




Connecting Communities for Change

Earth Trust Strategy 2022-2027



The future we are working towards

Earth Trust's purpose is to inspire people to address climate, biodiversity and wellbeing with the power of natural green spaces.

Our vision is a society where accessible, engaging green spaces enable nature and people to thrive in balance.

Visitors to Round Hill



For 40 years Earth Trust has been providing and championing accessible natural green spaces and running inspiring, award-winning programmes to help people connect with nature and the environment.

But it's not enough.

We must ensure everyone across the UK can access green space, connect with nature and be its champion. With your help we know we can do more.

We want a society where everyone has access to nature-filled green spaces close to where they live, work and play. Where we all have a deep understanding of our ecosystem, our place in it and our role in caring for it.



Roe Deer in Neptune Wood
Photo credit: Nick Warner

The big issues

We are facing a triple threat of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and a massive public health crisis, made worse for those in disadvantaged communities who have little or no access to nature.

It has never been more critical to provide access to green space and to engage people deeply with nature - both for their own wellbeing and to inspire action to protect the natural world for the future.

We need to address this directly by building green spaces and nature into the lives and places where people live, work and play - working with communities to identify barriers and needs.

The triple threat

- **Climate crisis:** our changing climate and the challenges of achieving net zero affect all people and nature in ways that are broad, and far-reaching.
- **Biodiversity crises:** the impact of humans on our habitats and species are now so fundamental, that the era we are living in has been termed the Anthropocene.
- **Health & equality crises:** UK mental health and wellbeing is in crisis, further heightened by societal inequalities that require wide scale commitment to levelling up, diversity and greater inclusion.

The part we play

Located in the South East and Oxfordshire – one of the most rapidly developing counties in the UK – Earth Trust is positioned at the sharp edge of creating and managing spaces that enable both people and nature to thrive in balance.

Together with our supporter community, we are guardians of some extremely special places, rich in nature and heritage. We use these amazing places to engage and inspire people and to demonstrate nature-based solutions that we hope others will take and use elsewhere.

Through our projects, we strive for sustainability, balancing people's access and dependency on natural resources such as food and water with thriving biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.

Earth Trust has been championing accessible, natural green spaces for 40 years, but the need has never been more critical than now. Over the next 5 years, we seek to do more than ever to ensure we are making a difference where it counts, prioritising our efforts on the big challenges we face, both nationally and regionally.

Our green space credentials

We own and manage the largest freely accessible natural green space landscape in Oxfordshire – the iconic Wittenham Clumps: 500 hectares of woodland, farmland, wildflower meadows and wetlands. We also care for a growing number of smaller community reserves – special places for both nature and people within urban areas and towns.

These places receive 200,000 plus visits a year.

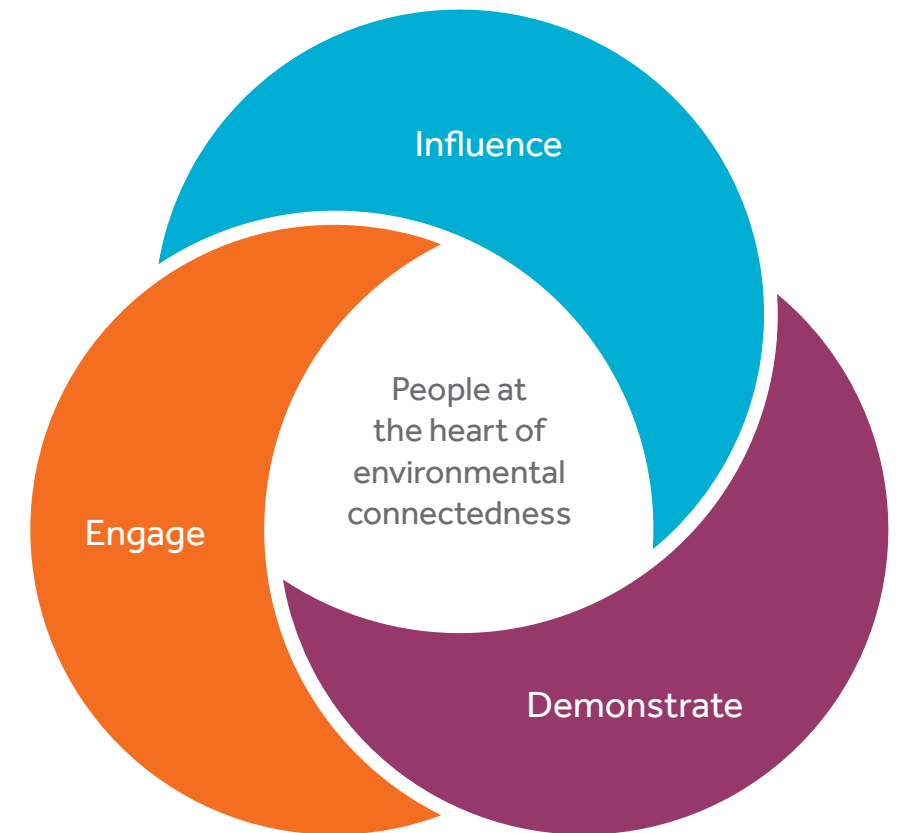
Thistle pulling at Church Meadow
Photo credit: Nick Warner



