



Strategy
2026-2030

Thriving together

Showing what's possible for nature
and people in real working landscapes

Foreword

People need to see that change is possible.

Walking up the Wittenham Clumps, where Earth Trust is based, you can explore an ancient hillfort, watch red kites overhead, and walk through fields where crops grow alongside wildflowers.

People come here for all sorts of reasons. For space and fresh air. For the view. To walk the dog. Families come to spend time together. Children come to play, to explore and get muddy.

It's a place full of life.

But something deeper is happening here.

This is a working landscape — one that produces food, supports wildlife, holds centuries of history, and is open to everyone. It is not a landscape set apart from the real world. It is part of it.

And that is what matters. The challenges facing land, nature and people are well understood. Nature is in decline, farming is under pressure, and demand on land continues to grow. But focusing only on problems doesn't motivate people. It can overwhelm them.

What people need are places where they can see something different. Places where they can experience how it might work.

That's what Earth Trust does.

For decades, this landscape has shown how nature and people can thrive together. This strategy marks a clear step forward in that role.

We are strengthening what happens on the land and how people experience it – bringing together farming, nature recovery and public access in a way that is practical, visible and grounded in reality.

Because when people can see it clearly, something changes.

They understand more. They care more. And they begin to believe that a different future is possible – not just here, but everywhere.

This is how change spreads.



Ian Barrett
Chief Executive



Sarah Hendry
Co-Chairs of Trustees



Frank Nigriello

For decades,
this landscape has
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and people
can thrive
together.



Nature and people thriving together

We inspire change by showing what's possible – in a real working landscape that people can see for themselves.

We want to see nature and people thriving together.

We know that access to nature improves people's quality of life and we work to make this a place that people return to.

We believe that nature recovery can work in the real world. Not just in protected areas, but across the landscapes we use every day. So we show it, here on our land.

Our Mission



We protect, restore and care for nature, wildlife, landscapes and heritage for current and future generations.



We bring people in – to experience it, care about it, and take action, showing how farming and forestry can support nature's recovery.



A real, working landscape

**Earth Trust is based at the Wittenham Clumps
– one of the most visited green spaces in Oxfordshire.**

From the iconic twin hills and ancient hillfort to the working farmland that surrounds them, this is a place shaped by thousands of years of human activity. Today, it remains a living, working landscape – not preserved as a museum, but actively managed and used every day.

Across more than 1,300 acres of fields, woodland, wetland and meadows, we bring together farming, wildlife, heritage and public access in one place. Alongside this, we care for a network of community nature reserves across the south of Oxfordshire, extending our work beyond the Clumps into the wider landscape.

These are not remote or hidden sites.

Around 250,000 people visit our landscapes each year – walking the hills, exploring, attending events, or simply passing through on their daily lives. Thousands more take part in organised activities, from school visits and education programmes to seasonal events and volunteering.

That scale matters.

The Wittenham Clumps are not a controlled experiment or small demonstration site. This is a busy, complex, real-world landscape – with all the pressures, trade-offs and opportunities that come with it.

It is also a place with a long record of change.

For decades, this land has been managed in ways that have increased wildlife and restored habitats on what was once ordinary farmland. Alongside that, we have extended our work into new areas of habitat restoration, community engagement and land management.

The combination
of scale, openness and
active management
is what makes Earth
Trust distinctive



This combination of scale, openness and active management is what makes Earth Trust distinctive – a farmed landscape that it is visible, accessible and experienced by so many people.

It is here – in a real place that is used and visited every day – that new ways of managing land can be tested, understood and shared.



Showing what's possible

Over the next four years, we will focus on making this landscape work even better and bringing people in to experience it.

Everything in this strategy supports our aim of inspiring change by showing what's possible in a real working landscape that people can see for themselves.

