

# Land Use, Re-Wilding and the importance of Biodiversity

## Native woodland covers just 2.5% of the landmass in the UK

and while we are weaning ourselves off of carbon intensive materials and energy sources we are still releasing immense amounts of human caused CO<sub>2</sub>e every day. Areas rich in biodiversity are some of the most efficient sequesterers of carbon; not to mention they also provide clean water, eliminate pollutants from our air and promote healthier and more efficient crop yields. Promoting biodiversity not only benefits the planet, it is also (physically and mentally) good for humans too. Despite this humanity seems to have a mindset that nature is something to overcome, to enslave, and to separate ourselves from - disregarding the fact that working alongside nature instead of against it can lead to increased financial stability while benefiting our and the planet's health.

Farming has been far too intensive for far too long, single crop fields, pesticides and tilling are particularly disruptive to soil health killing the worms and critters who work to keep the soil healthy. Many of the farms in the UK (and around the world) will soon lose the ability to grow crops efficiently if we do not pick up the pace on our conversion to more sustainable land management techniques. Not only does unhealthy soil reduce the efficiency of the crops themselves, but it also increases flood risk and hugely reduces the amount of carbon the soil is able to store.

While it is of course the valid

argument that we need to feed an ever increasing population, and intensive farming does sound like it will produce more food than 'slow farming'. Modern intensive farming techniques are merely a short term solution to the issue which is only going to become more pressing in the coming decades.

## We are going to need to feed more people using the same or less land than we are currently using.

Reducing food waste and eating less/no animal products will result in far more efficient use of the farmed land, but it is also important to ensure that we are not ruining our soils ability to grow food.

Rejuvenating soil health is something that can and has been done in a variety of ways with great success, many farmers who have converted their techniques to soil friendly practices see profits surge and reliance on government subsidies and payouts hugely reduced. There are many ways to help soil, from sowing seeds without tilling to planting trees / orchards (or anything with permanent roots).

An example of an incredible story which came from the inability to efficiently farm anymore is that of Knepp Castle Estate.

## [www.knepp.co.uk/home](http://www.knepp.co.uk/home)

'Knepp is a 3,500 acre estate just south of Horsham, West Sussex. Since 2001, the land – once

Find out more about rewilding, how to get involved and where to donate at the addresses below

[www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/](http://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/)  
[www.knepp.co.uk/home](http://www.knepp.co.uk/home)

intensively farmed - has been devoted to a pioneering rewilding project. Using grazing animals as the drivers of habitat creation, and with the restoration of dynamic, natural water courses, the project has seen extraordinary increases in wildlife. Extremely rare species like turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons and purple emperor butterflies are now breeding here; and populations of more common species are rocketing.

The vision of the Knepp Wildland Project is radically different to conventional nature conservation in that it is not driven by specific goals or target species. Instead, its driving principle is to establish a functioning ecosystem where nature is given as much freedom as possible.

## The aim is to show how a 'process-led' approach can be a highly effective, low-cost method of ecological restoration

suitable for failing or abandoned farmland - that can work to support established nature reserves and wildlife sites.'

We have all become more aware of the importance of bees and other pollinating insects, but there are many many other vital roles being played out by seemingly insignificant animals, insects and wildlife every day, without which we wouldn't have our most basic needs such as food, water or clean air.

by Seb.