Our promise for the next 5 years

Our mission. To champion access and engagement with natural green spaces for everyone, so that together we take action for people and planet.

Orchids at Thrupp Lake



Demonstrate.
Engage. Influence.

How we deliver our mission

We use the places we care for to demonstrate nature based solutions and the power of engaging people with the natural world, in order to influence for more accessible and better green spaces.

An aerial photograph showing a modern building with a green roof and solar panels, surrounded by lush green fields and trees. In the background, rolling hills and a body of water are visible under a blue sky.

What the future Earth Trust will look like

Our plans are ambitious, but achievable with the support and growth of our loyal community of changemakers, our strong expertise and willingness to evolve our approach.

Together we have an important role to play in demonstrating, modelling and advocating for green spaces that bring nature and people closer together in the places where we all live, work and play.

Sense of place: Earth Lab and the Wittenham Clumps

In 5 years time...

Earth Trust and our diverse community of individuals and partners will be:

Leading-edge exemplars of managing accessible engaging green spaces of different scales and diversity – from landscape scale to local urban oasis, from destination to doorstep – all rich in nature and demonstrating nature based solutions.

Ensuring everyone has access: Modelling the highest standards of green space accessibility, equity, equality and inclusion across all our green spaces and sharing our learning with others.

Making our voice heard: Influencing to ensure that access to green space is written into all future housing developments, starting in Oxfordshire and wider afield in future, and working with the development industry to explore and illustrate building nature in to lives and livelihoods.

Engaging more people – in more ways – with the natural world: Earth Trust Centre and Farm will be a destination hub of activity, experience, conversation, learning and skills, with the infrastructure in place to enable and support the needs of diverse audiences.

Financially sustainable and demonstrating new operating models of financial sustainability for other land managers of green space and farmland.

On our way to Net Zero/Carbon Neutral and sharing our learning of what works and what doesn't to help bring others along with us.

Our approach

In order to deliver this strategy, we are ready to transform the way we work and engage with others. We have identified six specific ways in which our approach will evolve.

Greater focus on movement building: Empowering a wider, and more diverse community of changemakers to connect with our purpose – and contributing to national conversations where it counts.

More partnership and collaborations: Our vision is ambitious and we can't achieve it by ourselves. We have much to share, but also much to learn from others. We seek to nurture more partnerships that enable us to scale up our impact.

Living our values: Bringing a values-led lens to our work both inside and outside of the organisation. By living our values, we will demonstrate the power of working with others to achieve common goals.

