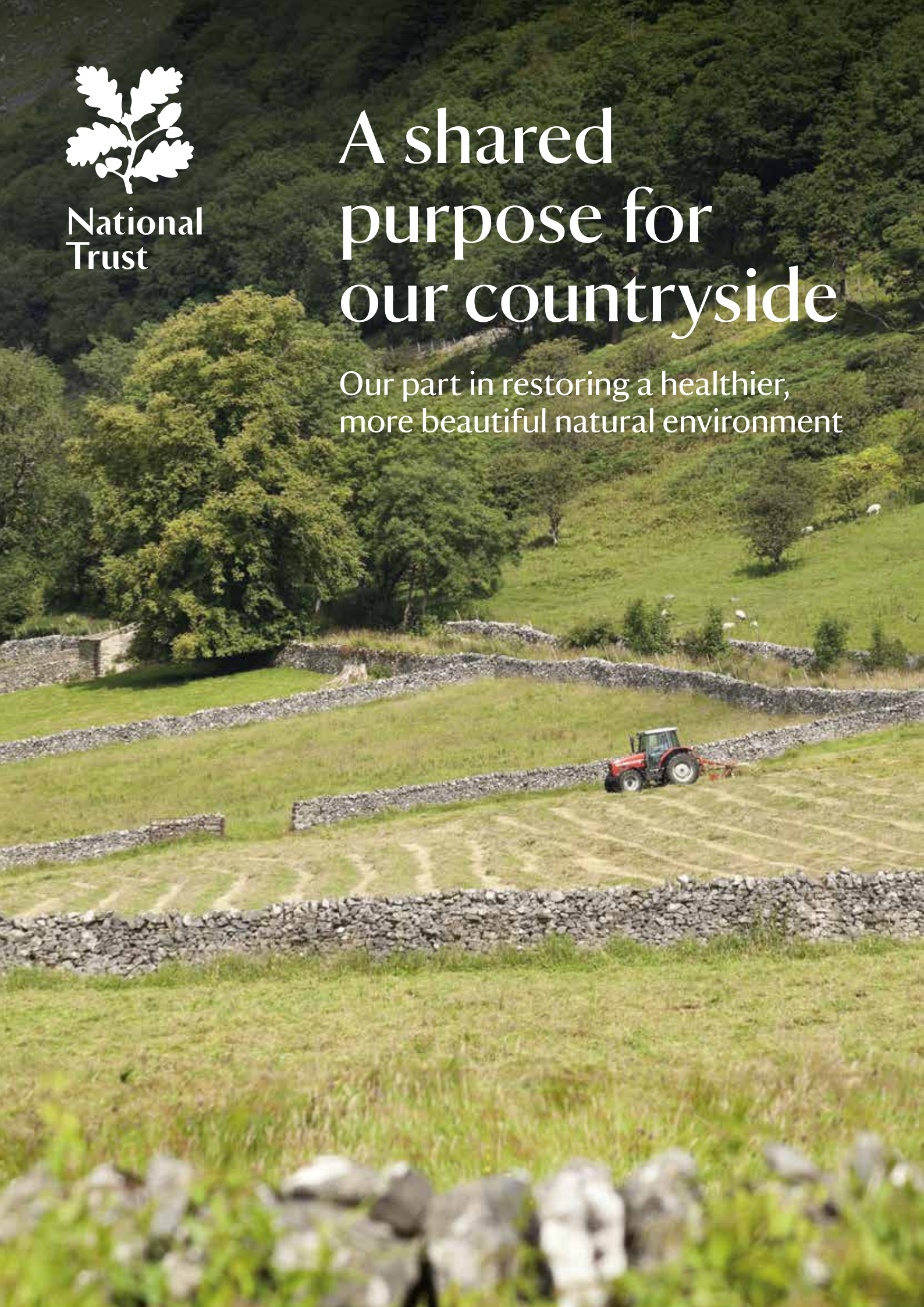


National
Trust

A shared purpose for our countryside

Our part in restoring a healthier,
more beautiful natural environment



This is about our natural environment

Our shared inheritance of woods, cwms, loughs, moors, crags, brooks, fens, brecks, hedges, rolling fields, heaths, saltings, creeks and beaches. It's about their peats, sands, soils and waters. And the creatures and plants that live in, on and over them. It's about why we need this fabric as a nation, as much as we need our ancient sites, grand houses and art collections, or even our languages. It's an appeal to protect and carry this fabric with us, in fast-changing times, so we can continue to flourish with it in the future. And it's about the National Trust's part in helping to do this, on behalf of everyone.