We will strengthen two connected parts of our work:

We will rebuild our work on the land – restoring our role as a place where nature-friendly farming is tested, demonstrated and proven in practice. Our focus is on making this a productive, well-managed landscape where nature is increasing, farming is viable, and the results are clear to see. We will be open about what works, what doesn't, and the trade-offs involved, showing how nature-friendly farming can be implemented not just in theory, but in the real world.

We will transform how people experience this landscape. Through the development of our Centre as a Gateway to Nature, and through a stronger programme of events, education and activities, we will draw more people into the landscape and engage them more deeply when they are here. We will create a place that people actively choose to visit – a destination for days out, discovery and shared experiences.

These are not separate priorities. They depend on each other.

Better land management provides something real to see. Stronger engagement ensures that more people understand it, value it, and share it with others.

This matters beyond our boundaries. Farmers need to know that nature-friendly approaches can work in practice, not just in principle. Communities need places where they can experience nature first-hand. And decision-makers need examples they can trust.

Our role is to bring these together in one place, and make it easier for others to take it further.

We are not trying to do everything. We are focusing on what this landscape can uniquely offer: a real place, openly managed, where people can see how farming, nature, heritage and access can work side by side. Because if people can see that it works here, it becomes easier to believe it can work elsewhere.

We are
focusing on what
this landscape can
uniquely offer





Nature will
only recover if it
can survive and
thrive on working
farmland



Farming that works for nature

For nature to survive and thrive nationally, it needs to be able to flourish across the whole countryside.

We are rebuilding our role as a place where nature-friendly land management is shown in practice on the ground.

Action for nature's recovery often focuses on nature reserves and rewilding. These have an essential role to play. In landscape terms however, they only cover 2-3% of land nationally. Nature will not survive and thrive unless it can do so on the 95% plus of countryside that is not set aside for nature, including the 70% of the UK that is farmland.

Nature-friendly land management is part of Earth Trust's DNA. Forty years ago the Wittenham Clumps were – in wildlife terms – ordinary English farmland, supporting what was then a normal range of species. From the outset, we managed the land as farmland, restoring traditional land management techniques, researching the impact of farming and forestry methods on wildlife, and sharing our learning widely.

People remember Earth Trust as an organisation that was one of the first to create beetle banks and flower-rich field margins and to test new approaches to grazing, before these approaches were widely known.

Thanks to those 40 years of nature-friendly land management, we still have good populations of species such as grey partridge, linnet and yellowhammer that are now rare elsewhere.

The last few years have been difficult for UK farming, with a changing climate leading to periods of drought and flooding that have significantly affected harvests. These pressures are expected to grow in coming years and farmers are looking at how to increase the resilience of their farms. Nature-friendly farming has a key role to play in improving soil health and water management. Reducing reliance on fertilisers and pesticides can help reduce the cost of poor harvests. We are looking at the effects of climate change across our landscape and how we can improve the health and resilience of our land.

Over the last two years, we have:

- renewed our focus on nature-friendly farming and introduced regenerative farming techniques to build the quality of our soils and further improve the health and resilience of our land
- planted trees in arable fields and pastures to demonstrate the potential for agroforestry to improve farming and nature and build resilience
- created a new farm nature trail to show people what this looks like

Rebuilding our role as a visible, credible showcase of nature-friendly farming in practice means three things. We will:

- 1 test and demonstrate approaches that are not yet mainstream – including lower-input systems and more diverse rotations, livestock integration and agroforestry
- 2 make this work visible and useful to other farmers and landowners – through visits, workshops, peer learning and open sharing of what works and what does not
- 3 show that this can work as a real business – productive, profitable and resilient, with stacked farm enterprises, farm shop and cafe sales and new routes to premium markets helping strengthen the model over time.

We will shape a landscape where farming and wildlife are visibly improving together, backed by monitoring of soil health, biodiversity and wider ecosystem benefits.

This will be a central part of showing what's possible in a real, working landscape.

It will give farmers and landowners the confidence to make changes on their own land, right across the countryside.

