

A group of four volunteers is seen from behind, walking up a grassy hill. They are wearing backpacks and carrying tools like axes and a wooden post. The sky is overcast and the ground is covered in tall grass and small purple flowers.

Earth Trust Volunteer Impact Report 2024

Covering the period 1st January to 31st October 2024

Earth Trust

Volunteer Impact Report 2024

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Our purpose

To inspire people to address the climate, biodiversity and health crises with the power of natural green spaces.

Our vision

A society where accessible, engaging green spaces enable nature and people to thrive in balance.

Our mission

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

Championing accessible natural green spaces for everyone

For over 40 years, we have nurtured and improved the spaces in our care, demonstrating nature-based solutions and the power of engaging with the natural world, in order to influence for more accessible and healthier green spaces.

Our five-year strategy - Connecting Communities for Change - sets out our commitment to be louder and bolder in sharing our experience of balancing the needs of nature with the needs of people. To engage more people - in more ways - with the natural world. And, to do more than ever to ensure we are making a difference where it counts, prioritising our efforts on the big challenges.

We are rapidly growing a diverse community of changemakers who are supporting our aims to:

- Become leading-edge exemplars of managing accessible, engaging green spaces
- Ensure everyone has access to green spaces
- Make our voice heard to influence for positive change
- Engage more people with the natural world
- Work towards Net Zero

This report covers a ten-month period from January to October 2024, reflecting our transition to a calendar year reporting cycle.

Introduction

Fostering a community of changemakers

Nicola Frost

Volunteer Manager

Our Connecting Communities for Change strategy sets out our aspirations to do more to pioneer nature-based solutions and connect diverse communities to green spaces, to champion environmental action and drive the change we need to see to create a positive future for people and our planet.

Achieving these goals relies on our ability to grow a passionate movement of changemakers, a community of people and partners who can work with us, to nurture and improve the spaces in our care, demonstrate nature-based solutions, and inspire people to take action through connections with the natural world.

Volunteers are a critical part of the Earth Trust community, engaged in a wide range of activities that underpin our work, from supporting our land management and learning programmes, to engaging with people at our public events and helping with fundraising.

We are proud to have 266 active volunteers, people who share our commitment to championing accessible green spaces and nature recovery. During 2024 their generous contribution of time, energy and enthusiasm has enabled us to expand our work caring for some of South Oxfordshire's most important landscapes and community reserves, welcoming more schools to our Earth Lab to experience the power of outdoor learning,

and engaging more visitors than ever, making memories and connecting with nature at our sites. We would not have been able to achieve all that we have over this past year without the help of our volunteers, and we are incredibly grateful to each and every one.

As we move to increase the reach and impact of Earth Trust, we aim to grow our community of volunteers. To do this, we need to address the range and flexibility of the volunteer roles we offer, and facilitate involvement with our work in different ways, to connect more people with our cause.

The first step in achieving this has been the creation of a Volunteer Enabling Plan, launched in 2023. It sets out how we will expand our programme over the next three years and work to develop our approach to volunteering began in earnest this year, with initial actions well underway.

As we grow the number of people who give us the gift of their time, and enable more people in more ways to become involved with our work, we are creating a powerful network. A community of changemakers that can take action for people and the planet. Together, we can help nature and people to thrive in balance.



I love volunteering with Earth Trust, it is the highlight of my week. I always end the day feeling really happy.

Highlights of 2024

- 266 dedicated volunteers supporting our mission, donating over 16,700 hours
- Volunteering opportunities increased to 17 roles
- New weekend volunteering and young volunteering launched
- 14 volunteer learning events delivered to share skills, knowledge and experience
- 7 companies took advantage of our employee volunteering events with our rangers

OUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

We hugely value and appreciate the support of our volunteers, our community of changemakers who not only give their time to us, but share their skills and knowledge, enthusiasm and passion too, making a difference every day.

This is a reciprocal relationship. We recognise that the benefits of volunteering go both ways, and in return for the gift of time we receive, we aim to make the experience of volunteering with us enjoyable, rewarding and empowering.

