



AVIVA

**SUPPORTING NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS
TO CLIMATE CHANGE ACROSS THE UK**



A HUGE THANK YOU TO AVIVA!

Over the next five years, Aviva is donating a massive £10million, all in support of our Woodland Carbon scheme and enabling a whopping 330,000 tonnes of carbon to be stored over 100 years.

THIS IS BIG NEWS.

Not only will it help mitigate the residual emissions associated with Aviva's carbon footprint, it also forms part of their roadmap to net zero by 2040.



AN INSPIRING PARTNERSHIP

When it comes to conservation, the Woodland Trust is focused on protecting, restoring and creating native woodland and managing it in terms of the wider landscape. Whether that's nurturing community woods in urban spaces, restoring historical features on farmland, or designing ambitious, landscape-scale new woodland, we're working towards a larger network of woods and trees that is bigger, better and more joined up.

By working in partnership with us, Aviva can make a significant impact for nature and the climate crisis, while pushing towards its goal of achieving net zero by 2040.

How? By supporting the sequestration of carbon from a number of UK sites, and showcasing their impact through our 'hero' sites:

- [Snaizeholme, North Yorkshire](#)
- [Smithills Estate, Lancashire](#)
- [Green Farm, Norfolk](#)

As well as highlighting our work to reduce the effects of the climate crisis, these sites also demonstrate the impact our partnership has on specific ecosystems – including those that link closely to Aviva's own operations, such as natural flood management.

It's these sites that tell the story of Aviva's impact and our work together.



“Our partnership with the Woodland Trust ensures that the benefits of a nature-resilient UK are felt for years to come. The philosophy of putting the ‘right tree in the right place’ is key to building a resilient landscape and brings wider co-benefits, including biodiversity enhancements, whilst removing carbon from the atmosphere, which is supporting us on our journey to net zero.”

Zelda Bentham,
Group Head of Sustainability, Aviva





“Aviva’s investment in nature-based solutions in the UK is a very welcome and significant act which will deliver for people and wildlife, contributing to tackling the nature and climate crisis in parallel. We are delighted that Aviva shares our philosophy of the right tree in the right place, which is a vital component in ensuring we build landscape resilience as well as protecting our woodland species which are tragically in decline.

“Aviva could have opted to offset its emissions abroad for as little as £5 per tonne, but we price our carbon credits at around six times that, reflecting the true cost of acquiring land, establishing a resilient native habitat and managing it effectively for the long term. We are sure this will raise the stakes across the sector and encourage more businesses to consider their responsibility to future generations.”

Darren Moorcroft,
CEO, Woodland Trust





PARTNERSHIP LIFT-OFF

Our partnership launch was a joint affair, with coordinated comms released throughout February and March 2023 that utilised every aspect of marketing.

We earned exposure in the national media thanks to a joint press release and a paid boost across Aviva's social media that expanded and built on our organic success. And we also generated interest from the regional press, who were very engaged with our work at our local hero sites.

But we also made the most of our own media, with articles in our *Broadleaf* and *Wood Wise* magazines, while the general public showed a hugely positive response – particularly to Aviva's own social media.

This meant we were able to use our individual voices to tailor our messages, maximising reach and relevance for our audiences.

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Social media

We started with a coordinated content plan, which led to healthy performance – highlighted by Aviva’s initial post – and was amplified by retweets and shares across both supporter and corporate channels.

Here’s how those numbers break down.

Aviva

X (formally Twitter)

219,000 impressions across two posts

Post one:

205,000 impressions

Post two (featuring a video of Snaizeholme):

14,000 impressions

LinkedIn

21,700 impressions across two posts

Post one:

14,000 impressions.
40% greater than their channel average of 10,000.
An engagement rate of 3.6%

Post two (featuring a video of Snaizeholme):

7,700 impressions.
An engagement rate of 3.6%

The Woodland Trust

X (formally Twitter)

22,691 impressions across our launch chain of two posts

Thanks to the support provided by the amplification of Aviva’s post, our posts generated a further:

9,072 views

22 likes

8 reshares

LinkedIn

Our showcase page for corporate partnerships achieved:

3,197 impressions.

An engagement rate of 6.41%

What do these numbers show?

That Aviva’s audience is interested in hearing all about its conservation work with the Woodland Trust.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Press coverage

Most press pick-up came from regional media close to the named hero sites – Snaizeholme, Smithills and Green Farm – and included coverage in:

- Eastern Daily Press
- Yorkshire Post Online
- Norwich Evening News
- Business Green
- Yorkshire Post

Broadleaf

Written for the Woodland Trust's supporters, *Broadleaf* is our in-house magazine and has a huge readership of 180,000 households.

The spring edition, published in early March 2023, featured a prominent article that detailed Aviva's support and shone a light on our hero sites.

