

## Earth Trust News

Exclusive newsletter for Earth Trust Supporters  
Issue 10 - Summer 2022



Photo: Jo Cartmell

Earlier this month, the important role of Earth Trust in championing access to green spaces for everyone was marked with the return of the annual Rose Ceremony. In a tradition going back several decades, the Chair of Oxfordshire County Council, Susanna Pressel, presented a rose to the Earth Trust as a peppercorn rent for public access to Wittenham Clumps.

Public access to green spaces and the ability to connect communities with the natural world continues to be not just invaluable but critical, as we emerge from the pandemic. Around 1 in 3 of us don't have access to accessible nature-rich spaces near our homes, with no green space at all in some of the most deprived areas. With Oxfordshire being one of the most rapidly developing counties in the UK, we are positioned at the sharp edge of creating and managing spaces that enable both people and nature to thrive in balance.

This year's Rose Ceremony event was also a celebration of Earth Trust's 40th anniversary. It brought together some of our closest supporters to celebrate our shared history and look to the future as we outlined our fresh strategic direction.

To know and be able to demonstrate that we have been providing and championing accessible natural green spaces and running inspiring, award-winning programmes to help people connect with nature and the environment for this length of time, is an immense achievement.

And, it's an achievement that we would have not reached, if it were not for the support of our volunteers, friends, staff and

As we enter our 40th year, it has never been more critical to provide access to green space

Jayne Manley  
Chief executive

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partners. You have enabled us to get to this point, to reach our 40th anniversary and to be an organisation that is influential – with the drive to be even more influential in future. Together, we are demonstrating the ability of natural green spaces to address the challenges of climate, biodiversity and health. But, we need to be bolder in sharing our learning, to be noisier, to connect more with others, and to be confident in the influence that we can bring about as a result. [Continue...](#)



Photo: Burst Design

Rose Ceremony presentation  
Ian Davidson, Chair of trustees and Susanna Pressel,  
Chair of Oxfordshire County Council

**Our new strategy is now available on our website and I encourage you to take a look, and share your feedback.**

At the heart of our plans for the next five years is building and connecting communities to proactively influence for change. This new strategy is the product of much analysis, horizon scanning and consultation. Throughout the process it became clear that bringing together a community of people with a shared ambition is how we can make real change happen.

Our vision is a society where accessible, engaging green spaces enable nature and people to thrive in balance. We cannot achieve this vision alone. We know that everyone needs access to green spaces across the UK. And, we know we don't have all the answers. But we need to be working as a community to find the solutions. So, I want to take our bold strategic direction and continue to expand our community, and widen our circle of change-makers. We are moving from a quiet organisation that does great things to an organisation that speaks out, creates new spaces for new, interesting and sometimes difficult conversations.

So, you are making all the difference, you have made all the difference over the last 40 years, and I'm hoping that you will continue to make all the difference in the next 40 years.

Let's work together to make a different future.

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



## Forthcoming events this summer

Plans are underway for a range of exciting events, starting this summer, as we explore the ground beneath our feet and focus on the theme of thanking the earth. We will be offering a series of walks, talks and tours around some of our green spaces, led by our knowledgeable volunteers and rangers, as well as hosting family-fun activities in our fantastic Earth Lab classroom and around the Earth Trust centre site. Visit the 'What's on' page on our website for full details and booking information.

# Thanking the Earth:

## News on our evolving food and farming strategy



The food choices we make directly impact our own health and that of the planet, but the farming sector is undergoing significant change, with impacts coming from many angles. Brexit and the changes to government funding, the radical focus needed on climate change and biodiversity, the need to deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes all combine to demand change for how we farm and produce food.



At Earth Trust, our role as farmers and producers of food is an important part of our identity and the greenspaces we care for. Food itself is an important conduit to engaging people in the environment and the natural world. We have a part to play in advocating and demonstrating food production systems that support our priorities of biodiversity, climate and health.

As part of our refreshed outlook we revisited our Food and Farming strategy. Surreptitiously, the completion of this work coincided with the publication of the government's long-awaited food strategy.