Volunteer programme in numbers

	2023	2024		2023	2024
No. of active volunteers	212	266	Total hours donated	14,842	16,716
No. registered volunteers	310	354	Value of voluntary hours	£205,562	£231,517

Varied roles, flexible ways to get involved

Our volunteers come from all walks of life, and their reasons for being involved with Earth Trust are just as varied. Some are keen to learn new skills or gain work experience, many enjoy the social side – making new friends, connecting with like-minded folk – for others, it may be about improving their physical health or mental wellbeing, or simply to spend time in nature and make a difference in their local community.

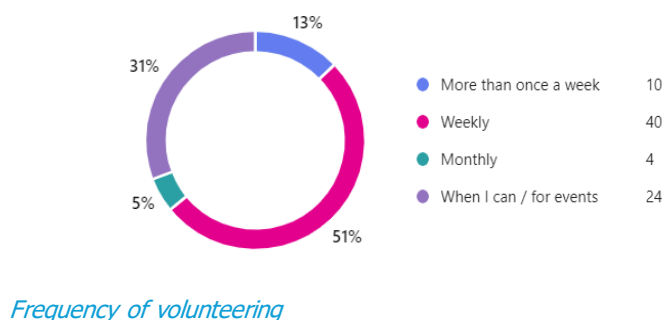
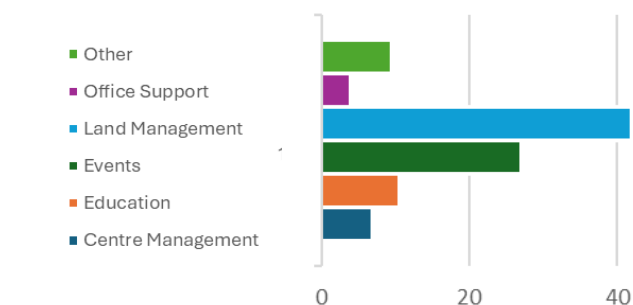
We provide flexible opportunities to volunteer across the whole organisation, from caring for our green spaces and lending a hand at events, to sharing information about our work in the community and supporting our education programme. We have regular, weekly work teams as well as options to help on a seasonal or ad-hoc basis.

We aim to offer a broad range of roles so that there is something for everyone, whether that's being cosy inside with a cuppa or connecting with nature outdoors, to meeting people and inspiring our visitors with the power of green spaces.

In 2024, we increased the number of opportunities to get involved, creating five new roles that brought the number of roles on offer to 17, spread across our teams.

Be Outdoors	Keep Cosy	Inspire Others
Community Warden	Office Support	Public Events Support
Butterfly Surveyor	Programing Admin	Earth Trust Ambassador
Centre Maintenance	Young Volunteers Co-ordinator	Education Support: Earth School
Land Management		Education Support: Earth Skills
Centre Gardener		Education Support: Earth Skills, SEN
Education Gardener		Walks, Talks and Tours Guide
Forester		Visitor Researcher

The majority of our volunteers are members of our regular, weekly groups - predominantly supporting the Land Management and Events teams.



% volunteers per team

Frequency of volunteering

Inclusivity, support and collaboration

We strive to be a diverse and inclusive place and are committed to equality of opportunity for all our volunteers.

We have a reasonably balanced gender split, between men (53%) and women (47%). Twenty-one per cent of our volunteers are aged 40-60, with the majority, some 77% of people, in the 60-80 age bracket, reflecting the fact that most of our roles are weekday-based so more suitable for people who are retired or working part-time. This is an area of our programme that we are looking to address further, to be able to welcome more people with a desire to get involved, but with limited time to do so in the week.

We provide a Volunteer Handbook & Safety Guide to all volunteers when they join us, full of useful tips and information, along with an induction to the charity and role specific training. Each volunteer is fully supported by a dedicated staff member who is an ongoing point of contact for advice and guidance.

We are proud to be a friendly, positive and collaborative place to come to, and this is evidenced by the feedback we receive from our volunteers.

Sharing information, knowledge and skills

Our primary way of keeping in touch with our volunteers is via a weekly e-newsletter – the Volunteer Bulletin – which highlights details of upcoming role opportunities, events and news from around the charity, along with team updates, often from the volunteers themselves.

We run a year-round programme of learning events for our volunteers, to make sure they have the skills and experience they need to be competent and safe in tasks asked of them, and feel comfortable in taking on new responsibilities.

This year, we organised training for our land management volunteers in skills like coppicing and axe work, and we made use of the expert knowledge of our volunteers too, with sessions delivered for staff and volunteers by our hedgelaying teams and education volunteers.