Cover drive

Huge win for UK tree planting as insurance giant Aviva becomes £10m 'carbon partner' for the Trust

"THIS IS A TERRIFIC pat on the back for our sophisticated approach to creating woodland, and sends a powerful signal to other companies looking to do the right thing for nature and the climate."

No wonder the Trust's Pip Greensmith is cock-a-hoop. Her team has just landed a £10 million pledge from the insurer Aviva to help us plant more than 2,000 acres of tree cover at sites nationwide by 2028. It's part of the firm's wider £100 million investment in UK conservation projects, and it will not only soak up over 300,000 tonnes of carbon, but boost air quality, mitigate flood risk and craft dynamic new Trust reserves that people can enjoy for free.

"What's so gratifying is that Aviva is keen on the holistic benefits that flow from the Trust's credo of the right tree in the right place," adds Pip. "It could offset its emissions abroad for as little as £5 per



tonne, but we price our carbon credits at around six times that, reflecting the true cost of establishing resilient native habitat for the long term. We don't just saturate the land with saplings and walk away."

Landscapes set to prosper stretch from the remote mountains of Sutherland, where we will plant a cool 800,000 trees with the volunteer-run Assynt Foundation, to Green Farm in the Brecks, close to Aviva's own roots as the Norwich Union. An intriguing smaller scheme will create a 12,000-tree wood on the Isle of Arran, with the Samye Ling community of Tibetan monks leading the planting.

Aviva's Zeldia Bentham says: "We aim to be a net zero company by 2040, and the Woodland Trust offers the kind of interventions we're looking for: ones that remove carbon, benefit communities and make a positive impact on the biodiversity crisis. We are so pleased to be involved."

THE BEST POLICY

How Aviva's £10 million will plant for the planet

1.4m Saplings – enough for 883 rugby pitches of woodland

4.3 New trees needed to soak up 1 tonne of carbon emissions

331k Tonnes of carbon absorbed over the coming century

FOUR HERO SITES

Assynt

Our community partnership around Lochinver will plant 7km² of forest, succouring red squirrels.



Snaizeholme

One of England's biggest new native woods will take root in this Wensleydale otter stronghold.



Green Farm

Our £4.6m scheme in Norfolk will bed in 142,000 trees, forging habitat for the super-rare northern pool frog.



Smithills Estate

Peatland restoration at our Bolton reserve will consume 17,000 tonnes of carbon by 2040.



Sharing stories

The launch campaign was just the start. Thanks to our coordinated comms, we've shared stories about activities on our hero sites throughout the year – all delivered at a Countries and Regions (CARs) level.

As part of this, we ensure appropriate recognition is given to Aviva through CARs communications, celebrating their volunteers and shining a light on the impact Aviva is having for wildlife and habitats.

VOLUNTEERS: MAKING YOUR MARK

Aviva colleagues have been making the most of the various volunteering opportunities offered by our partnership – not least by helping to create new woodland for wildlife and people to enjoy.

Throughout our partnership, we've seen:

- 169 colleagues engaged
- 72% of take-up (despite challenging weather!)
- 786 hours volunteered
- 4,100 trees planted by volunteers across the UK.

But it's not just about getting trees in the ground. Aviva's colleagues have made a difference in other ways too.

Coppicing at Bagger Wood

Bagger Wood was infected by tree disease, so to prevent it remaining on site, each of the sweet chestnut trees must be coppiced every year for four years. This work is carried out by volunteers and is vital to preventing the spread of disease and helping the woodland thrive.

Vole guard removal at Kinclaven

During their first 10 years, newly planted trees are a tempting snack for browsing wildlife, so tree guards are important for their survival. The Woodland Trust is committed to finding plastic-free alternatives and completely removing plastic tree guards from all our sites by 2030, and the removal of guards at the end of their lives is an important step towards this goal.



Pulling Himalayan balsam, an invasive species, at Knavesmire Wood

First introduced in the 19th century, Himalayan balsam shades and stifles other species and can lead to riverbank erosion. So it's important that this invasive plant is removed to allow native species to thrive.

Recording trees for the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) at York, Bristol and Perth

Using the ATI, the Woodland Trust can map, analyse and monitor the various characteristics of ancient and veteran trees. These trees are vital – for their value to wildlife, carbon-storing capacity and connection to local stories, people and culture. Keeping a record enables us to provide much-needed protection.

“ We had a great day; it was a beautiful setting and lovely to do some volunteering that was less physically intensive than the tasks we normally undertake. I've found myself looking at trees differently since and I'm idling sourcing a tape measure to take out on walks so I can contribute to the ATI inventory! ”

Ripley Castle ATI Volunteer



“ We are so impressed with the high level of engagement and enthusiasm for volunteering events that we’ve seen from Aviva’s colleagues. This is what an impactful partnership looks like. ”

Pip Greensmith,
Head of partnerships, Woodland Trust



Philip Formby/WTML

Quarterly volunteer updates

We know how much Aviva colleagues want to keep up to date with what’s going on, which is why we produce a quarterly newsletter – the first of which landed in June 2023.