We will shape a landscape where farming and wildlife are visibly improving together



Nature you can see

When wildlife is visible and thriving in ordinary landscapes, people can believe change is possible.

We are restoring and improving habitats and supporting species across our landscapes and community reserves.

Earth Trust manages a wide range of habitats, from species-rich grasslands and farmland to woodlands, wetlands, hedgerows and ponds.

Over the years we have pioneered habitat restoration at scale, including chalk grassland restoration at Bushy Bank and our River of Life project, which created new backwaters on the Thames for young fish and wetland birds.

Over the last two years, we have continued to manage and improve habitats, such as the fen at Tuckmill Meadow, where we have cleared back brambles, introduced grazing, built leaky dams and constructed new boardwalks to open up, improve and protect the habitat, enabling wetland species such as southern marsh orchid to flourish.

We have trained volunteers in wildlife monitoring and begun to digitise 40 years of wildlife records to enable us to track the impact of our work on wildlife.

More people
will experience
nature up
close

Over the next four years, we will take a deliberate, landscape-wide approach to improving habitats and species. We will:

- continue to restore and enhance habitats across all of our land
- strengthen key features such as hedgerows, ponds and field margins
- use grazing and other management to improve the quality and diversity of grasslands
- further enhance Thames-side meadows
- target specific species where recovery is possible - including work to bring back lost species such as turtle dove, lapwing and fritillary butterflies
- build a strong evidence base through ongoing biodiversity monitoring

More people will experience nature up close – not as something rare or distant, but as something returning in a landscape they recognise. Clear, visible proof that nature can recover alongside farming and public access will give greater confidence to visitors, communities and decision-makers alike that nature recovery is possible across the wider countryside.



Restoring heritage

Understanding landscapes' deep roots helps people value and care for them.

We are exploring, conserving and helping people connect with heritage throughout the land we manage.

We care for landscapes with an extraordinary depth of history at the Wittenham Clumps and our nature reserves. The Iron Age hillfort, Roman remains and other features at the Wittenham Clumps, reflect continuous use over thousands of years. This is part of what makes this landscape distinctive – alongside farming, nature and public access – as one living, working landscape.

Over recent years, we have been exploring the history and archaeology of the landscape with partners including Dig Ventures and Oxford Archaeology. Archaeological digs have revealed a Roman aisled farmhouse next to our Centre. We have also taken steps to enhance the setting of Castle Hill hillfort through the creation of new chalk grassland in the adjacent field.

At the same time, some of this heritage is under pressure. Castle Hill has been significantly affected by the number of visitors, grazing and wildlife, leaving visible scars that require restoration. Much of the history of the landscape also remains easy for visitors to miss

Over the next four years, we will continue to take an active approach to caring for and revealing heritage across the landscape.

We will:

- restore and repair damaged areas of Castle Hill
- further enhance the landscape setting through improvements to flower-rich habitats, woodlands and grazing
- create alternative routes to reduce pressure on vulnerable areas and open up more of the site
- continue archaeological work and improve interpretation
- create more opportunities for people to explore and engage with the history of the landscape

This will create a more resilient landscape where heritage is protected and visible and can be enjoyed without being damaged.

More people will recognise this as a landscape shaped over time – not just a place to visit, but a place that has been lived in and worked for generations. A deeper connection to the landscape will strengthen people's sense of responsibility for how it is cared for in the future, and help build wider support for the changes needed across the countryside.

A deeper connection to the landscape will strengthen people's sense of responsibility for how it is cared for in the future



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A place to discover

The Wittenham Clumps is a place where people can take their first steps into nature and start to care for it.

