

## Our inspirational and growing community

**You, our Friends and donors, along with our volunteers, our staff, visitors and those that enjoy our spaces are all part of a community that wants to be part of making change happen. We are proud that together we are guardians of some extremely special places, and that these inspire and influence others. Nature is a powerful solution to climate change, biodiversity loss and human health.**

Our Annual Impact report for 2021-22 is now available and I encourage you to take a look and reflect, as we have done, upon the achievements which your generosity have made possible. Throughout what can only be described as a challenging year (for Earth Trust, as for so many individuals and organisations), we are immensely proud that we successfully delivered a number of new and important initiatives which have increased and deepened our impact this year.

Over the coming months, we will be making some exciting developments to refresh and extend our Friends scheme, and bring more people into our community. More information on this will be shared with you shortly.

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Jayne Manley  
Chief executive



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We are also looking for exceptional people to bring their experiences, ideas, skills and abilities to support the transformation of the Trust, to join our Board of Trustees as we embark on the next exciting chapter in our 40-year history. We are seeking to appoint up to four Trustees. If this is something you would be interested in, we would love to hear from you to explore how you want to get involved and contribute.

Every one of us has a vital role to play in connecting with, and caring for, our green spaces so that people and nature thrive together. Your continued support is so valuable and (as we hope this newsletter will show) impactful in helping us become a strong voice for nature, and champion accessible green spaces, so that together we can take action for people and planet.



# Voicing concern for nature and the environment

In October, Natural England published their annual “people and nature” report, which revealed that **time spent in nature continues to be of the utmost importance to individuals, post-pandemic: Since coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, people have continued to find nature/wildlife and visiting green and natural spaces to be essential to their wellbeing.**

**86% of people said that protecting the environment was important to them** – in fact, when asked about issues facing the UK, ‘The environment/ climate change’ was the third most commonly selected response (chosen by 29% of people), after ‘Health/ the NHS/ Coronavirus’ (52%) and ‘the rising cost of living’ (30%).

This recognition of the value of nature is also reflected in behaviour. Between April 2021 and March 2022, **85% of respondents said they were going to make changes to their lifestyle to protect the environment.** It is clear that people want, and are willing to take, action.

The report findings are significant (and heartening, for us). The belief that for people to care for nature, they must first connect with it, has long been a central tenant for Earth Trust’s work. We have been influencing for better and more accessible green spaces throughout our 40 year history. But, over the last few months, we have been more actively connecting to national campaigns that make noise for nature.

We talked in a previous newsletter about the [Nature for Everyone](#) Campaign - Proposed clauses to the levelling up bill were taken to Committee Stage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on 20th October so we are anticipating an update on the campaign in the coming weeks.

Earlier in October, we added our voice to over 75 nature, countryside, heritage and health organisations in expressing concern to the Prime Minister about potential deregulation of environmental protection laws at the same time as planning rules are being relaxed within investment zones. There has also been intense speculation



that Defra may change or delay proposed Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMS). The government has denied an intention to go back on its commitment to the environment, but with only eight years left to meet legal obligations around nature restoration, this potentially represents a large set back to progress. Changing the rules when there is no clear plan or mandate for an alternative could set back environmental delivery by years.

The environmental sector is angry – many calling this an attack on nature. We have reached out to our community – volunteers, friends, supporters, asking you to express concern to MPs, and have been delighted with the response. Together, we can make change happen. As we connect our communities, our voice will become louder.

Natural England's report, as well as [The People's Plan for Nature](#) project (powered by the WWF, the RSPB and National Trust) are symbolic of the

heights of public interest in environment, the importance of having your say and demanding action.

With the launch of our new strategic direction, Earth Trust is embarking on a significant period of change – exploring how our new communication, engagement and education strategies can further develop the experience we provide for people, and how this can lead to real-world change where we all do our bit to help nature and people thrive together.

## Earth Trust education delivery programme

Our new Education Manager, Stuart Ritchie, joined us in August, bringing a wealth of experience from his previous role at Castlebank Horticultural and Environmental Centre in Lanark, Scotland. September saw an exciting new term begin at Earth School, with the return of our ever-popular Forest Acorns (nature-based learning and discovery activities for 3-5 years olds), and we welcomed back the schools that visit us on a weekly basis, including Wallingford School, Bishopswood Special School and Endeavour Academy. Young people from these schools have been visiting us for several years as they work through our Countryside Skills qualification. Having time out in the great outdoors is an essential part of their school week, with great impact for each student's wellbeing.

Throughout the academic year, we engage with several thousand children through Earth School visits. Moving forward, Stuart and the team will be responsible for developing and delivering an ambitious new education programme, carefully designed to deliver on National Curriculum objectives with a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), the Arts and Human History. We will champion cross-disciplinary learning at every opportunity, believing it to greatly enhance student understanding, and will make maximal use of our outstanding site which includes SSSI woodland, wildflower meadows, extensive farmland, wetlands and nationally significant heritage assets. This perfect suite of outdoor classrooms is now complemented by our award-winning Earth Lab. This new programme will address the three crises of climate, ecosystems and wellbeing, whilst also promoting our outstanding historical assets and heritage. We anticipate an exciting and challenging year ahead!



# News in brief

## Apr 21- Mar 22 Annual Impact Report

Due to the impacts of the global pandemic, Apr 21- Mar 22 was a turbulent year for Earth Trust, as for many organisations and individuals, and yet we are immensely proud that during that time we were still able to deliver a number of significant – and award winning – initiatives around nature based solutions to climate, biodiversity and health. We are steadily growing our community of change makers, in order to influence for greater change and action, and finding our voice - moving from a quiet organisation that does great things to an organisation that speaks out. Our impact has been widespread across all of our core areas and a comprehensive review of the year's achievements has now been published in our Annual Impact Report.

## Learnings from River of Life II

Just months since its completion, the River of Life II is already attracting fish, birds, mammals and... scientists! Now that construction is complete and the habitats are bedding in, the exciting next phase of our River of Life II project is just beginning. A collaboration of the Environment Agency, Land & Water Services and Bangor University, have begun monitoring at the site around Clifton Meadow and Church Farm, to help us explore how the new wetlands we have created along the banks of the River Thames are impacting the wider environment and, importantly, how they sequester carbon. There are currently large gaps in knowledge and understanding of exactly what happens to gas exchange across wetlands, so this research will be greatly valued by the scientific community.

## Thank the Earth Season

During October half-term, we welcomed more than 2,000 visitors to our very first Pumpkin Patch event. A dedicated team of 32 volunteers helped us sow the pumpkin seeds by hand and nurtured the pumpkin patch through a season of drought, hand-pulling thistles and weeds. It was a labour of love, culminating in a great sense of achievement for all as hundreds of visitors enjoyed picking and (we hope) appreciating their incredible, edible pumpkins. The event was part of our Thank the Earth season, focussed on encouraging people to reduce food waste and 'cook, carve, compost' their pumpkin instead of throwing it in the bin. A dedicated resource page was created on our website, including information on soil health, tips for reducing food waste, pumpkin recipe ideas and topical podcasts.



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