

COURTEENHALLESTATE



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

2022/2023



Head Gardener with Roade Primary School children, planting trees for the Queens Canopy to celebrate the Jubilee in 2023



Apple Harvest 2022 in the Orchard - Estate residents and workers working together

Most businesses recognise the importance of being a valuable member of their community. However, for Courteenhall Estate, the importance seems even more compelling. This is a business that has been in the same place under the stewardship of the same family for over 350 years. The Wake family therefore feel a debt and an obligation to the local community and see community as a vital part of what being sustainable means for their business.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is something that has always happened at Courteenhall, but now it has a name and a programme. We work with some truly amazing people and organisations, trying to fulfil aims like bridging the urban-rural divide, helping local charities in ways beyond just giving money, and focussing on education, especially those who may be getting left behind.

CSR for Courteenhall is also about environmental sustainability, community, and being an ethical business. We plan to be stewarding the land here in another 350 years, and in order to do that, we need to preserve and enhance our environmental assets, remain a viable and aspirational business, and retain the support of the local community.

We hope you enjoy reading about the projects below. Please get in touch if you can help with or would like to discuss any of them with us.

Dr Johnny Wake ARAgS DL, Managing Partner

Community



Road Primary School

This local school come to the Estate to incorporate the curriculum with learning outside. They do activities such as art in the Arboretum, receive talks from members of the Courteenhall team about regenerative and sustainable farming, and learn about the Countryside Code in relation to the livestock. Road Primary School were the school that we piloted the New Leaf Learning TRUST Programme with and they retain close links to it.



Children exploring

Blisworth Primary School

The school benefits from the practical learning opportunities the Estate has to offer incorporating their curriculum into the outdoor learning experience. The Estate was recently directly mentioned and credited in the OFSTED report in which the school was rated “Good” overall.

"All pupils recently visited the local Courteenhall Estate. Pupils say that the visit helped them appreciate and want to care for their locality. Older pupils enjoyed the responsibility of supporting the younger ones during the visit." (Blisworth School)



Children exploring the woodlands



Children weaving with Willow coppice

Courteenhall Church Fete

Every two years, the Estate host the Church fete on the parkland where the community come together for fun activities, bake sales, plant sales etc while raising money for the church.



Courteenhall Church Fete in 2022

Linking Environment & Farming (LEAF) Open Farm Sunday

Alongside the Church Fete, we run an **Open Farm Sunday** event where we give tours of the farm and explain what we do and why to help the community connect with the countryside and gain better understanding.



Representative from LEAF Charity



Tractor & trailer tour of the Estate

Road Tennis club

Sponsorship of team kits.

Stoke Bruerne Cricket Club

We purchased an external defibrillator for the club following instances where two players had collapsed.

Blisworth Parish Council / School Allotments

The Courteenhall Grounds team cleared and fenced an allotment in Blisworth that the school have taken on to learn about field to fork and how to grow their own vegetables.

Blisworth Football Club

We have sponsored junior team kits for 2 years.



Blisworth Youth Football Team sponsored by Courteenhall

Northamptonshire Sport Charity

We recently hosted the Northants District Cross Country event where several local schools came together for a running meet.



Inter School cross country in the park at Courteenhall November 2022

Charity



New Leaf Learning TRUST Programme

Courteenhall host and pay for the programme on the Estate which brings small groups of children from local schools that have had to overcome difficulties, including bereavement, having a parent in prison, or a diagnosis of a special educational need or disability. The programme encourages the children to learn while connecting with the outdoors, building confidence, whilst providing training to the children's parents and teachers. Activities include building dens in the woods, slack-lining and yoga in the Old Grammar School. Courteenhall has also been instrumental in setting the TRUST programme up as a charity now called New Leaf Learning to enable them to get funding for their work.

Home-Start Daventry and South Northants

This local charity use the Hall and meeting spaces for events and meetings and also have a secure space that they use for storage. The Estate also donate the charity £15,000 per annum for them to employ a half-time volunteer coordinator. The charity recently hosted their 25th anniversary on the Estate. Details can be found [here](#).

Country Trust

This charity brings primary school children from urban deprived schools to learn about farming, food to fork and the countryside.