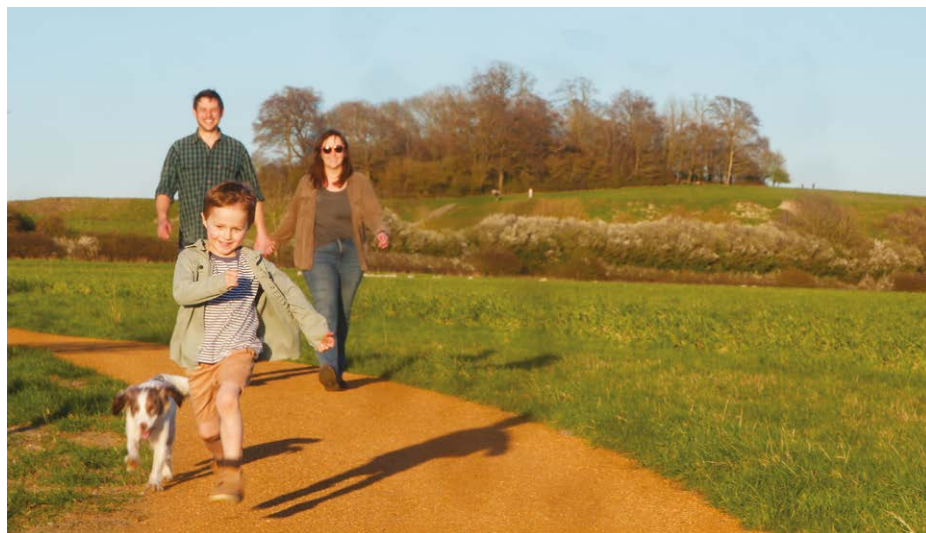
We are transforming the Earth Trust Centre into a visitor gateway to the Wittenham Clumps, where people start to explore and fall in love with the landscape.

We want everybody to be able to experience nature and the countryside and the benefits that come from this for health, confidence and quality of life.

Opening the landscape to people who might not otherwise have access has been central to what we do for over 40 years. But access to the Wittenham Clumps goes back further, to when the County Council first agreed access with the landowners in 1970 – an agreement still marked annually each year by the presentation of a single rose as a symbolic rent.

Today, around 200,000 people visit the Clumps each year. As the local population grows, this access is becoming increasingly important.

For many, visiting the countryside feels natural. For others, it's less familiar. It can feel unclear where to go, where to start, or whether it is really for you.



We are changing that by making the Wittenham Clumps a place people choose for a day out:

- A new access track from Sires Hill and a new car park will create a straightforward and confident arrival. It will feel like somewhere you can drive up to, park, and get going.
- The Visitor Centre will be welcoming and practical, with the facilities families need for a day out, including toilets and baby change
- A timber-framed café and farm shop will provide a place to relax with great coffee and cake, to stop for a meal, or to buy food from our land and local suppliers
- A high-quality nature-based playscape will provide activities for children and families to enjoy, gaining confidence to explore the wider landscape
- Waymarked trails will make it easy to head out into our fields, woods and wetlands to discover wildlife and see nature-friendly farming in action

By 2030, we will actively engage 100,000 people at our Centre every year.

More people will build the know-how to navigate an active working landscape.

The Wittenham Clumps will be a place where people feel comfortable exploring the countryside. A place where people can discover wildlife, fall in love with nature and be inspired to care for it. It will be a place where people can experience nature-friendly farming and see how wildlife can recover in landscapes like this.



The Wittenham
Clumps will be a place
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Deepening connections

People come back because there is always something new to see as the landscape changes through the seasons.

We are building a year-round programme of activities and events that people will want to keep coming back to.

Many people know Earth Trust for our events. For some it's the lambing festivals they brought their children to. For some it's a film or talk. For others it's the chance to spend time in nature and celebrate the summer solstice with a cocktail in hand.

Our events attract over 9,000 people annually, from fun, social entry points and family activities to more in-depth opportunities to explore how nature-friendly land management can help restore wildlife.

We are building our events into a clear seasonal calendar, with activities and events that reflect what is happening on the land, giving people lots of reasons to return.

By 2030, more than 20,000 people a year will be attending events at the Wittenham Clumps.

More people will visit more often. People will come back at different times of year and see that the same places look different. Wildlife changes. The landscape doesn't stand still.