Education volunteers share their bushcraft expertise



Hedgelaying volunteers teaching traditional countryside skills

There were tree ID walks and visits to our wetland projects alongside the River Thames with our rangers, workshops with our Artist in Residents - a chance to connect with nature through clay and poetry – and wellbeing courses in our woodlands. In total, we provided 14 'Learning, Knowledge & Experience' events for our volunteers in the year.

A recent development has been the introduction of bi-annual Insight events; a chance to update our volunteers and members on the progress of Earth Trust's strategy, with a deep dive into specific projects. In spring, we held a webinar on our wetlands work, sharing details of the impact of our River of Life II habitat creation project three years on, and the autumn session provided a chance to hear first-hand from our senior staff on our work managing our expanded range of community reserves.

Friendship, wellbeing and recognition

One of the highest scoring benefit questions in our annual volunteer survey is the social side of being involved in volunteering. As well as the comradeship of the volunteer sessions themselves, we organise regular get-togethers for volunteers to socialise and meet people from different teams.

We have an annual summer party, team Christmas get togethers, and a dedicated celebration event during Volunteers' Week, which provide platforms for friendship, networking and connection. They are informal opportunities to meet with others – with all-important refreshments provided - and are a way for Earth Trust to say thank you for all the support we receive from our volunteers.

Recognising this contribution is important to us and for Volunteers' Week in June we sent every volunteer a handwritten thank you card and arranged a picnic at one of the community reserves we care for in Wallingford. And we present long-service certificates to volunteers who have supported us for over 10 years at these events too.



Volunteers' Week thank you cards delivered by staff to the Thursday land volunteers



Summer Social in Earth Lab with staff running the bar and BBQ, live music by the Ukulele Band



Long-service certificate presented to volunteer Jurgen



River of Life II walk for volunteers and members

Feedback on our programme

Every year we ask our volunteers for their thoughts on our programme via a dedicated survey. In 2024, 32% of our active volunteers responded (2023: 29%), with a good cross section of roles represented.

The survey is a valuable temperature check on how people are feeling about volunteering with us and gives us clear indications on what is going well and ideas for areas that need improvement.

In the question asking what motivates people to volunteer with us, the top three answers were:

- Taking action for the planet
- Learning new skills
- Supporting the local community

The elements of our programme our volunteers most value were similar to last year's results with the flexibility and variety of our roles scoring highly.

It is heartening to hear that our volunteers continue to feel supported and valued, and their knowledge and expertise are recognised at Earth Trust.

"Without exception I find staff are always appreciative of the contribution made by volunteers"

We have a very loyal volunteer base, with almost half - 47% - being part of our community for over three years.

We had many helpful suggestions for areas of our programme that we can improve on, with volunteers asking for more learning opportunities on the subject of climate action and biodiversity, and more information on our farm plans.

Whilst our volunteers appreciate the range of walks, talks and training sessions we organised in 2024 - 169 volunteers have attended a Learning, Knowledge & Experience event this year - some struggle with the timings of these as they are predominantly weekday, daytime events. This is something we will look at in the coming year, to make sure we can offer a variety of options to access skills development and learning opportunities.

We are delighted that our efforts to provide a rewarding and enjoyable volunteer experience are so well received by our community. From the overwhelmingly positive comments our staff receive on a regular basis in one-to-one conversations, to the warm words of thanks we hear at our dedicated social events, and the formal annual survey, we are proud to have such a well-regarded volunteer programme.

Hard to think of any possible improvements. I would instead like to say a big thank you to all involved whose efforts make volunteering with Earth Trust so rewarding.

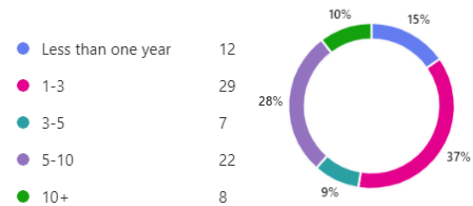


Earth Trust is the best place I have volunteered. I feel you have the balance right and always endeavour to make us feel valued and included.

