

Sir David Attenborough champions pioneering UK environmental project at historic estate

Wildlife project will integrate nature recovery alongside farming, recreation, education and tourism across a 15-mile landscape

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“

Time is running out to save the historic Rothbury Estate. The Wildlife Trusts have launched an appeal to buy this special place, to create a place where people and nature can thrive side by side.”

Sir David Attenborough

environmentalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough, now in his hundredth year, is championing a bold project which would create a major step-change for nature recovery in the UK.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Now, The Wildlife Trusts (a UK federation of 46 environmental charities) have created a blueprint for how nature and humans can thrive on our changing planet. The proposed location is the Rothbury Estate in Northumberland, England.

Sir David's support comes at a critical time for the project because there is just one year left to raise the nearly \$40 million needed to complete the purchase of the historic estate. Over \$10.6 million has already been raised towards this target from individual donations ranging from \$6 to \$6 million.

This vast upland near Hadrian's Wall and the Scottish border had been owned by just one family for 700 years before coming onto the open market in 2023. At 15 square miles, it is the largest area of land to be put on sale in England in decades. It offers huge scope for restoring nature, at scale, to benefit both wildlife and people.

In a short film, [Sir David Attenborough says](#):

“Time is running out to save the historic Rothbury Estate. This huge, heart-shaped expanse of moorland, rivers, forest and upland in Northumberland needs your help. People know and love the Simonside Hills that rise here. They walk the ridges and listen for the calls of the curlew. They watch for red squirrels and admire the views as they scramble among the crags. They walk along its remote paths and marvel at the astonishing rock carvings left by our distant ancestors, who

once lived here.

“The Wildlife Trusts have launched an appeal to buy this very special place. They will work with local farmers to care for the area and breathe new life into its precious wildlife habitats. With the communities who live and work at Rothbury, The Wildlife Trusts will create a place where people and nature can thrive side by side. Please help us make this vision a reality. Thank you.”

The size of the Rothbury Estate gives it great potential to contribute to nature restoration targets in the UK once it is secured. Restoring its habitats for wildlife such as cuckoo, pine marten, beaver and golden eagle will have real significance for a greater area beyond its boundaries because the estate lies at the heart of a 40-mile nature corridor, stretching from the north-east coast of England to the central Scottish border.

The Wildlife Trusts, in partnership with Northumberland Wildlife Trust, have ambitious plans to integrate nature recovery with farming, recreation, education and tourism on the estate. In October 2024 they were given two years to raise the funds to buy the whole estate in its entirety – now there is just one year left.

Craig Bennett, chief executive of The Wildlife Trusts, says:

“We’re extremely grateful to Sir David for championing the [Rothbury Appeal](#) at such a vital time for nature recovery in the UK. He has been a staunch supporter of The Wildlife Trusts for over 60 years and he understands what a huge difference securing this land could make for wildlife and for future generations. This opportunity is extraordinary, but so is the threat. If The Wildlife Trusts fail to acquire the Rothbury Estate in its entirety by autumn 2026, it is likely it will be broken up into separate landholdings, with many planted with non-native conifers for commercial forestry.”

People can donate to the Rothbury Appeal at <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/appeals/rothbury-estate-nature-and-nation>
www.wildlifetrusts.org

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The Cauldhole Moss area of the Rothbury Estate, Northumberland

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