Repeated experience will deepen their connection to nature and the land.

What people see here will shape what they believe is possible.

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Learning from the land

Early experiences of the countryside shape how people see it and care for it.

We provide hands-on learning rooted in the landscape, where children explore nature, history, food and farming.

Education has been part of what Earth Trust does from its earliest days, when local schools came for visits at Little Wittenham Manor and young people learned skills in conservation and countryside management.

Our learning offer now centres on school visits which bring pupils out of the classroom into a living landscape. Here they can explore curriculum content such as rivers, biodiversity and history through direct contact with nature and heritage in a real working landscape.

Over recent years, we have improved and expanded our learning provision. In 2021, we opened a new purpose-built education building at the Centre. And last year we created an “edible classroom” where children can see food growing and young people can learn horticultural skills.

We now reach over 7,000 children a year through school visits, programmes and events.

More young people will develop a lasting connection to nature and a clearer understanding of how land can be managed

Over the next four years we will focus on increasing reach, repeat engagement and progression over time. This means:

- bringing more schools and young people into the programme
- increasing the number of repeat visits and longer-term relationships
- strengthening links between school visits, regular programmes and wider engagement

By 2030, more than 10,000 children a year will be coming to the Wittenham Clumps for landscape-based learning.

More young people will experience how it feels to be out in nature, that freedom as they run down the Clumps, the feel of the wind as it whips around them – and a sense that this is a place for them. More young people will develop a lasting connection to nature and a clearer understanding of how land can be managed. And more young people will return with their families – becoming part of the wider community of visitors and supporters.

Learning plays a central role in our wider aims, helping more people see how nature recovery can work in the real world.



Creating community

Our Volunteers and Supporters are a vital part of the team and the work we do here.

We are building a strong community where people are actively involved in helping nature and people thrive.

We want people to feel part of this place – not just to visit, but to belong. Volunteering for Earth Trust gives opportunities to build communities, make lasting friendships and develop skills for life. Generously giving their time and energy, volunteers come to really care about what happens here and are essential to delivering it.

We have a thriving community of volunteers and members who support everything we do.

Across the site, volunteers contribute their time, skills and enthusiasm – from practical conservation work like hedging and habitat management, to supporting education, events, welcoming visitors and maintaining the land. This approach is essential in helping us care for the landscape and create a great experience for the people who visit.

Alongside this, over 500 members support the Clumps and our wider efforts, taking part in events that bring people together.

We are invested in strengthening this community, and over the last year have created new roles, changed systems and developed an evolved approach. We have made our volunteering accessible to younger people through our Young Rangers initiative and expanded our capacity for more volunteering through experienced volunteers leading and supporting others through our Volunteer Session Leader programme.

Since 2020, our volunteer community has grown from 55 to 309 active volunteers, contributing more than 21,500 hours each year and playing an increasingly important role in our ambitions for this landscape.

We want people to feel part of this place – not just to visit, but to belong



Over the next four years, we will build on this by growing and strengthening our community.

We will:

- develop new volunteer roles to support a more active and welcoming visitor experience
- expand opportunities for young people to get involved and build a lasting connection with the place
- continue to improve how we support and coordinate volunteers
- grow our volunteering and membership offer to reach more people
- create more opportunities for people to feel part of the life of the place

More people will help care for the landscape and support everything we do. More people will have a sense of belonging to this place, and a shared responsibility for looking after it. A growing group of people will support, champion and sustain Earth Trust – helping our work reach further beyond our landscape.

Working together for change you can see

Partnership working enables us to achieve far more than we could alone.

We are building strong, practical, place-based partnerships that support work on the ground.

We are grateful for long-standing support of partners such as the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, the National Lottery and businesses such as Lucy Group, Beard and Brickability for helping us grow our impact.

We work with partners in a practical, place-based way, supporting work on the ground and helping make real change possible across the landscape.

Partnership with Earth Trust offers something distinctive.