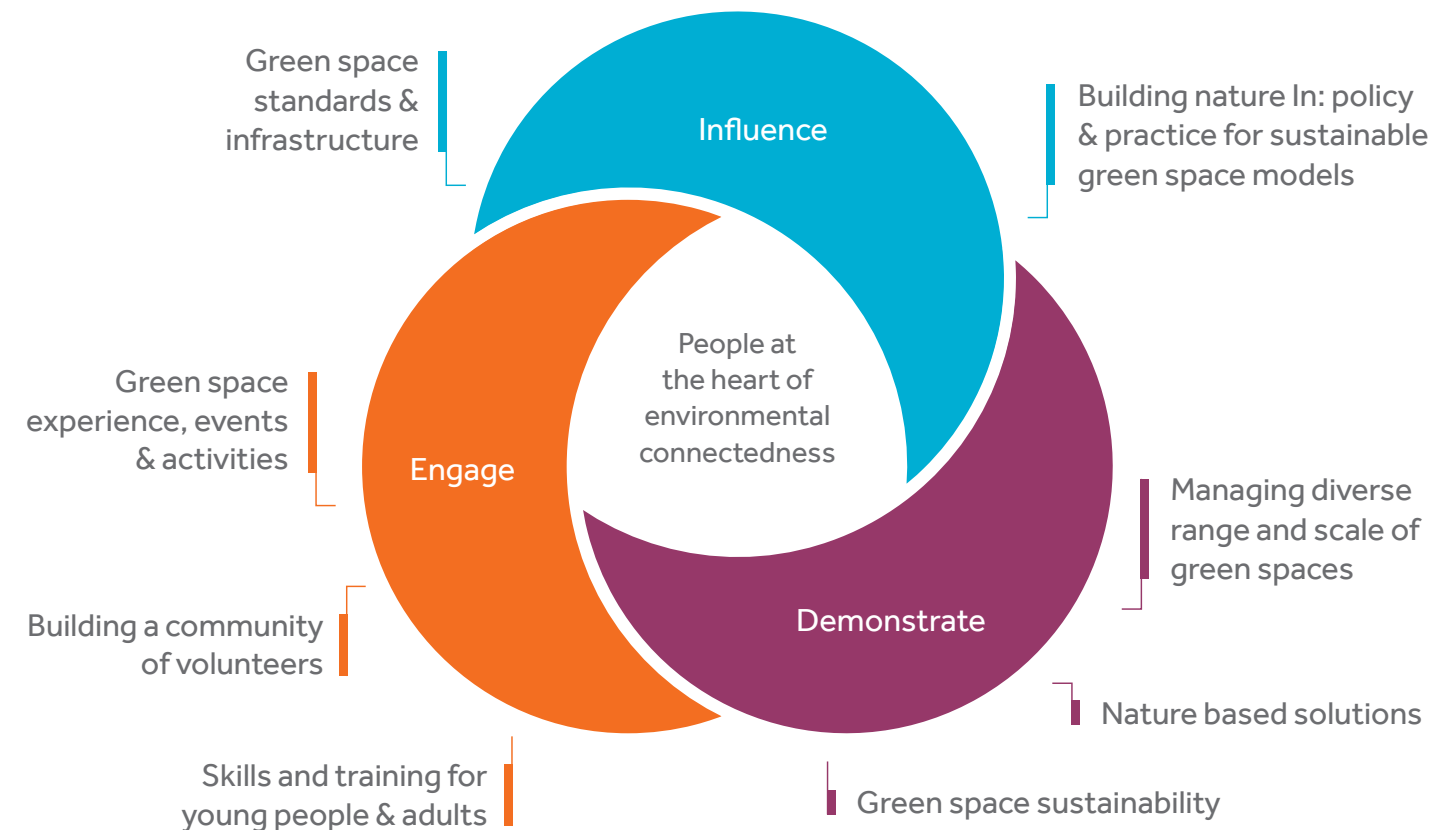
Being evidence, data and information based in our decision making: Recognising that social data and biological data are equally important and that both are needed to inform our work.

Learning and sharing to create new pathways for the future: Using our long history of trialling, testing and demonstrating, we will be bolder – and louder – in communicating our learning to influence policy and practice.

Identifying – and delivering – our own netzero and action plan.

How we will support change

A closer look at our strategic priorities shows how we are working towards our goals for 2027.



Demonstrate

We care for and improve the spaces we manage and by so doing demonstrate their role in addressing the climate, ecosystems and health crises facing our world today.



Nature based solutions

Our projects generate new evidence, data and research partnerships to demonstrate the value of nature based solutions.

Case Study River of Life

We completed the largest wetland creation project in the River Thames catchment. This habitat is improving water quality, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and flood alleviation, and demonstrates how similar projects can benefit the environment and people without damaging farming models.

Plans for the future Urban solutions

Developing partnerships to maximise social, environmental and economic benefits of nature based solutions in a large-scale city based setting.