Children from the TRUST Program working together

Archway Trust visits

A local church group who support a community of single parents. They hold events on the Estate where parents can meet up and have a cup of tea and a walk around the parkland to connect people in similar situations and help out where they can.

Homes for Hounds

Hold their annual charity fundraiser Greyhound Fun day and Companion Dog show in the parkland.

Maggie's Cancer Care

This cancer care charity is building a center in Northampton and the Estate have contributed £5,000.

Blisworth Primary School

Raising money for the school with an annual Friday Fun Fest day and Christmas event of which Courteenhall sponsored in 2022 and again in 2023.

The bigwig Ball

Sponsoring the bigwig Ball which is an annual charity ball that raises money for Cancer Research UK. The Courteenhall Estate sponsored for one aspect of the ball, which in 2022 raised £108,000.



Organisers from the bigwig ball in 2022

Charity Event Hosting

We have hosted a variety of one-off charity fundraising events, including simulated game days for the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, drinks for the Royal Forestry Society, and an arboretum walk for ABF The Soldiers' Charity.



Corporate event

Ethical Business



Good Business Charter

The Estate is a member of the Good Business Charter. Proudly, we were the first farming business and also the first business in Northamptonshire to register for membership. The accreditation recognises responsible business practices. It is based on 10 components: real living wage, fairer hours and contracts, employee well-being, employee representation, diversity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, paying fair tax, commitment to customers, ethical sourcing, and prompt payment.

High Environmental Standards for Properties

Courteenhall have been adding renewable energy facilities to the properties with rooftop solar, solar-thermal panels and a large number of heat pumps installed to replace oil boilers.

Commercial Barn Conversion Standards

The Estate have recently carried out conversions of two agricultural buildings into high spec commercial units. In doing so we have used the highest quality materials including insulated cladding and solar panels, and the units have been designed to a high standard with sufficient parking and yard space to enable the development to function and flow properly. Minimising light pollution has also been a strong focus.



West Lodge Upper Barns

Ukraine War

As part of the government initiative, Homes for Ukraine, Courtenhall sponsored a Ukrainian family who now live in a property on the Estate . The Estate have helped the family find work, as well as supporting them with college and local school placements.

Tove Valley Cluster Farm

This is a group of geographically-linked farmers working together to help sustain nature on a landscape scale. The group was co-founded and chaired by Johnny Wake. As part of the incentive, a 28.7km wildlife corridor has been created, running through the cluster.

Environnement



Countryside Stewardship

In January 2022, the Estate upgraded into a higher tier countryside stewardship (CS) scheme in which the rotation of the farm has changed significantly and now includes 2 years of leguminous fallow over half the farm at a time. This provides food and habitat for farmland wildlife and pollinators including bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies and hoverflies, as well as invertebrate chick food for farmland birds around the sown fallow between April and July. In terms of soil benefit, it allows the Estate to manage grass-based weeds more effectively through a topping regime and the seed mix is nitrogen fixing, meaning more nitrogen (natural fertiliser) in the soil for the next cereal crop.

The scheme also includes:

- o Over 11 tonnes per annum of supplementary feeding for farmland birds during the hungry gap over winter.
 - o A Beetle bank to provide habitat for invertebrates and insects within the arable fields.
 - o Over 70ha of flower rich margins and plots to provide habitat and wildlife corridors across the farm. These have been designed so they are linked to allow wildlife to travel around the farm without the need to venture into arable land.
 - o Over 22ha of winter bird food which provides seeds and food for birds over the winter.
 - o Over 8ha of buffer strips to help prevent any possible soil erosion into the watercourses.
 - o Approx. 5km of hedgerows managed to ensure they are at optimum benefit to wildlife.
 - o Over 67ha of wood pasture being created, which will be a grass and wildflower mix that our cattle can graze and will also be planted with trees. This includes just over 40ha of parkland reversion (two fields that were converted into arable use for food production during the war are being reverted back to parkland)
 - o Reintroduction of Traditional Hereford cattle, a British rare breed, that have previously been on the Estate for generations and have been brought back into the parkland to manage the pasture and provide a sustainable source of meat. At present the cattle are currently exclusively supplied to The Ethical Butcher, which is committed to supplying regenerative and sustainable meat.
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- o The agreement also includes many one-off items including:
 - o Over 3km of new hedges being planted.
 - o Over 13km of hedge laying.
 - o Over 14km of sheep netting.
 - o Over 1,500 trees planted.
 - o Over 250 tree guards to protect the newly planted trees and ancient trees in the historic parkland.
 - o Pond restoration.
 - o The construction of a series of 3 lakes within the parkland which will create habitat for invertebrates and small amphibians such as newts (subject to planning), as well as helping to provide flood mitigation.