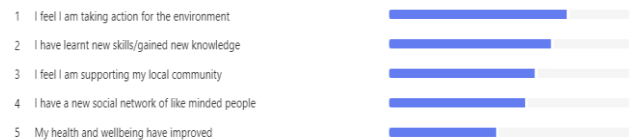
How important are these aspects of our programme to you?



How long have you been volunteering with Earth Trust?



What impact has volunteering with us had on you?



VOLUNTEER ENABLING PLAN

Our strategic 'Connecting Communities for Change' ambitions are only achievable with the support, and growth, of a loyal community of changemakers. We want to build and connect a wider volunteer community, diversifying our volunteer network and supporting more people to join us, so that together we can realise our goals and inspire action for accessible natural green spaces where nature and people thrive in balance.

In 2023 we undertook a review of our volunteering programme, using feedback from our volunteers, together with external insight, to understand the strengths of our existing activities and identify opportunities to evolve, improve and expand volunteering at Earth Trust.

The resulting Volunteer Enabling Plan, launched in 2023, and shared with our volunteers, brings clarity to our aspirations to grow volunteering, identified strategic and operational priorities for the next three years, and set out a roadmap for the development of the volunteer programme, with three priority areas of action:

1. Evolve our model to enable more people to get involved
2. Create a step change in the volunteer experience
3. Support the growing organisation through volunteering

Since launching the plan we have made significant progress on all three action areas and we are continuing our efforts to expand and improve our volunteer programme in 2025, to be able to reach more people and establish new ways for people to become involved with Earth Trust.

ACTION AREA 1: EVOLVING OUR MODEL

We created a new regular weekend volunteering opportunity earlier this year, with our rangers running monthly land management work parties at Wallingford Castle Meadows community reserve on a Saturday. This group now consists of 10 regular volunteers, many of whom work full-time so were unable to access our mid-week work parties.

Fresh air and exercise

Katy Hurley and Nick Cook were two of the first volunteers to join our new weekend team. They were keen to help care for their local green spaces and with busy full-time jobs they jumped at the chance to get involved on a Saturday.

"The idea of doing something that would also be a bit of exercise in the fresh air - hard things to come by sat at a desk all week - was a real attraction!"

[Read more > Weekend blog](#)



Following a pilot in 2023, we launched a Young Persons programme, and we are now able to offer six volunteer roles to people aged 13-18 years, a completely new endeavour for Earth Trust.

To date we have engaged with 22 young people. These range from young volunteers involved as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, as well as young people volunteering to gain work experience, and others motivated to join and support their local environment.

Taking action

A key area of our work is advocating for green spaces where people and nature thrive together. By participating in networks and events, we ensure our voice is heard in critical policy discussions and through 2023 and 2024, we contributed to the Nature 2030 campaign, calling for a “vote for nature” in the general election.

For the first time, we mobilised our supporters and Oxfordshire community and were delighted that volunteers joined us on the ‘March for Nature’ in London in July, adding our voices to the 60,000+ members of the public and nature-supporters from over 100 organisations and charities.



ACTION AREA 2: ACHIEVING A STEP CHANGE

In January 2024, we launched our official Volunteer Handbook & Safety Guide, helping to formalise our approach to the volunteer/charity relationship. It includes a volunteer agreement, introduction to Earth Trust’s work and values, and basic training. Together, these documents now form part of our registration and induction process for all volunteers.

Summer 2024 saw the introduction of Welcome Walks for our new supporters - members and volunteers – and this face-to-face interaction has proved to be very popular with 10 volunteers attending the first two walks.

*“The walk is a great idea. It allows new volunteers to meet other new volunteers, for us to meet staff and find out more about the charity - there’s more of it than I was aware!
It’s a great opportunity to begin to feel a part of the Earth Trust community.”*

Now in its third year, our Learning, Development & Experience programme for volunteers has continued to expand, to enhance our volunteers’ theoretical knowledge with talks, walks and workshops, along with training in core skills needed to carry out work safely and professionally, predominantly for the Land Management work groups.

Delivering a consistent experience

This year has also seen the launch of a new initiative, the Volunteer Experience Team, which was set up to facilitate collaborative working between staff who manage volunteers, in order to deliver a consistent and cohesive volunteer experience.

The team meet regularly and have developed a Volunteer Charter & Principles which have now been embedded into the way we manage our volunteer programme. One of the key benefits of the team is peer learning and skill sharing, creating a support system for staff involved in managing volunteers.