Managing a diverse range and scale of green spaces

We care for diverse environments – from landscape scale to local green spaces – with multiple benefits for people, climate and ecosystems.

Case Study Farming in a changing context

Against a backdrop of significant policy change, we are piloting approaches and business models to sustainably manage our farm for the future. Our farm is a living demonstration of managing accessible landscape at scale, enabling us to learn and engage others in how food, nature, trees and people can live in harmony alongside clean wetland ecosystems.

Plans for the future Green infrastructure

Building on the diversity of local green spaces we care for, to support future communities in caring for their own green spaces close to where they live and work.

Green space sustainability

We demonstrate green space sustainability where natural green spaces are accessible and engaging and the infrastructure for people is built into financial models.

Case Study Pioneers of Biodiversity Net Gain

As the UK's first biodiversity offsetting scheme, we provided an early exemplar of how biodiversity loss at one location can lead to enhancement of a rare habitat close by. In 2022, we were shortlisted for a Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management award for our maintenance of chalk downland at Bushey Bank.

Plans for the future Climate resilience

Contributing to the UK's future genetic forestry resource by enabling resilience to climatic changes and helping plant the right trees.

Engage

We engage and inspire people with the environment, empowering us all to make change happen.



Green space experiences, events and activities

We welcome, engage, and inspire visitors to our accessible green spaces, offering a diverse and lively public programme of events and activities.

We nurture inclusive opportunities for all people to engage with nature – connecting with a wide range of communities to share learning and reduce barriers to green spaces access.

Case Study

Creativity in a changing environment

We developed a range of digital and online initiatives during the Covid pandemic – from attracting a global digital audience as we uncovered exciting evidence of Iron Age and Roman dwellings, to piloting a series of wellbeing walks with Oxfordshire Mind to provide nature-based support to the vulnerable.

Plans for the future

A new nature based playscape

Our Earth Adventure playscape will enable Earth Trust Centre visitors to discover the wonder of a nature experience through water, soil, trees and heritage. It will offer vital stepping stone for people to gain confidence in nature and green spaces before heading out to explore on their own.

Equality & inclusivity

Working closely with government agencies and local authorities to address the barriers to people accessing greenspace and the countryside.

Skills and training for young people and adults

We use the environment to inspire learning and discovery - Earth School for primary school pupils, Countryside Skills experience and qualifications for youth who find the traditional academic environment challenging and a growing programme of adult courses.

Case Study

Inspiring learning

We have developed partnerships to pilot outdoor education initiatives for SEN and 'referred' children, and provided subsidised outdoor education sessions for children most affected by the Covid pandemic.

Plans for the future

Expanding our curriculum

Ensuring that our education programme addresses the 3 crises of climate, ecosystems and wellbeing, by expanding our audiences and integrating STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) into our curriculum.

Building a community of volunteers

We foster a community of engaged volunteers and changemakers (the beating heart of Earth Trust) and support others to nurture their own volunteer networks.

Case Study

Diversifying opportunities

We expanded our range of volunteer roles to support the skill set and interests of a more diverse range of volunteers – including tour and walking guides, community ambassadors and nature surveyors - connecting more visitors to the nature they are enjoying and inspiring the desire to learn and think about their own impact on these special places.

Plans for the future

Catalysing change

Building a movement of green space champions, bringing more – and more diverse - people together through volunteering to foster the energy, skills and ideas that will help us achieve change.

Influence

We influence decision makers so that more people can access and engage with green spaces where they live, work and play.



Green spaces standards and infrastructure

We advocate and advise on building nature and green spaces into existing and new development, through our burgeoning network of collaboration and partnerships.

Case Study

Earth Lab: demonstrating the possible

Earth Lab - our award winning learning building - is a demonstration of a sustainable future and of the role Earth Trust plays in challenging standard practice in the construction and design industry. Earth Lab continues to inspire others to think about how development decisions could actively address challenges of climate change and biodiversity.

Plans for the future

Advocating for investment

Champion green infrastructure policies and practices in local authorities, agencies and government, so that future developments are designed with ecosystem maintenance and health benefits in mind and appropriate levels of funding are allocated to develop and care for greenspaces.

Building nature in: Policy and practice for sustainable green space business models

Using our land, assets and projects, we pilot and demonstrate the building blocks for improving people's access to the environment alongside successful nature recovery.

