

- Some of England's biggest landowners, who collectively own and manage around 30 percent of England's land, sign pact to tackle climate change
- Signatories include farmers, charities and private landowners, vow to work together alongside nature to use land effectively
- Commitment made to coincide with outcomes of COP26 to show what can be done at home to tackle climate change

Joint principles include backing nature to tackle the climate crisis, reducing carbon and adapt to changing circumstances



The National Trust has brought together some of England’s largest landowners and managers together to sign up to a range of commitments to help the government meet its net zero ambitions and reverse environmental damage.

Among those who have signed up include the RSPB, Church Commissioners for England, the Duchy of Cornwall, National Parks, Soil Association, The Wildlife Trusts and Woodland Trust.

The organisations have vowed to work together to ensure that our natural resources like peat bogs, woodlands and rivers are used as effectively as possible to tackle the climate crisis.

The deal was agreed following a one-day summit at the National Trust’s Wimpole Estate in October, which was attended by Defra Climate Adaptation minister Jo Churchill

Some of the ways land can be used responsibly to tackle climate change include a focus on creating more woodland, restoring and protecting peatlands to capture carbon, reconnecting rivers and preventing flooding as well as the management of coastal erosion.

Participants have also sent a letter to Environment Secretary George Eustice which states their own practical commitments as responsible stewards on how they plan to tackle climate change.

The six climate and nature-based solutions that organisations have signed up to include:

1. Take meaningful action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change to ensure a net gain in carbon sequestration.
2. Create or restore homes for wildlife that support nature’s recovery and provide long term biodiversity increases
3. Be designed, implemented and managed in consultation with local communities, taking into account past, present and future landscape character
4. Facilitate opportunities to deliver benefits for people at a local and a national level, such as access to nature and green job generation
5. Consider the location, ecology and surrounding landscape to ensure multiple benefits, such as carbon sequestration and flood management.
6. Be future-proofed and adaptively managed so they are climate resilient for generations to come.

John Weir, Head of Real Estate at the Church Commissioners, said: “The two pillars that underpin our approach to responsible investment are respect for people and respect for the planet. The devastating impact climate change is having on both humanity and the natural environment is clear for all to see, and this requires the private and third sectors working closely with government to create a world that is greener, healthier and safer.

“As an organisation with significant land holdings, we have the potential to leverage our natural assets to deliver positive social and environmental outcomes while still fulfilling our fiduciary duties for the Church.

“This pact brings together some of England’s biggest landowners and we look forward to working alongside the National Trust and other landowners in meeting the ambitious targets we have all agreed to set ourselves.”

Notes to editors:

1. UK government climate change targets [here](#).
2. The historic Wimpole Estate has a heritage of farming for more than 2,000 years, and now plays a vital frontline role in the fight against the modern threat of climate change. The farm here is testing nature-friendly methods, taking new approaches to land management and making homes for wildlife, which involves low-carbon farming practices, improving vegetation cover, planting trees and creating 121 acres of pastures, scrub, ponds and wetland. A carbon audit is currently being carried out on the estate which will help measure success and identify more ways to reduce emissions. Renewable energy sources are used across the estate, with the house and tearoom heated by a ground-source heat pump and a welcome centre powered by solar panels, which also helps run off-road electric vehicles. More here
3. Full list of signatories account for around 30% of land in England - calculated using data taken from whoownsengland.org and organisations' own figures and include: National Trust, Church Commissioners for England, Duchy of Cornwall, Holkham Estate, National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks England, Nature Friendly Farming Network, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and Yorkshire Water
4. The Trust has ambitious targets to deliver nature-based solutions, including Holcombe Moor, where restoration of the blanket bog created natural flood management for Greater Manchester, at Wallington woodlands, where aerial laser mapping revealed the best place to plant trees to protect newly discovered archaeological features, and at Porlock Vale, where we re-naturalised the flow of water across the floodplain to slow the stream and create more joined up aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
5. Full targets here:
 1. Be implemented alongside, not instead of, urgent and meaningful action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change and increase biodiversity, and be designed and monitored to ensure that there is a net gain of carbon sequestration. The most pressing action we need to take to tackle climate change is to reduce the harmful emissions we release. Society, and particularly land managers, can do this, for example, by shifting towards renewable energy sources, using electric vehicles, making our buildings more energy efficient and reducing emissions from agriculture. Nature-based solutions can complement such carbon reduction strategies and help reduce the impacts of existing and continuing emissions; however, we cannot use nature-based solutions to neutralise all the harmful emissions we are currently releasing. Reducing emissions and mitigation efforts, including nature-based solutions, will be crucial in reaching our national ambition of having net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Hence, for nature-based solutions to be meaningful in the fight against climate change, they must be accompanied by efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Nature-based solution should be implemented alongside, not instead of, existing and increased nature conservation policy, funding and action which is essential to turn around the loss of

biodiversity in the UK. Implementing nature-based solutions will go a long way to creating new, nature-friendly habitats, but significant separate work is also needed to create the breadth of high-quality habitats required by our native species. Land use changes and management practices of nature-based solutions can themselves generate emissions; steps should be taken to ensure that these emissions do not outweigh the carbon sequestered by the solution. Where possible, baselining and monitoring should be put in place so the net emissions of the project can be understood and minimised.