We’re now several editions in and receiving wonderful feedback from teams across Aviva, which is raising our partnership’s profile and increasing engagement.



Case study:

SNAIZEHOLME VOLUNTEERING WEEK, 18 – 22 SEPTEMBER 2023

Aviva colleagues braved the elements for a week-long volunteering programme of tree planting and fence removal at Aviva's hero site, Snaizeholme in the Yorkshire Dales.

The landscape is in dire need of trees, and this could not have been more evident during the visit. A staggering 21 streams run down the

over-grazed slopes into Snaizeholme Beck, and in periods of heavy rainfall, the headlong rush of water poses a flood risk not just in the immediate area but also in towns and cities downriver.

Unfortunately, the weather did halt play on the Thursday, but despite the challenging

conditions, colleagues succeeded in planting 1,800 trees and removing 500m of fencing. That's the same as five football pitches! It was an excellent opportunity to showcase just how essential natural flood management is in the uplands.

“The whole day was fantastic! The Woodland Trust team were brilliant, and I had a huge sense of achievement at the end of it! Really felt like we were making a difference!”

Snaizeholme volunteer



HERO SITES: HIGHLIGHTS

Snaizeholme, Yorkshire Dales

Snaizeholme is a unique and complex habitat restoration and nature recovery project 20 miles north of Settle, not far from the iconic Ribbleshead Viaduct in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

At 561.59 hectares, it is one of the boldest habitat restoration projects in the English uplands, increasing ecological connectivity, supporting the local population of red squirrels

and improving water quality across the many watercourses, as well as slowing the flow in periods of flooding.

This has a two-fold benefit: not only will it help manage water flow through river tributaries as far as York, it will also limit flooding along the River Ouse – and reduce the impact on Aviva’s own riverside office in the city. So it makes good business sense to support our work on resilient landscapes.



Simon Rodman/EKO Create

Tree planting

With all fencing installed, tree-planting season is well underway. We’ve been hitting our target of 20,000 trees a week, with two thirds of our planned 300,000 trees already planted at the time of publication.



Simon Rodman/EKO Create

Building strong foundations

We've been busy onsite:

- Access is essential for this project, so track installation got underway at the start of October 2023, with surveys and planning in place to reduce disturbance on the rough, steep terrain.
- Adverse weather meant the new bridge, which spans 30 metres and is raised above the flood levels, has been slow to progress. We also needed to install culverts before building could start.
- We've made a start on restoring the barn, with the aim of completing it by summer 2024. Once finished, it will provide shelter for site workers and a hub for researchers.

On-site research

- We installed the first of three weather stations in October 2023. The data gathered will tell us how the microclimate can impact growth rates.
- We'd installed 18 soil loggers by the end of 2023. These sensors will monitor vegetation, as well as soil nutrients and water properties.

Did you know?

A culvert prevents waterlogging, flooding and erosion, and allows water to follow its natural course underneath a bridge.



Biodiversity impact

Saving Snaizholme's plant communities

Now that grazing pressure has been vastly reduced – thanks to the removal of sheep – we are starting to see the recovery of upland plant communities associated with a diverse arrange of habitats, not least wet flush communities and heathland communities of bilberry (1) and heather.

We are also seeing the craggy areas of the site, especially in the steep gullies and waterfalls, supporting many woodland ground flora species that have survived in isolated areas. These include woodland indicator species such as wood sorrel (2), opposite-leaved golden saxifrage (3), and water avens (4). We'll monitor these communities as the site develops and, when the time comes, support their colonisation to other parts of the site.



Case study:

SMITHILLS ESTATE, LANCASHIRE

Smithills Estate is the Woodland Trust's largest site in England. All 684.66 hectares are steeped in history and shadowed by the famous Winter Hill TV mast.

The site is a mix of grassland, farmland, moorland, wooden cloughs (ravines) and bogs, all crisscrossed by dry stone walls, and framing breathtaking views over Bolton and Manchester.

Engaging the local community

From maps to signage, visitor guides to gateways, we are renewing our interpretation across the estate so more people will explore and connect with the environment on their doorstep.

As part of this, we're continuing to maintain the existing network of paths so the site is always safe and inviting.



Did you know?
Winter Hill is named for the cotton grass that grows on the hill. It can turn the whole hill white, making it look like it's covered in snow

Key moorland plants are returning

- Common cotton grass
- Soft rush
- Bilberry
- Sphagnum moss
- Heather

People and place

Visitors will be able to explore and connect to the landscape in a number of ways, including via:

- Story stones, which were inspired by the trespass stone off Coal Pit Road. They were added to the site in 1996 to celebrate the

100th anniversary of the mass trespass. Through the story stones, local voices and experiences are captured and anchored in a sense of place within the landscape, serving as a reminder of how important green spaces like Smithills are for people and nature.

