



Community Champion Partnership Agreement

Background and Mission Statement

Weald to Waves is an ambition to create something truly remarkable; a connected corridor of nature across Sussex. Spanning re-forested ridges and historic sandstone heathlands of the High Weald to the biodiverse clay vale of the Low Weald, the Weald to Waves corridor will run over the globally rare chalk grasslands of the South Downs National Park and out along the riparian ribbons of our restored rivers to a revived coast and kelp-rich Sussex Bay. It will tie together a wide community of land managers and owners, farmers, conservation organisations, councils, schools, public services, businesses, and local groups across Sussex.

In the 2010 landmark report, *Making Space for Nature*, Sir John Lawton called for a shift towards a new era of conservation based on the principles of 'bigger, better, and more joined up'. We echo this vision with a community-led corridor reaching over 100 miles across the county to demonstrate landscape-scale recovery in action. By working collectively to deliver on the 25-year environment plan, we will demonstrate that landscape-scale conservation is possible even in the densely populated Southeast. Documenting our efforts online, we will overcome landscape fragmentation in terms of infrastructure, nature, and ownership, to lead the way for other landscape scale nature recovery projects across the country to follow.

There is a growing effort across Sussex to protect open, green spaces whilst farming and living sustainably alongside our wildlife. The Weald to Waves initiative will map and support these projects as the initial stepping stones of life across the landscape. However, to facilitate the true return of biodiversity at scale we need a concerted effort to create swathes of new habitats and, critically, to connect projects and landholdings together so these pockets of wildlife can transform into complex ecosystems. We will be a leading example of how nature's recovery can coexist and support sustainable food production alongside our cultural and social lives.

Goal 1

To create a nationally significant wildlife corridor of 100 miles in length, from the Ashdown Forest, via Knepp Wildland, taking in three rivers to bolster the kelp forests off the Sussex Coast. As farmers and land managers, we will register over 20,000 hectares as a ribbon of largely contiguous natural habitat so that wildlife can travel through the landscape more easily. We will collaborate with councils, businesses, services, charities and community groups to join the dots.

Goal 2

We will promote nature as a provider of vital ecosystem services - clean water, fertile soils, pollination, carbon capture and flood control. This will involve sustainable farming along the corridor, and across Sussex, to protect and enhance those services and a reduction of the pollutants that are compromising our landscape, and flowing into our waterways and marine environment. We will track and evidence our progress and push for accountability and transparency for all those with a responsibility for land and water management. From Wealden forests to kelp forests, rewilded gardens to farm hedgerows, restored rivers to wild beaches, and from butterfly banks to wildflower verges - all efforts will be recognised.

Goal 3

We will engage people and communities across Sussex by creating new opportunities to understand, enjoy and protect nature along the corridor. We help to track and connect projects that enhance life along the corridor route, weaving socio-economic and environmental objectives together so that communities can thrive alongside nature. This will involve harnessing regional capacity and knowledge and ensuring that all voices are heard.

The Weald to Waves corridor will look to enhance hedgerows and footpaths, parks and playgrounds, allotments and gardens, riverbanks and floodplains, woodlands and commons to allow wildlife to thrive within these connected habitats. This will allow small terrestrial mammals, bats, invertebrates, plants and birds, to flow through an interconnected, biodiversity rich landscape. It will help to boost the resilience of our species by giving them space to migrate and adapt as temperatures rise and climates rapidly shift. It will also provide ecosystem services, provisioning fresh air, biodiversity, cleaner water, flood mitigation and sequestering carbon whilst protecting our seas.

Community engagement is at the centre of our work and the Weald to Waves project will ensure that everyone has a role in building a more inclusive and resilient future.

Project scope and objectives



The initial 100-mile corridor connects Ashdown Forest in the High Weald to the coast and kelp forests offshore via the Arun, Adur and Ouse river valley catchments.

While we feel there is a need to draw some parameters around the initial corridor route to ensure it is measurable and achievable, there is great value in having a wide network of supporters that can lead to the emergence of new threads of the corridor and active communities. We will ensure the Weald to Waves initiative acts as a broad home for those engaged and interested in nature recovery right across Sussex. We will provide online resources and guidance to support connected conservation and regeneration activities and create space for groups to come together locally and regionally, with networking to allow active participants to connect with others.

Governance and planning

The Weald to Waves initiative is coordinated by the Knepp Wildland Foundation. This coordination currently includes fundraising, financial management, communication, and partnership liaison. The Knepp Wildland Foundation is responsible for coordinating and leading operations, and this arrangement will be reviewed annually with amendments made by majority decision of the group.

The initiative will be supported by a steering committee of elected representatives who will meet quarterly to discuss progress and advance the aims of the group. An interdisciplinary advisory network will be established to offer expertise and guidance on any interventions, activities and planning. The corridor will seek to harness

existing capacity and skills held in the region and encourage collaboration between organisations. We expect to be working in a consortium with conservation and wildlife organisations, community action groups, parish, district and county councils, research and education institutions, our county-wide farmer clusters and unions, service providers, health trusts and government agencies, as well as funders, local and regional media and our creative and technical industries across Sussex.

Weald to Waves is open to members joining at any time and there will be a role for schools and community groups, businesses, and local government to incorporate sustainability principles into their working environments. As a Community Champion, the Weald to Waves project invites you to sign the partnership pledge as set out below.