ACTION AREA 3: SUPPORTING GROWTH

As our volunteer community grows to reflect our five-year strategy aims, we have recognised the need to introduce capacity building for volunteering and have created supervisory roles for some of our main volunteer groups.

In November we will be running our first Session Leader training day for both staff and volunteers which will cover topics from health & safety and risk assessments, to welcoming new volunteers and safeguarding.

The intention is for this training programme to be run annually to onboard new session leaders, and as a refresher for existing volunteer team leaders. By identifying and upskilling volunteers who are interested in leading volunteer work parties we will greatly enhance our ability to grow our volunteer programme.

Support in new areas

With a growing staff team, our need for support volunteers has increased. Admin and office roles are the only indoor opportunities we offer, and they are very popular. In 2024, we expanded the range of tasks admin volunteers were involved in to five out of seven of our departments, with new ways identified for volunteers to support us, either remotely or in the office.



THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

The impact of our volunteering programme is two-fold. On the one-hand, our volunteering programme has a very direct impact on the people who get involved. And on the other, our work would not be possible without the generous donation of time our community of volunteers provide to us. Our achievements in pioneering nature-based solutions, connecting diverse communities to green spaces, and championing environmental action is dependent on their support.

A PERSONAL VALUE

Earth Trust volunteers share our passion for making a difference to sustainability, biodiversity and wellbeing using the power of natural green spaces. We know from our volunteer survey that people gain an immense sense of personal fulfilment, as well as enjoying improved physical health and mental wellbeing from being involved and making a difference.

Whether it's gaining experience or sharing knowledge, meeting new people or doing something for the local community, there are a broad range of benefits to be gained in becoming an Earth Trust volunteer.

Career step-change

For Laura, volunteering with Earth Trust has been the start of exploring a new direction for her work life.

When she began thinking about changing her career to something connected to her passion for the countryside, Laura got in touch to find out what volunteer opportunities there might be.

"I've gained new land management skills, from coppicing and scything to traditional hedgelaying, that have enabled me to take the first steps in moving my career onto a new path."

[Read more > Time for change](#)



Countryside skills

Martin, a passionate hedgelayer, not only contributes his time and expertise with our land team but he also shares his experts with others.

Over the course of the 2023/24 autumn/winter season, he and the team mentored new volunteers ensuring the continuation of this vital countryside craft.

"It really inspires me seeing younger people doing their bit to look after the planet. I hope one day they'll pass on this craft again."

[Read more > Sharing green skills](#)



Physical health & wellbeing

Searching for a renewed sense of purpose after a career in science research led Debbie to explore volunteering options Earth Trust.

With a great love for wildlife, history and beautiful places she was keen to contribute her time to their benefit.

"I was very warmly welcomed, and after a tour around I felt a very strong connection to the place and soon joined the centre gardens team. Being a volunteer has been a considerable aid in my re-connecting with the joy of being alive and re-engaging with the world. I am very, very lucky to be part of it."

[Read more > Finding a sense of purpose](#)



Team building in green spaces

Volunteering is a great way to bring groups of employees together, taking part in hands-on, rewarding projects and learning first-hand about biodiversity, green spaces, and sustainability, in the landscapes where it happens.

In 2024, seven groups took up the opportunity to spend the day with a member of our ranger team. Our land management work is led by the seasons, so there is always plenty to get stuck into, and the teams we've welcomed this year have been willing to try their hand at all we ask of them.



Arrow Planning team volunteer day in Paradise Wood, June 2024

LANDSCAPE-SCALE NATURE RECOVERY

Together with our supporters, we are guardians of important habitats in South Oxfordshire, from our flagship green spaces around Little Wittenham and 530-hectare farm, to our network of managed community reserves.

At the forefront of maintaining these landscapes is an approach that prioritises public access, preserves heritage features and actively contributes to nature's recovery.

Our Land Management team of rangers and volunteers have seen us achieve significant progress towards becoming a leading-edge exemplar of managing accessible, engaging green spaces in 2024, showcasing nature-based solutions and restoring biodiversity at the locations in our care.