We develop models and partnerships that support us – and others - to sustainably manage green spaces for the future, exploring new funding and operating models and working towards carbon neutrality.

Case Study

Driving regional change

We led the Oxfordshire Environment Board, supporting the development of the Local Nature Partnership to address biodiversity loss and catalyse nature recovery and helped establish a county-wide 'Growth Board' Environment Steering Group, to tackle climate change and improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

Plans for the future

Cross-sector collaboration

Continue to shape thinking about Oxfordshire's role in addressing climate and ecological emergencies through partnership and collaborations across public, private and third sectors.



The spaces that Earth Trust care for all include the vital resources of 'water', 'food' and 'trees'. Life on our planet depends on these natural resources and how we manage them.

These resources are building blocks of our ecosystem, and are also the themes through which Earth Trust can demonstrate, engage and influence others to deliver better outcomes for nature, climate and people's health.

Focusing on these themes enables us to develop our own models of green space management and support their application in other countryside and urban environments across the UK.

Food & farming

The food choices we make directly impact our own health and that of the planet. Farming and local food production has the potential to create great change for climate, nature and human health, and these sectors are changing fast.

We make local food and farming more accessible to enable people to support practices that are good for the soil, climate, nature and human health.

Plans for the future

Respond to and influence future food and farming policies and practice, explore new ways of managing farmland, forestry and wetlands introducing new farm management techniques and operational models to care for the soil using regenerative principles.

Future forests

Trees, woodlands and forests are critical components of life on Earth and of sustainability whether in cities, towns or the countryside. They provide habitats, mitigate climate change and deliver a wealth of benefits for human health.

We care for and demonstrate that different trees, woodland and forests deliver varied benefits, and the sustainability relies on planting the right trees in the right places for a future horizon of 50-100 years.

Plans for the future

Work with academic institutions and practitioners to explore the genetics of our research woodland and diverse woodland ecosystems to enable more resilient future forestry planning in urban and countryside settings. Demonstrate sustainable use and management of timber through our Centre and green spaces.

Water & wetlands

Water is a vital part of all ecosystems, above and below ground, and no other life can survive without it. Water features need to be managed and cared for within the context of their urban or rural landscapes, in order to deliver the vast benefits they offer.

We manage and demonstrate the ability for different waterscapes to deliver improved water quality, retention, sustainable use, carbon sequestration, and wetland habitats for biodiversity, climate and health.

Plans for the future

Undertake a first of its kind scientific study into the carbon 'footprint' of our new wetlands, and an ecological study into the changes in biodiversity and 're-wilding' of features to capture returning species, their numbers and habitats. Ensure our own infrastructure manages water wisely, demonstrating and engaging people of all ages in water and nature based solutions.

This strategy serves as a guide for Earth Trust's focus from 2022-2027, but it is also a call to action to those who share our vision.

Let's work together

Join our community of champions for access and engagement with natural green spaces for everyone.

Our Values

Earth Trust's values have always been integral to our culture and work. But in order to grow a connected community, we need to articulate our values more clearly. Our values apply both to how we work internally and externally with others. They define who we are. They act as a compass for decision making – energising change and guiding our decisions.

School children in a blossom filled Broad Arboretum



Learning together

We are all exploring and learning together. Collaborating and sharing expertise makes everyone's understanding of the world better. We embrace differences and enjoy constructive challenge, delivering our best work at every opportunity. We listen with deep attention and speak up when needed.



Making change happen

We focus our attention on the things that need changing to enable people and nature to live in harmony. We recognize that change happens in different ways and at different paces, and encourage fresh thinking and trying new ideas as an integral part of learning what works.



People at the heart

We seek to build a community of changemakers by fostering meaningful connection and lasting relationships. Everyone has a role to play. By nurturing a warm, respectful and open culture of belonging, based on meeting people where they are, we enable people to actively participate and contribute to change.



Connected to nature

We all have a responsibility to care for nature and understand our role within the ecosystem. But, for people to understand their environment, their place in it and their role in caring for it, they must have the opportunity to experience and nurture a deep connection to nature.

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Cover photo caption: East Oxford Primary School pupil on school visit to our lambing sheds.

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