- Our Walker Fold exhibition, which looks back at the incredible journey of Smithills over the past six years.
- New benches, which offer visitors a chance to rest and find out more about local habitats.



Case study:

GREEN FARM, NORFOLK

A stone's throw from Aviva's Norwich offices, this 119-hectare site will be transformed into a mosaic of broadleaf woodland, wood pasture, grassland and hedgerows.

Not only that, but we'll also preserve the site's rare pingo ponds, formed by glacial movement and home to the super-rare northern pool frog, which is only found in Norfolk (pictured right).

Planning ahead

Following consultation with local residents and landowners with neighbouring boundaries, we completed a design plan in November 2023 and, with the support of a woodland consultant, submitted the documents to the Forestry Commission.

Patching up the pingo ponds

To monitor the ponds and survey water levels, we installed automatic dip wells. They can monitor data for up to two years before requiring new batteries, saving on resource. The

first data download is scheduled for summer 2024, and this will give us a good idea of the ponds' condition.



Matthew Roberts Photography



Robin Chittenden/Alamy Stock Photo

Bringing wildlife back into balance

Having collaborated closely with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Forestry England, we've found that deer are a significant threat to the site. So we're working with our neighbours to mitigate this. Watch this space to find out what we have planned.

Norfolk hawker dragonfly



Evin Elsbj/Alamy Stock Photo

ADVOCACY: LEADING THE CHARGE

Aviva is leading their sector in the fight against climate change, paving the way with bold and ambitious action for people and planet through nature-based solutions.

This kind of advocacy through partnerships is essential if the Woodland Trust is going to achieve its goals, and Aviva is a key part of this. By raising awareness of the existential threat climate change presents to the insurance industry and demonstrating how positive action can mitigate that threat, Aviva is making a difference.

“Both Aviva and the Woodland Trust are focused on a better future for our planet, people and biodiversity. Climate change and biodiversity loss are interdependent issues and crucial to the long-term sustainability of our planet. That is why we are delighted to partner with the Woodland Trust on this project, helping make the UK the most climate-ready economy.”

Claudine Blamey,
Aviva Group Sustainability Director



LASTING CONNECTIONS

Representation at the parliamentary reception

As part of the partnership launch, Zelda Bentham, Group Head of Sustainability for Aviva, spoke at the Woodland Trust's 50th Anniversary parliamentary reception in December 2022.

This event carried momentum into the 2023 parliamentary reception, attended by Aviva, Lloyds Banking Group, L&G Asset Management and the ABI.

Engaging the C-suite

With thanks to our partnership with Aviva, Darren Moorcroft, CEO for the Woodland Trust, wrote to C-suite leaders in the insurance sector to directly campaign for action on nature.

Having raised awareness of the Nature Recovery Report, Darren received an invitation to be guest of honour at the ABI summer reception. He then went on to be a keynote speaker at ABI climate change summit in July 2023.



Film: Growing Partnerships for Impact

The Woodland Trust promoted their partnerships film – featuring Zelda Bentham, Group Head for Sustainability at Aviva – in a rolling presentation at edie23, before using it as the hero content for a new partnerships landing page on their website.

Aviva's contribution to the film increases visibility of the partnership, supporting Aviva's position as thought leaders and innovators in their field, while demonstrating the Woodland Trust's ambition to deliver impactful landscape-scale projects in partnership.



A WORD TO THE WOOD WISE

Wood Wise, the Woodland Trust's scientific journal, delves into the news and science behind our tree and woodland conservation work.

Specially curated for the spring/summer 2023 edition, it featured a series of thought-provoking articles from expert contributors that examined the subject of a nature-positive economy. One of these contributors was

Aviva's Zelda Bentham, who wrote an article entitled: 'How can financial services contribute to a nature-positive future?'

Having Aviva speak about the business need for the sector to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss sends a powerful message and solidifies the vital role that financial services have, through partnership with NGOs, in creating a nature-positive economy.



John Bridges/WTML



Mark Taylor/naturepl.com



WTML

WHAT NEXT FOR THE PARTNERSHIP?

We're incredibly grateful to Aviva for their support. Together, we're making a real difference for trees and people across the UK. We are proud to state that we are on track to deliver the planned 330,000 tonnes of carbon. This is a fantastic position to be in at this stage in the journey.

We enter a new chapter in the 2024/25 planting season, one where we hope to see the continued development of work already begun, deeper engagement with our communities as we bring them along on a journey of transformation, and the beginnings of restoration and creation work still to come.