Highlights of 2024

- 5 community reserves at Didcot, Wallingford and Abingdon nurtured for nature and access with the help of 127 land volunteers
- 472 metres of hedgerows restored by two expert teams of volunteers at our Little Wittenham green spaces
- More than 295 hectares of woodland, wetland and meadow landscapes supported by our volunteers, nationally important SSSI, SAC and SAM landscapes
- 8 volunteers carried out butterfly transects through spring and summer to monitor our progress in managing our land for biodiversity

Accessible, natural green spaces

At Wallingford Castle Meadows community reserve, our land management approach has been instrumental in achieving the prestigious Green Flag Award for the 16th consecutive year.

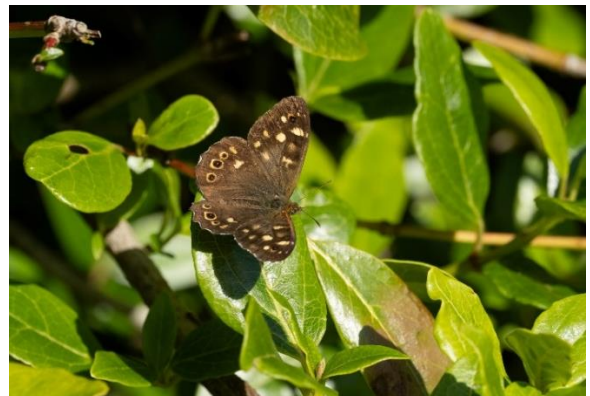
It's a reflection of the many hours of hard work of our volunteers in supporting us to enhance biodiversity and access at this historical green space, through every season, in all weathers.



[Read more > Green Flag for Wallingford](#)

Supporting species recovery

Each of the reserves has its own unique flora and fauna, and our team of volunteer Community Wardens become experts on the site they take on responsibility for, undertaking regular checks to maintain access for visitors and helping in the care of these nationally crucial habitats. Butterfly surveys are carried out twice a year by specialist volunteers, they provide critical data on our conservation efforts for at risk species.



[Read more > Community wardens at Earth Trust](#)

Rare wetland habitats

Wetlands offer nature-based solutions to some of the planet's most pressing problems. Their ecosystems deliver a whole raft of benefits, from improved water quality, and flood alleviation to carbon sequestration. Yet these important habitats are disappearing fast in the face of climate change and urban expansion.

South Oxfordshire features some of the rarest and most threatened freshwater plants and wildlife in the UK. Alongside the River Thames in Wallingford are important riparian habitats, and in Abingdon, rare fens and reed beds. With the help of our volunteer teams, we work at the community reserves here on rotation through the seasons, for conservation and access.

Managing mini wetlands

At Abbey Fishponds in Abingdon, we carry out a spring and winter cut of the fens and reed beds.

This programme of scything and removing the material helps to promote flora diversity by stopping the area from scrubbing up and becoming dominated by the coarse, competitive species.

In such a delicate habitat, these jobs cannot be done by machines. It's hard, manual labour so we are especially grateful to our volunteers for their efforts here.

Read more > [Water & Wetlands](#)



Creating a woodland mosaic

Little Wittenham Wood is a SSSI site, a woodland of international importance for wildlife as it is home to one of the UK's largest colonies of great crested newts (an endangered species). Our Land Management volunteers are regularly hard at work helping to maintain and improve the woodland habitat there for a wide variety of flora and fauna.

We cut scallops along the rides and coppice areas on rotation to create a mosaic of vegetation height and a patchwork of habitats around the woodland ponds. This traditional management technique helps form a diverse structure to the wood with open sunny glades which support a wide range of native plants, invertebrates, small mammals and woodland birdlife. The material we cut also provides stakes for our hedge laying volunteers, and the timber that is extracted is used in our boiler to heat Earth Trust centre.



Tree surveying specialists

With the help of a new team of specialist forester volunteers, we began to map and record the trees in Little Wittenham Wood, carefully identifying species and documenting the ecological significance of each tree.

The first completed survey saw 4 ancient trees and 54 veteran trees categorised, ranging from ash and hazel to field maple and cherry plum.

It's important work that will have a lasting impact on our preservation of these trees in the woodland.

[Read more > Meet-the-foresters](#)



Tree survey training

Coppice restoration

In August, we began work on a new project to transform a neglected coppice coupe.

Supported by the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment, with funding from South Oxfordshire District Council, it aims to enhance biodiversity and engage people in sustainable woodland management skills and traditional crafts.