Along with many others, we have expressed our concern about the watering down of earlier recommendations from food guru Henry Dimbleby, which we feel risk abandoning the cohesion of actions needed to support food production and ecological goals.

Our aim is to respond to and influence future food and farming policies and to practice, test and demonstrate the financial make-up of greenspaces and the political incentives to farm with nature.

Underpinning this, is the emphasis that we need to place on healthy soils. 98%, of the food calories that we eat rely on soil.

Healthy soils reduce the need for chemical inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. Healthy soils hold on to extra carbon and in addition, act as sponges, holding on to the water that might otherwise percolate, or run off a more intensively farmed arable field. So emphasizing and focusing our time on healthy soils is critical to the management of our farm and the impact it has on biodiversity and human health.

Over the next 5 years we are seeking to evolve our arable farm operations to reflect growing soil science principles – for example, by increasing the diversity of crops we grow and minimising soil disturbance, reducing tillage, protecting the soil surface with cover crops, using livestock within the rotation and keeping living roots in the soil. Much of the farm is grassland; and this too within the mixed farm significantly contributes to biodiversity, carbon sequestration and wellbeing.

Alongside this, we are seeking to connect more people with the food we grow and how it is grown, bringing local food and farming to life for our growing population so that more people support practices that are good for the soil, climate, nature and human health.

Our plans for the Earth Trust Centre include the development of a market garden in order to tell the farm to fork story. Once in place, this garden could offer an exciting opportunity for exploring community supported agriculture and providing produce, as well as eventually feeding our own café. It will also offers us the potential to further develop our Countryside Skills and other green skills development for all ages. We are developing the market garden concept further this year in readiness for fundraising for its establishment.

In the meantime we are planning an exciting Autumn season of family events and activities to involve communities in growing and harvesting, minimising food waste, and making sure food is fair and affordable. Our Thank the Earth season will include a Maize Maze, pumpkin harvesting and sunflowers – all with a focus on sustainable production practices that give back to the earth. For example, the maize will eventually be used for animal fodder, edible varieties of pumpkins and some sunflowers will be reserved for birds to eat.

Watch this space for news on how to get involved!



**The soil holds 25% of biodiversity within itself and supports the 75% that is above ground.**





## This year marks 40 years of Earth Trust championing accessible natural green spaces for everyone.

Here is a reminder of some of our milestone moments.

- 1982**  
Northmoor Trust for Countryside Conservation acquires Little Wittenham Wood and starts survey of the plants and animals
- 1983**  
First volunteers join the team pollarding willows and surveying birds
- 1985**  
Trainee Warden Scheme is launched
- 1989**  
First Lambing Festival takes place
- 1992**  
Friends Scheme is introduced
- 1998**  
Planting of Broad Arboretum, a living collection of every tree species native to Oxfordshire
- 2000**  
Little Wittenham Wood is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- 2005**  
The Trust begins management of community reserves across Oxfordshire
- 2006**  
Project Timescape (now Earth Trust Centre) opens for visitors at new volunteer-constructed, environmentally friendly offices
- 2008**  
Green Flag Award for Wallingford Castle Meadows
- 2009**  
Launch of Farm Step programme with first Farm Step shepherds
- 2009**  
Largescale wildflower meadow creation and restoration project
- 2010**  
River of Life I project begins in partnership with Environment Agency
- 2011**  
Northmoor Trust becomes Earth Trust  
Connecting Naturally project launches, working with 10 children's centres in urban areas
- 2012**  
Work begins to improve breeding habitat of Great Crested Newts with creation of three new ponds in Little Wittenham Wood
- 2013**  
Paradise Wood becomes a key part of the Defra funded Living Ash Project  
Bushey bank project: Earth Trust sign UK's first formal biodiversity offsetting agreement
- 2014**  
River of Life wins CIEEM Best Practice Award for Practical Nature Conservation
- 2016**  
Earth Trust receives the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service
- 2018**  
Dig Ventures Archaeological excavation discovers Iron Age roundhouse and Roman villa
- 2020**  
Construction of Earth Lab & Innovation Hub
- 2021**  
River of Life II is completed with planting of c4,000 trees  
Earth Lab wins the OXProp Award for Most Innovative and Sustainable Initiative of the Year
- 2022**  
Acquisition of Bessie's field, connecting the Clumps with Little Wittenham Wood



