was a large hand-worked piece of wood which has been sent off for evaluation and dating. In addition we found evidence of a possible *midden* – a deposit containing refuse that could indicate evidence of a settlement.

This autumn we will be submitting two planning applications, one for the backwaters along the Thames and one for the new ponds in Little Wittenham Wood, with work aiming to start in spring 2020. We need your support and would love you to come along to one of our public consultations this October to share your views on the proposals. Please take a look at the back cover for the dates and locations.

Find out more at www.earthtrust.org.uk/riveroflife2

We will be creating 46,646m² of backwaters and ponds, totalling an area the size of 8 football pitches. They will hold enough water to half fill the Royal Albert Hall!

Gateway: Behind the scenes

As the Gateway project unfolds and moves from concept to completion, Earth Trust has recruited staff with dedicated skills to ensure we continue to be able to protect the place that so many love. We are delighted to introduce our team! This investment will enable us to turn our vision into a reality and ensure we have the right skills to deliver our Gateway project. Meet the team....



From left: Adam, Nic, Ruby, Abi and Darshana

GATEWAY: safeguarding our green spaces for the future

THE CHALLENGE

Earth Trust is expecting an increase in visitors from 150,000 per year to 200,000 by 2023. We need to ensure this special place is protected.

BETTER FACILITIES

The Gateway will offer welcoming facilities for visitors, such as a cafe and market garden. Earth Lab and the Innovation Hub will provide flexible, multipurpose spaces for a range of uses.



IMPROVED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

With more indoor and outdoor classroom space we'll be able to reach many more people than we do currently, offering more opportunities for all ages.



DEMONSTRATION OF SUSTAINABILITY

The design choices we make and interpretive stories we'll tell will encourage a dynamic relationship between people and the natural environment, helping to secure a sustainable future on this planet.



Adam Godwin, Project Manager:

“The natural environment has always been a passion of mine, choosing to study it at university and subsequently becoming a focus for my career. For me the Gateway offers an opportunity to deliver true sustainable management, providing an exemplar model for both the region and the country.”

Nic Williams, Volunteer Officer: “I joined Earth Trust earlier in the year having worked with volunteers whilst managing a local community shop. Gateway will be an exciting new destination for the local community, with a diverse range of volunteering opportunities.”

Communications Manager: “I have always believed in the power of communications and have worked for local and international NGOs as well as in the TV industry. Gateway to me is a symbol of hope for the future of our planet.”

Abi Morris, Visitor Experience Manager: “Having worked for large heritage and conservation charities, I'm so excited to be here developing the Gateway, playing a part in showcasing our work caring for such a wonderfully diverse range of green spaces.”

Darshana Patel, Finance Manager: “I have worked in Finance for many years. Gateway to me is a hope to create an awareness within the community to care, respect and look after our planet, which is our one and only home!”



£1,600,000

Income raised

£300,000

Shortfall to be raised

Save the date!

Take a look at some of the events and exclusive Friends offers Earth Trust has coming up:

17th-23rd October 2019

3pm – 7pm / Free

River of Life II Public Consultation

We want to know what you think about our plans to create new wetland habitats along the Thames and Thame, and in Little Wittenham Wood. Come and take a look at the plans and share your views at our public consultation events:

Thursday 17th October: Dorchester-on-Thames Village Hall

Friday 18th October: Long Wittenham Village Hall

Monday 21st October: Manor House, Little Wittenham

Wednesday 23rd October: Clifton Hampden Village Hall

November 2019 - February 2020

Times and prices vary / Earth Trust Centre

Archaeology Live!

DigVentures return this winter for further archaeological investigations ahead of the Gateway. You'll have the opportunity to discover more about the history beneath our feet with tours, Finds Lab sessions and a community dig! Friends discount and/or priority booking applicable for some events; please check the website for full details.

Thursday 28th November 2019

5.30pm – 7.30pm / Free / Earth Trust Centre

Friends' Festive Reception

Let us show you our appreciation for your support by coming along to the Earth Trust Centre and joining us for a winter tipple to kick off the festive season. Your formal invitation with details of how to register will follow.

**Thank you for
being our Friend!**
Your support allows
us to continue with
our work to champion
accessible green
spaces.



www.earthtrust.org.uk

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