What you'll find inside

This booklet is split into the following sections:

- 1 Why a healthy beautiful natural environment matters to us as a nation
- 2 The National Trust's part in the natural environment
- 3 Our case: Why we believe we have a shared purpose in prioritising nature
- 4 Securing the fabric of our natural environment
- 5 Shaping the workings of our countryside
6. Making it happen

Right Ballymorran Bay showing Feehary Island in the centre and looking south Pealsland Point in the foreground.

‘Here we set out our vision and our priorities for the countryside which we and our partners look after for the nation. We believe that we need to play our part in protecting and improving our natural environment – soils, water, wildlife – for future generations. A healthy countryside and flourishing wildlife are not just good for people’s health and happiness, they are also the essential foundations for a thriving rural and national economy. As the nation moves through uncertain times, we will work together with others to make this case for the countryside and for nature, in words, and in actions on the ground.’

**Helen Ghosh,
Director-General**

‘The Trust’s renewed focus on wildlife and landscapes strikes a strong chord for the Ranger team and others here in Edale. We put our hearts into our work because we care passionately about land and nature, and most importantly, what it can do for people. That drives what we do in the places we look after in the Peak District. But of course, these things still matter whether a place is owned by the National Trust or not. The principles are the same everywhere. It makes practical good sense to take care of our soils, water, and wildlife. For all of us, and for our children. That’s why this is a shared purpose.’

**Ted Talbot,
Countryside Manager
and Ranger Champion**





A few years ago there was a culling of words from the Oxford Junior Dictionary – words like acorn, bluebell, conker and cowslip were no longer seen as sufficiently part of children's everyday experience.

Nature is like air or clean water; not really something that can trend in and out of fashion. It's a tangible part of us, and our children, and it always will be.

Why restoring a healthy beautiful natural environment matters to us as a nation

Nature got here before us, but since we arrived tens of thousands of years ago we have fed ourselves, built our settlements, and shaped our culture from the natural fabric around us. In our fields, hedges, tracks, woods and settlements there's no hard line that shows where we stop and nature begins. It's part of us, we're part of it, and it defines and enriches us as a nation.

But now the natural environment is under pressure. Nature's vital signs don't look great. It shows up in the ever-declining counts of once common birds, insects, animals and plants. You can see it in satellite images of plumes of topsoil drifting out to sea, washed down from the land and threatening the future of our harvests. Water companies see it in the millions they spend on cleaning water from their reservoirs, rivers and aquifers. Communities feel it when storm-water flashes down from the hills and floods their homes. And we all experience it in the increasingly extreme weather, turning up the pressure on nature.

To add to these pressures, the outlook is uncertain, as exit from the EU brings new challenges as well as opportunities to put nature back in good heart for future generations.

We see this as a shared challenge. And we think it's our job as a conservation charity and as one of the nation's biggest landowners to step up and play our part in securing a way forward and shaping the future. And we're excited. We believe in our nation's countryside. We believe in the central role that the natural environment has in our national life and its economy. And we believe that the National Trust has a huge amount to offer.

The National Trust's part in the natural environment

When you think of us, you might well picture some of the treasury of houses and gardens that we've been entrusted with. Lanhydrock, Montacute, Sissinghurst, Bodnant, Hardwick, Fountains Abbey. They're the eye-catching showstoppers that shape many people's view of the National Trust. But to us the natural environment – land and nature – is an equal treasure. And it cuts at least as deeply to our cause and our foundation. In fact, it's explicit in the 1907 National Trust Act:

'The National Trust shall be established for the purposes of promoting the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty and historic interest and as regards lands for the preservation (so far as practicable) of their natural aspect, features and animal and plant life.'

Nature matters to us because it matters to the nation. In fact, ten times as many people come to our outdoor places, as to our pay-for-entry houses and gardens. From windswept headlands way out on the edge in Cornwall or Pembrokeshire, to lowland farms in Gloucestershire, up to the mountains of the Lake District, and The Mournes of County Down. Whether we own them or not, places like these and the nature they contain have always mattered to people.

What we can bring to the table:

1000

square miles of land
...of which two-fifths are SSSI or ASSI,
and fifteen square miles are National
Nature Reserve

775 miles

of coastline

The expertise of our
staff and volunteers

200 million

visits every year

The long view

– and a duty to serve the nation

Right Visitors walking on a footpath in Cwm Idwal Valley towards Ogwen Valley. Carneddau and Glyderau, Gwynedd. Wales.