Our work is here to be seen and experienced – a real, working landscape where projects can be visited, understood and shared with staff and communities.

We are grateful for the support that businesses have given to our education work – helping schools and children from some of the most deprived areas around us to come to the Wittenham Clumps, with all of the benefits that brings.

We know that companies are increasingly looking to understand and offset their impact on nature, to increase the resilience of their supply chains, reduce risks and meet growing expectations of staff, customers and sustainability reporting. Working with purpose-based partners can help to meet these needs and give benefits in profile, reputation, and retention and recruitment of purpose-driven staff.



As expectations on businesses grow, Earth Trust can help turn ambition into action, providing credible, tangible ways to contribute to nature recovery.

We are looking for more partners to work with us on specific, practical projects, including nature-friendly farming and habitat creation – from agroforestry and sustainable farming approaches to restoring and enhancing grasslands, hedgerows, ponds and wetlands.

Together, this can create something more than individual projects. We can build a growing body of real-world examples of how businesses and charities can work together to restore nature in working landscapes – showing what's possible, and helping it spread beyond our boundaries.

We are building strong, practical, place-based partnerships that support work on the ground

How we work

Our values underpin everything in this strategy, shaping how we manage the land, how people experience the place, and how we turn ideas into action.



Caring for nature

We care deeply about the natural world, landscape and heritage. We show how nature and people can thrive in a productive, farmed environment through long-term responsible stewardship.



Learning together

We try things out in the real world, learn from the results, and share what we learn. We engage people's hearts and minds in learning through practical experiences in our landscapes.



Making change happen

We focus on turning priorities into practical action. We take responsibility for making progress where it matters most, so our work makes a meaningful difference.



Inspiring & involving people

We meet people with warmth, energy and a sense of fun, creating welcoming, enjoyable experiences that draw people in and make them want to get involved.

Putting it all together

How the changes we are making deliver wider change



Building strong foundations

Caring for the landscape, reaching more people and inspiring wider change all rely on a strong, sustainable base.

We are strengthening our finances and environmental sustainability to increase our impact for nature.

Around 200,000 people visit the Wittenham Clumps each year, but these visits generate little direct income to support the cost of caring for the landscape and keeping it open for everyone.

We spend over £400 a day just to maintain the habitats, heritage and paths in the Wittenham Clumps landscape.

At the same time, what happens here is bigger than this place alone. By managing a real, accessible landscape and making that visible, we help show how nature, farming and people can work together – and support that approach spreading beyond our boundaries.

To make this possible, we operate a mixed model. We keep the landscape wildlife-rich and freely accessible, and fund its care through a combination of income-generating activities, partnerships and funding.

We are strengthening our finances and environmental sustainability to increase our impact for nature

We have begun to strengthen this model. The farm shop, café and nature-based playscape are all aligned with our purpose while also generating income. Weddings and venue hire provide further opportunities for both engagement and income, and we will continue to invest in these areas to improve what we offer.

We will continue to grow income in ways that support, rather than compete with, our purpose – creating a more sustainable model for the site while maintaining what makes it special and accessible.

Alongside this, we will continue to manage and improve our environmental footprint. We are already carbon and nature positive, with a wealth of biodiversity, and the carbon sequestered by our land each year outweighing emissions from our operations (both direct and indirect). We will build on this through improvements to resource and energy use, including growing the use of renewable energy and heat systems at the Centre.

Together, this will create a more resilient organisation – able to care for the Clumps, engage people at scale, and show what's possible in the wider countryside



Scaling what works

What works here can work elsewhere.

This place shows what is possible.

Nature can recover in ordinary, working landscapes. When people experience that for themselves, something changes. They care more. They believe more is possible.

With the right support, we can take this further – reaching more people, improving more land, and helping what happens here take hold more widely.

This is how we will see nature and people thriving together throughout the country.

Nature
can recover
in ordinary,
working
landscapes





This place
shows what
is possible

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