To prepare the site for planting hazel and sweet chestnut trees, our volunteers' first task has been work installing a protective deer fence.

[Read more > Coppice coupe](#)



Preparing holes for deer-proof fencing

THE INSPIRING POWER OF GREEN SPACES

Immersive, real-world learning

Over the last two years, our education programme has evolved to offer immersive, real-world learning experiences that foster meaningful connections between young people and nature. We refreshed our curriculum-linked Earth School with a focus on STEM and human history for Key Stage 1 – 3 and developed new ways for our younger visitors to learn about where we came from, the planet in the present and how we can live in a future world.

We are incredibly lucky to have a cohort of dedicated, inspiring education volunteers that support our learning programme and in 2024 we grew the team from four to 20 people to enable us to accommodate a significantly growing number of school visits.

The volunteers are a critical part of our education experiences: they enable our staff to give more attention to each child during their visit, whilst ensuring teachers and the school feel looked after too. And they support our expanding holiday-time Earth Explorer events for families, providing friendly, caring support and encouragement to engage visitors in nature, history and heritage.

Highlights of 2024

- 32 education volunteers supported our Earth School, Earth Skills and Earth Explorers programmes
- 3,273 school children experienced hands-on Earth School learning experiences making full use of our surrounding flagship green spaces
- 752 children attended an Earth Explorers holiday session, connecting with the natural world and discovering tales of our ancestors in the landscape where history happened

"Our volunteers are helping us to bring science into the real world, making it fun and relatable, complementing the theory in the classroom." Stuart Ritchie, Education Manager

Little Acorns on tour

Earth Explorer learning events have become a regular part of our school holiday programme, and our education event volunteers helped with over a dozen seasonal, nature-based play sessions for local youngsters.

With funding from South Oxfordshire District Council, we were able to offer a free activity day for families at Abingdon's Abbey Fishponds community reserve and our volunteers Jan and Stuart had great fun sharing their excitement of mini-beast finds with families.

[Read more > Earth Explorers](#)



East Oxford primary school visit

Every one of our education volunteers is invested in the quality and impact of our work, supporting and enabling our workshops, and delivering activities in our Earth School workshops.

They are involved in every aspect, from encouraging pupils to explore more climate-friendly materials or discovering the diversity of pond life, to guiding young learners in spinning Earth Trust sheep's wool into yarn during an Anglo-Saxon workshop.

[Read more > Earth School](#)



Learning in the land

The quality and diversity of our physical spaces is fundamental to the provision of our education programme, from the Wittenham Clumps, to our woodlands and wetlands, meadows and farmland, every land volunteer helping us to look after these spaces is also contributing to the quality of the Earth Trust education offer.

Closer to the Centre, the gardening volunteers ensure the green spaces around Earth Lab are inviting all year round, creating a hugely positive first impression for visiting children and young people, that they have arrived somewhere special.

Food origins

Our new Kitchen Garden, created by our volunteers, has become a valuable immersive teaching resource, connecting visiting school groups with the origins of their food.

By providing hands-on experiences in planting and harvesting produce, it has positively impacted children's attitudes towards healthy eating, with teachers reporting students trying new foods they would have previously avoided.

"I loved exploring the garden and finding all the different insects and animals living there."

"It was fun eating the food and tasting different things. I also liked learning about the planet".

[Read more > Cultivating a greener future](#)



Our maintenance volunteers have also contributed hugely to the development of our education gardens, including building composting bays, a log store, shed and rainwater harvesting system, and installing a wood-fired oven. Without their expertise, time and enthusiasm, we wouldn't have these brilliant resources in our education toolkit.

Engaging people for change

Through our public programming we're engaging people with the environment, providing ways for them to notice, appreciate and celebrate the natural world, that we hope in turn will inspire them to take action to protect it.

We have a core team of 35 public programming volunteers, supported by 47 additional volunteers who help at our bigger events and festivals.

In 2024, our volunteers supported a broad range of events, from our Archaeological Festival, Artweeks Gallery, Spring Festival and Pumpkin Patch, to our series of workshops and specialist talks, from clay making and owl conservation, to dig tours and foraging walks.