Since 1951 we've been taking care of thirty-three square miles of the wild Carneddau and Glyderau ranges in Snowdonia – including Cwm Idwal, pictured here.

The hill farms in Snowdonia, economically marginal as they are, help define the landscapes here. But they are especially exposed to the changes ahead in agricultural subsidies. They're recognised by Government as being in a 'Less Favoured Area'. Yet ironically these landscapes are 'Most Favoured' in terms of what they can do for the nation.





River catchments encapsulate the ways in which the natural environment and human needs are bound up in our landscapes. In catchments like the Bure, which flows through the Norfolk Broads, the needs of householders, water companies, farmers, and tourists overlap. They all ultimately have an interest in stable, fertile soils that stay on the fields, and in aquifers that are reliably charged with water.

Why? Well this matters for supplying clean drinking water and for managing floodwaters; it matters for growing crops and rearing livestock, and it matters for the famous wildlife and beauty of the Broads. It matters too for the barn owls, water voles, and brown trout on our Blickling Estate. They benefit from the restoration of streams and meadows along the Upper Bure, which in turn plays its part in securing soils and improving water quality in the river.

As with all catchment work, this is about playing a part in landscape-wide action, that goes well beyond our estate. And our work on the Upper Bure fits in with a wider pattern of catchment partnerships that we are involved in across the country.

Our case

Why we believe we have a shared purpose in prioritising nature

Whether you are a farmer, a conservationist, a hill-walker, a day-tripper, the natural environment provides foundations for the things you do. We'd extend that, too to the other big players in the rural economy; water companies, food manufacturers, hotels and B&B's, cafés and shops. And all the tens of thousands of people these enterprises employ.

Without secure and fertile soils, reliable clean water, and the living fabric of wildlife that binds our environment together and makes it beautiful, these working parts of our countryside would struggle to thrive. Not only that, but in our view the benefits the natural environment brings to wider society provide the countryside's best case for continuing support, by business and by Government.

Our case, therefore, is that we all have a shared purpose in prioritising nature.

That's not nature to the exclusion of other things; it's nature as the enabler of other things. It's a simple, practical case, made all the more timely by the changes in the world around us.

What prioritising nature means on the ground is as varied as the farms, fells, moors, mountains, estates, and coastlines that we play our part in looking after. In the places we take care of we're guided by the particularities of each place. And we don't have a hidden blueprint or set of solutions that we seek to impose. If this is a shared cause, then navigating the right path is a shared task with our tenants, our neighbours, and the partners that we work with more broadly to make things happen across the land.

However, we do have some firmly held principles and objectives. These are set out in more detail over the following pages. But in essence, they come down to two key endeavours that we will play our part in delivering, and promoting:

- **Securing the fabric of our natural environment**; making sure we carry it with us into the future. This is our first responsibility, and it's our priority for the land we take care of. It's about securing and constantly improving the condition of our wildlife, soils and water. We think it's a good principle for all land, not just our own.
- **Shaping the workings of our countryside**, so that in the future it can flourish along with nature. This is the 'how'. It ranges from the close, detailed work of restoring habitats and conserving species, through to addressing the bigger questions of how we manage and pay for our nation's countryside.

This very definitely isn't about abandoning land to nature, and giving up on it being productive. Virtually all of our land will still be producing useful things: food, water, wood, fuel, energy. Or being used to manage floods, or to help people have fun and get healthy outdoors. Or preferably combinations of all of these, plus other unplanned for things in the future. In fact, by protecting soils, water, and wildlife we will be securing the ability of the land to be productive in the long-term.

Left View over the lake at Blickling Estate, Norfolk.

Securing the fabric of our natural environment, making sure we carry it with us into the future

This is our first responsibility, and it's our priority for the land we take care of. It's about securing and constantly improving the condition of our wildlife, soils and water. We think it's a good principle for all land, not just our own.

Two fifths of all the land we are responsible for – an area the size of Berkshire – is designated as a Site, or Area, of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI, or ASSI). These are places that are recognised as having national significance for their wildlife or geology. Just as you would expect us to take exemplary care of our listed houses and gardens, we aim to take exemplary care of these precious natural places, too. And of course, just as with houses and gardens, our efforts don't stop at the edge of the designation. Across all of our land we'll be aiming for three things. These are our 'vital signs' – the things you can look for to know it's working:

1. Landscapes that are rich in wildlife. This is about nature being on the front foot; where it has come out of the margins so that our landscapes are suffused with woods and trees, thriving wildflowers, birdlife, and insects.