2. Create or restore wildlife rich habitats and ecosystems to genuinely support nature's recovery and provide long term biodiversity increases in a changing environment. Implementing nature-based solutions should not only deliver carbon sequestration, but also generate long-term improvements to biodiversity by creating new or restoring old habitats that wildlife will use. This will ensure that any solution implemented increases the number and abundance of species that benefit from the land. Land managers should ensure that there is a net increase in the land managed for nature and the number of benefits delivered for biodiversity through nature-based solutions. This should be done by taking a baseline of wildlife abundance and frequent monitoring to ensure that the solution is genuinely delivering for native wildlife. Overall, any nature-based solution should contribute to the Government's effort to halt and reverse species decline by 2030 and should be monitored to ensure this is achieved.
3. Wherever practical, be designed, implemented or managed in consultation with local communities to ensure they take account of past, present, and future landscape character. In some cases, to implement a nature-based solution, consultation with local communities is compulsory, but land managers, wherever practical, should aim to work in collaboration with local communities to ensure nature-based solutions are well understood and accepted. The multiple benefits that land managers can deliver to the environment and society are not always well-recognised. Implementing nature-based solutions offers an opportunity for an improved understanding between land managers and local communities on what good land stewardship can provide. Respecting the existing landscape character will help to ensure the new solution is welcomed and is effective. This does not mean nothing can change, rather it means understanding what is important and special about local landscapes and interpreting this for current societal and environmental demands. The historic uses of the land as well as the needs of modern society must both be considered. Taking account of landscape character also includes protecting existing historic features and working with existing plans for the neighbourhood, such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England.
4. Facilitate opportunities, wherever practical, to deliver benefits for communities and people, at a local and a national level, including to address the impacts of climate change upon people, communities, infrastructure and society. Beyond just working with local communities, implementing a nature-based solution provides the opportunity to deliver wider benefits to people, beyond carbon sequestration and habitat creation. This might include, for example, encouraging and facilitating local access to nature, by providing a path through newly

planted woodland, or generating green jobs and apprenticeships in the local area. In particular, nature-based solutions can be an essential delivery mechanism in helping society to adapt to more extreme weather conditions, rising sea levels and flooding, caused by climate change. These solutions are particularly beneficial because they often involve land managers working in close partnership with local people to reconnect them with and enhance the natural assets that underpin and protect their homes and livelihoods.

5. Consider the location, ecology and the broader landscape, to put the right solution in the right place and deliver multiple benefits. Any land management change will have consequences, so it is important to find the solution that maximises the benefits and balances the trade-offs. These benefits might include carbon sequestration, flood management, local community health, and increasing biodiversity. Nature-based solutions by definition will deliver multiple benefits across these categories and the best will be an effective mechanism to deliver against the multiple pressures on our land, from food production to providing new habitats. There will often be choices in the benefits a project can deliver and a fair, transparent, and inclusive process will be the best way to balance these. Different areas will be better suited to different solutions. This means, for example, a landscape of deep peat will be better suited to rewetting, rather than using it as a place establish a new forest, because the former may store carbon more effectively and the latter might release carbon from the soil. Early consideration, through consultation with local and national experts, on where to put a solution can ensure multiple benefits are delivered. The natural context of a plot of land will also be influenced by broader landscape-scale considerations, such as catchment areas, and these will also have a bearing on which solution is most appropriate. Land managers can look to plans and analysis of the local area, including Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England, to understand the potential of the land, how it could best be used, and how it could best compliment the surrounding landscape. Employing a nature-based solution does not necessarily mean taking land out of agricultural production. In many cases, solutions can be implemented that increase or diversify agricultural production, while still delivering several benefits. Farmers should consider what part of their land is most suitable to employing a nature-based solution, both from the perspective of delivering more, bigger, better and more joined up nature, but also from an economic perspective.
6. Be future-proofed and adaptively managed to ensure they are climate resilient and effective for generations to come. When implementing a nature-based solution, consideration should be given to the changes we will increasingly see to our land because of climate change. Already, temperatures are becoming more extreme and flooding and drought more commonplace and extensive, and these changes will only increase. Not only can nature-based solutions help to alleviate the effects of these changing weather patterns, but solutions should be implemented that will be sustainable in this new and changing environment. Adding regular review points into the management plan of a solution will ensure it is correctly adapted to changing circumstances. We are still studying and learning about nature-based solutions, so it is very likely that new techniques will develop and new best practice will evolve as the evidence base grows. These should be applied;

management of nature-based solutions must evolve with the science, as well as the climate. Innovation and testing of new techniques and natural technologies should be welcomed and this further requires fluid management and monitoring, to understand the effect new techniques deliver and adapt them to ensure positive outcomes. Management plans should also be flexible enough to react and make changes if monitoring reveals the project is not delivering the desired outcomes or if changing external factors have impacted the project's effectiveness.

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