Highlights of 2024

- Over 8,000 people attended an event, connecting with the land and our learning more about Earth Trust's work, our purpose and mission
- 3 flagship events - Spring Festival, Archaeology Festival and Pumpkin Patch - facilitated conversations about food, farming, heritage and history
- 25 talks, walks and workshops allowed visitors to experience aspects of our work in more detail from creating poetry inspired by the local landscape to learning about the night sky in a stargazing evening at the Clumps

Our volunteers are essential to the success of the programme. With limited staff resources, we simply couldn't run flagship events, like the festivals, that attract thousands of people, without their support.

We rely on over 20 volunteers per day for large-scale events like these, to help with logistical tasks and safety, engage visitors with our cause, and create a welcoming atmosphere. And they are crucial for the smooth-running of medium-sized events too such as Cocktails on the Clumps, theatre performances, stargazing nights, and our annual Christmas Market.

Their dedication and hard work enable us to deliver an ever-growing and more diverse range of events, allowing us to connect people to nature, the landscape and natural heritage through memorable experiences that promote change.

Connecting food and farming

By sharing information on land management and soil health, our Thank the Earth season in October engaged a wider audience with our ambitions and created deeper connections to the land through our farm-based autumn event.

Some 60 volunteers helped us deliver our flagship Pumpkin Patch event over seven days, from welcoming visitors and co-ordinating car parking, to supporting crafting activities and sharing information with visitors on ways to get involved, including volunteering opportunities.

[Read more > Thank the Earth](#)



Community outreach

As well as being present on the Wittenham Clumps to meet with visitors and highlight the best walks and wildlife to see, depending on the season, our six volunteer Ambassadors have represented us at 12 local events so far this year, sharing highlights of our work with nature groups and village exhibitions.

With a passion for our cause and a good knowledge of the local community, the team are helping to raise awareness of Earth Trust and generate support for our work to grow our community of changemakers.

[Read more > Ambassador role](#)



"A lovely day out at Earth Trust enjoying the Pumpkin patch and Maize maze. Marvellous muddy fun, even the grumpy pre-teens had fun. Every single volunteer was friendly, engaging and seemed to really care about giving you a good experience." Visitor

"It made me want to volunteer at Earth Trust, absolutely lovely." Visitor

"I love being at Earth Trust, the volunteers are always great and there is something peaceful about it, even when it's busy." Visitor

LOOKING TO 2025

Our strategic programmes are elevating our core work in land management, education, engagement and inclusion to new heights. Underlying all of this is our commitment to grow a passionate movement of changemakers and demonstrate scalable solutions for a greener, more resilient world. Together, we're ensuring equitable access to nature, inspiring bold environmental action, and shaping a brighter future for people and planet.

Our strategic focus for our volunteer programme remains on creating new routes into volunteering with us and making the experience purposeful and fun.

In 2025, with your support, we will

- Increase the number of roles available at weekends, evenings and holidays
- Enhance our Insight, Learning & Experience programme
- Be the best neighbour we can be - with new charity partnerships and support for community groups
- Meet the demands of our current and future community through support for session leaders, a flexible corporate offer and flourishing opportunities for young people to volunteer and develop skills.

THANK YOU

We are incredibly grateful to all our volunteers for their support of Earth Trust in 2024, and to the members and funders who make our volunteer programme possible.

Donors & Funders

Asda Foundation
Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust
DLM Charitable Trust
Doris Field Charitable Trust
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
Nineveh Charitable Trust

Pye Charitable Settlement
Sandra Charitable Trust
Schroder Charity Trust
South Oxfordshire District Council
Swire Charitable Trust

Corporate & Community Volunteers

Infineum UK Ltd
Wallingford Green Gym
Siemens Healthineers
Virgin Media O2
Arrow Planning

Corteva
Vtech
Vector Design
SLB (Schlumberger)

Earth Trust is a member of OCVA www.ocva.org.uk

GET INVOLVED

Make a positive impact for people and planet!

We're looking for more people to help us carry out our vital work, championing accessible natural green spaces that enable nature and people to thrive in balance. From caring for local community reserves or lending a hand at events, to sharing information about our charity, we have a whole range of flexible opportunities available for you to get involved with. If you have some spare time, we'd love you to join our team!

earthtrust.org.uk/volunteer

Photo credits: Chloe Lee, Mike Towndrow, Liz Towndrow, Nick Warner, Gemma Warr, Burst Design

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