2. Healthy soils and water. This means soil that stays on the fields, where its organic matter, carbon, and health can be built up. And watercourses and river catchments that can soak up the rain, and drain out steady flows of clean water, free from contaminants or heavy sediment loads.

3. Nature that is available for everyone to enjoy. This cuts to the heart of our cause. We're restoring a healthy, beautiful natural environment precisely because it enriches people's lives. This is about landscapes that are open and welcoming; paths, signs, car parks and cafes that are organised so that people have wonderful experiences out in nature, and the constant creation of new ways for people to get involved, so that they know they are part of the story.

Putting all of this together on the land isn't a simple game. But we're getting to be old hands at this. We've been managing land since we started with our first five acres at Dinas Oleu in Wales, in 1895 – observing, thinking, working, listening; balancing needs. So we've got experience, and experience enough to know that we'll keep learning.

Over the next ten years we'll work on our own land and with our tenants to reach the following milestones:

- Getting all of our designated wildlife sites on course to be in good ecological condition.
- Using 10% of our land to create or restore 25,000 hectares (nearly 100 square miles) of new wildlife habitats.
- Meeting a minimum 'do no harm' principle across all of our land; where the condition of soils, water and wildlife is maintained, at least.
- Nature-friendly farming; moving to a position where improving the condition of nature is a core part of the business model first on half, and ultimately on all of our land.

Top left Lapwing

Top right Wall Brown Butterfly, *Lasiommata megera*, nectaring, showing underwing

Right View of Edale from Edale Rocks at Kinder Scout. Part of the Pennine Way in the Middle distance.





We plan to use our land to help reverse the decline of once common, much-loved species. Birds like the yellowhammer and lapwing (pictured), which have lost over half their number. And butterflies like the wall brown (pictured), which has declined by almost three quarters since the 1970s.



On the forty square miles of the High Peak Moors in the Peak District we've got a fifty-year vision to secure the natural fabric of the land. We'll be rewetting and reversing the loss of peat and blanket bogs – safeguarding 13 million tonnes of carbon, and clearing the water that flows down into the Derwent dams. We'll be getting a richer mix of moorland plants and birds to thrive up there, and allowing trees to spread into the valleys and cloughs. It'll still be very much a working landscape; just working for a wider range of purposes than in the past. It'll be beautiful, an even more stunning place for the people who make their way up there from Manchester, Sheffield and beyond.

Shaping the workings of our countryside, so that in the future we can flourish along with nature

This is the ‘how’. It ranges from the close, detailed work of restoring habitats and conserving species, through to addressing the bigger questions of how we manage and pay for our nation’s countryside.

At the heart of what we do there will always be a need for practical conservation. In this our teams will be guided by the rubric of ‘**better, bigger, more, and joined up**’ set out by Sir John Lawton in the Government’s 2010 review of English wildlife sites:

Better. This means restoring damaged habitats, reducing the pressure on nature from intensive management, and taking account of natural processes – like allowing vegetation to find its own balance or a river to find its own course.

Bigger. This is about creating more space for nature. Much of it is about allowing fragments of habitats to expand out so that they’re more robust. But it’s also about more ambitious, landscape-scale wildlife projects. Like our hundred-year plan at Wicken Fen, to extend the wetland by over twenty square miles, reaching out to the edge of Cambridge.

More. This is straightforward habitat creation; like establishing wildflower meadows, or saltmarsh to buffer our shores, or planting woods, trees, and hedges.

Joined up. This is partly about creating new habitats to link existing ones up, so species can move around. But it’s also about finding ways to make all parts of the land, whether cropped, grazed or not, more hospitable to nature. As a conservation charity we think we have a particular role here, leading the way in doing this.

Our local teams look after large parts of our land directly and in-hand. This gives us the direct capacity to deliver our aims, and to set exemplary standards for taking care of land and nature. It also provides a platform, and the practical credibility, to engage with our other land, which is let out under tenancy agreements. On our tenanted land we achieve our aims by finding common cause and working in partnership with our tenants. We see this as an opportunity in itself. It means we benefit from our tenants’ wealth of knowledge and experience, it grounds our work in the practical realities faced by rural businesses, and it makes what we do relevant beyond our estate.



We’re aiming to see a step-change on our land in the abundance and diversity of flowers that are good for pollinators. Plants like cranesbills, vetches and knapweeds (pictured).