Weald to Waves

Community Champion Partnership Pledge

The following pledge serves as an initial, non-binding commitment to act as an official partner to the Weald to Waves corridor, in the role of a **Community Champion**. The language and scope of this agreement will evolve as the corridor comes to life and opportunities develop. All members will be free to publicly align with the initiatives to demonstrate their commitment to nature recovery. Community Champions do not require or lead to any specific designation or protection but will play a crucial role in building a community along the Weald to Waves corridor and beyond, that prioritises improving connectivity for nature recovery.

As part of their partnership, each Community Champion will benefit from:

- ✓ Opportunities for visibility and alignment with the project through digital communications, and events.
- ✓ Opportunities to attract funding for specific projects within your organisation that help to meet with project objectives.
- ✓ Access to learning and data and a chance to pilot new tools and technologies.
- ✓ Talks, training and engagement events on connectivity, biodiversity and wildlife corridors for your team and wider stakeholders.
- ✓ Inter-disciplinary networking and knowledge-sharing.

Scope of the Community Champion Role

Our aim is to create a network of Community Champions along the Weald to Waves project corridor. These Champions will embody the core values of increasing connectivity for nature recovery in their existing and/or future activities and will represent the Weald to Waves project as an ambassador, assist with project communications, and engage with other groups/businesses/individuals to build a community around the project and increase the pledges.

In signing this agreement, you agree to the following clauses:

- **We commit to a shared vision of making space for nature and improving the resilience of our land by creating connected spaces for ecosystems to recover.**
- As an ambassador for Weald to Waves, we agree to **representing and promoting the project** during our normal activities, and to encourage others to commit to action on nature recovery, and to submit pledges as Gardens and Greenspaces, Farmers and Landowners, or Community Networks.
- We make this agreement in the spirit of collaboration and community-building. When possible, we are open to hosting engagement visits and sharing information to inspire others in a position to join the initiative.
- We recognise that others will be on their own journey towards a better balance with nature and acknowledge that diversity is critical to our success. **We will not exert undue pressure** on other individuals,

groups, landowners, or farmers to join or adopt a particular practice or intervention or discuss others' efforts in disparaging terms.

- We agree to **share information about our projects, actions, and practical steps**, as part of efforts to share guidance and advice and positive examples to support others working towards improving connectivity for nature recovery in the Weald to Waves corridor.
- We agree to set a positive example for others in the corridor, by making visible any actions we are pledging to continue, expanding on or starting as a member of Weald to Waves. As part of this we will **assist in the creation of digital content** for the Weald to Waves website that will showcase the activities of our group and other Community Champions to the general public. This will include a minimum of a description of the project and our activities, media including photos or video, and contact details. This could also be expanded to include other elements such as volunteering opportunities, or an interactive map to help others explore your project.
- We understand that we may be invited to engage in press releases, communication features and media visits. While we note that participation will never be mandatory, we recognise the importance of community engagement and the urgent need for public education around nature recovery and will do all we can to aid and **support the visibility of this initiative**. We agree to support the Weald to Waves initiative by sharing information and news in our general communications, as well as sharing articles, or event details from our group for the Weald to Waves newsletter.
- We understand there is a need to gather information on the progress of the corridor and, where possible, we will consider sharing or collecting non-sensitive data to support the progress and monitoring of the corridor. Examples of this will include species or habitat monitoring data.

Variation

This membership agreement may be updated upon a majority decision by the steering committee. All members will be informed and invited to share feedback before variations are recorded as accepted amendments.

Disclaimer

It should be noted that by signing this document or by participating in Weald to Waves, members are not committing to legally binding obligations. It is intended that the members remain independent of each other and that their collaboration and use of the term 'member' does not constitute the creation of a legal entity, nor authorise the entry into a commitment for or on behalf of each other.

Signed:

Name:

Role:

Name of Organisation:

Date:

Statement of consent [please circle as appropriate]

We are/are not happy to be publicly acknowledged as a Community Champion of the Weald to Waves initiative on the website and in wider communications. *If so, please send hi-res group logo to info@wealdtowaves.co.uk*



Community Champion Partnership Annex Form:

Organisation name	Please give the full name of your organisation	
Organisation description	Please describe the purpose, scope and context of your group.	
Areas of activity	Please describe your main areas of activity.	
Previous/current actions	Please describe previous or current actions or projects that are relevant to W2W.	
Ecological monitoring	Please describe any ecological monitoring or survey you have/you are undertaking in your local area.	
	Are you in a position to contribute knowledge and share this data with W2W?	
Organisation size	To give us an idea of the scale of your group, please indicate the number of staff and/or volunteers, and/or members within your organisation.	
Guidance and Support	Please describe any professional advice, guidance or support provided by conservation organisations, such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust, South Downs National Park Authority or academic institutions, to your group.	
Communications	Do you have capacity to help with communications to raise visibility of the W2W project?	
	Is your organisation able to represent the W2W project and its goals at relevant meetings or events?	
Hosting	Are you in a position to offer space and facilitation to host meetings and events?	
Contact Details	Please give contact details for your group which you would like to be shared with the general public	
Social Media Details	Please enter any social media details for your group.	
Website	If applicable, please enter the website address for your group.	
Consent	<p>Statement of Consent</p> <p>Are you happy for Knepp Wildland Foundation, as the charitable administrator of Weald to Waves, to hold and store the information you have provided for the purposes of delivering against the aims of the project?</p>	