Photos: Burst Design

# News in brief



Photo: Burst Design

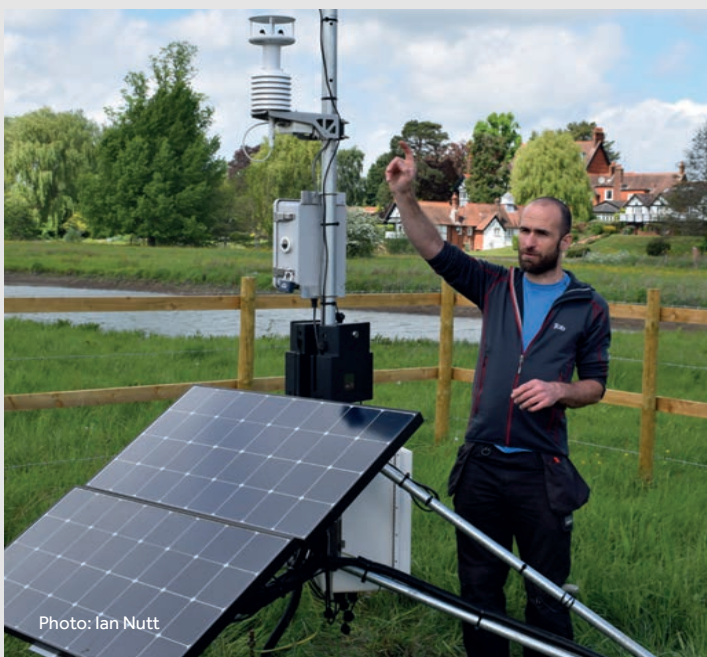


Photo: Ian Nutt



Photo: Jayne Manley

## CIEEM award for Bushey Bank

Earth Trust and partners, Environment Bank and Taylor Wimpey, are proud to have been awarded the CIEEM Award for 'Best Practice - Small Scale Mitigation' for our pioneering biodiversity offsetting project at Bushey Bank. The project has successfully demonstrated quantifiable Biodiversity Net Gain and how new partnerships can enable growth in business whilst improving the natural environment.

## Highlights from our 'Building Nature In' event

Can we design, build and live in places where people and nature thrive in balance? More than 100 representatives from local authorities, advisory bodies, planning, construction & development, social enterprise and environmental groups met to discuss 'Building Nature In' to the places where people live, work and play. This event marks the beginning of an exciting journey as Earth Trust seek to challenge the construction sector to truly integrate nature and ecosystems with the built environment.

## Scientifically discovering our wetland inhabitants

We'll soon be able to find out exactly what wildlife has been enjoying our new wetland habitat at the River of Life II floodplain area, thanks to a new biodiversity monitoring station. Our friends at the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) are helping us with an ecological study to better understand the impact of the changes in biodiversity and 're-wilding' of our newly created wetland features.

## Introducing... Bessie's field

Supported by a very generous donation from Audrey Wood, Earth Trust has acquired a 26.7 ha field, linked to the Earth Trust Farm and the Wittenham Clumps.

This new area of land presents an exciting opportunity to enhance Earth Trust's ability to demonstrate how farming and land management at scale can contribute to health & wellbeing, nature recovery and climate change mitigation.



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Little Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4QZ

### Credits

Editors: Suzi Kemp, Verity Warne  
Contributors: Jayne Manley

### Get in touch

[www.earthtrust.org.uk](http://www.earthtrust.org.uk)  
[supportus@earthtrust.org.uk](mailto:supportus@earthtrust.org.uk)  
01865 407792



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