Mel and Jonty Brunyee have been developing their business at Conygree Farm in the Cotswolds since 2004. They've created a mixed farm – integrating herb rich leys, field margins, fallows, farmland bird cover and limestone grassland with the rearing of Cotswold sheep, Traditional Hereford cattle, and Gloucester Old Spot pigs. Their ethos is founded on low input, premium output farming. Nurturing the soil is at the heart of their activities. And they have a passion for wildlife, with their flower-rich pasture providing habitat for pollinators, brown hares and farmland birds, as well as being a nutritious component in their animals' diets. And like many farmers, they take their land enterprise beyond the farm, combining consultancy, livery, and education. We're delighted. What they do is good for the long-term resilience of their business, it's good for wildlife, and it's good for the land.

Putting nature at the heart of the rural economy

Wildlife experts have been pointing out for years that birds, insects, mammals and plants won't last forever if they're confined to nature reserves, even ones that are bigger and more joined up. So we're acutely aware, across our estate, of the need to place nature at the heart of farming and the rural economy – making it part of the business model. So when nature and farms flourish, they flourish together.

This is the long game, and ultimately it goes beyond us. It brings us to those bigger questions about how, as a nation, we manage and pay for the countryside. It means shaping a future rural economy where land enterprises thrive *because* of a healthy, beautiful natural environment. Where they capitalise on the natural environment, but also protect and reinvest back into it so they can continue to thrive, on into the future. It's about putting people in a position where they can play the long game – harvesting, not mining the land.

For us this starts by nurturing our tenancies and our communities – investing in skills, supporting diversification, backing enterprising new entrants. But there's a wider game here too, to secure viable sources of income for the full range of outcomes that society is looking for from the land. Of course, we imagine this will be partly about grants. But we think it will also be about engaging commercial interests, like water companies or the food industry. And creating government policies that provide the right 'operating environment' to encourage them to get involved. This is fresh territory, but we're working on it because right now there's everything to play for.

Above Traditional Hereford cattle at Conygree Farm, Gloucestershire.

Left Marbled White Butterfly on knapweed.

Making it happen



We take care of 108 miles of the coast around Northern Ireland. Taking in dramatic heathy headlands, rockpools, caves, coves, arches and inlets; sea loughs, sand dunes, drumlins, tall cliffs and lookouts; rugged, windswept, beautiful wildlife: oystercatchers, kittiwakes, thrift, seals, seaweed, seashells, sunsets; big wild Atlantic waves.

And wide open beaches, like this one, Portstewart Strand at the mouth of the River Bann – two miles of pristine sands and waters. Where people, literally, immerse themselves in fresh salty nature. And where, if you like, you can taste the view from Harry's Shack. Lobsters landed on the beach by local fisherman Peter Boston on his day boat. Home-grown veg from the proprietor Donal Doherty's three acres.

It's just the sort of small extraordinary straightforwardly excellent, green-roofed café-in-a-shack we love to work with. That's because this sort of enterprise knits a lot of the pieces of a healthy, beautiful, natural environment together in one place; making a living from it, investing back into it by sourcing great food from nearby; supporting livelihoods. And helping make nature, and the reasons we cherish and protect it, come alive for the people who stop by.

We're firm in our principles and our aims; there's no meaningful compromise on the basic premise that we need to secure our natural environment – soils, water, and wildlife – for the future. But making it happen will be an evolving and collaborative process. It will involve listening, innovating and taking risks, learning, and working every step of the way with our partners.


We know we can help restore a healthy, beautiful, natural environment because our organisation has been entrusted with powerful means to make things happen:

We'll make good use of our land. We'll make sure the natural fabric that sets each of our places apart is secured, and passed on to the future in a better state for nature. We'll find ways to give the workings of these places, and the people that work them, a viable business model so they can keep on working. And we'll try things out, learn from our mistakes, learn from others, and share what we find with our neighbours and our partners.

We'll invest in people and relationships. We know that we can achieve great things when we work in partnership. This fills us with confidence, because we respect and we're inspired by the people we find ourselves working with – our tenants, other businesses, other conservation organisations, the public, volunteers, our members, and our passionate and able colleagues on the ground.

We'll use our voice. Our cause, and our foundation, gives us the remit and the responsibility to speak up. We think that remit and responsibility is backed up by our practical experience, and our stake in managing land throughout the country. So we'll speak up and promote this cause, because we think it's the right thing to do on behalf of the nation.

And we'll see things through. We're here to stay. Much of the land we look after is held in perpetuity. So we can play the long game; we can allow things to have their natural pace – whether that's habitats or human relationships. And in practical matters especially, we'll have patience. We're happy to take small steps, so long as we're always progressing in the right direction.



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Front cover Farming at Buckden, Upper Wharfedale, Yorkshire Dales.

Back cover A bumble bee at Westbury Court Garden, Gloucestershire.

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