Hedge Laying

Pond restoration

Quinoa within wild bird seed mix

Conservation & Regenerative Farming

We are always striving to farm the land we manage in as regenerative and sustainable way as possible and are constantly working alongside professionals and experts to learn more and implement changes where appropriate in order to improve our soils and water quality as well as helping nature. Biodiversity has appreciably improved at Courteenhall in the last decade.

Numbers of previously resident red-listed species, such as Greater Crested Newts, Orchids, Hedgehogs and Yellowhammers, have risen, and new red-listed species have arrived and made homes, such as Goshawks and Merlins.



Yellowhammer, captured by Tony Betts



Barn owl, captured by Tony Betts

- o Courteenhall Farms use minimal fertiliser and have been working in conjunction with Map of Ag and Kellogg's Origins on a trial for this, by testing a leaf of the crop to check whether, and if so, how much fertiliser is required.

- o Courteenhall are approx. 8 years into a system of minimum tillage, cover cropping and no insecticide to keep carbon in the soil, improve soil health, promote invertebrates and provide a natural nitrogen source.

- o The Farm uses a reduced traffic system to minimise soil compaction and thereby promote soil health and water quality.

- o The Estate has also been part of a Hedgerow Carbon Code pilot in conjunction with the [GWCT](#).



Traditional Hereford Cattle grazing in the park

Renewable Energy

The Estate have invested in a wide portfolio of renewable energy sources, including:

- o Photo-voltaic solar: 7 arrays, totalling just under 600kW.
- o Solar-thermal: 2 arrays, totalling 32KW.
- o Ground source heating: 16 systems, totalling 2.76MW.
- o Air source heat pumps: 4 systems, totalling 40kW.
- o Biomass: 1 system of 30kW.



Combine in action for Summer 2022 Harvest of Wheat

Carbon Measurement

Courteenhall have worked with Linking Environment and Farming ([LEAF](#)) to work out their carbon footprint. In their quest for more accurate data, they have commissioned a carbon survey by [Ecometric](#). [Ecometric](#) use a combination of soil and lab measurements with AI and satellite hyperspectral imagery to produce a peer-reviewed and far more accurate measure of soil carbon than is available via the conventional carbon calculators. This is part of the vision at Courteenhall for having a credible and robust baseline carbon measurement and the plan is to repeat the measurements every year.

Courteenhall are now part of [ClieN Farms](#), in conjunction with the [GWCT](#), which is an EU project, working alongside NESTLE.



ClieN Farms visit held at Courteenhall

Voluntary Awards and Roles



Courteenhall and Johnny Wake have been recognised for various awards and has representation on various industry committees:

- Voted onto the Country Land and Business Association’s Policy Committee.
- Voted onto the Royal Forestry Society’s Midlands Division Committee.
- Approached to become a Deputy Lieutenant of Northamptonshire.
- Recognised by the Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards and East of England Agricultural Society.

Johnny has also been awarded accolades and been asked to speak or be interviewed recognising Courteenhall's stance on improving sustainability:

- Awarded Associateship of Royal Agricultural Societies by the Council for Awards of Royal Agricultural Societies.
- Presented with the NFU Community Hero award for “going above and beyond” for the local community by MP Dame Andrea Leadsom.
- Asked to speak at Groundswell 2022, the agricultural industry’s leading show on regenerative agriculture, on the topic “Towards Climate-Friendly Farming”.
- Asked to speak at the 2023 Royal Agricultural University and Institute of Agricultural Management’s prestigious Leadership Management Course, about his journey.
- Asked to speak at Cranfield University’s Venture Day on the topic of sustainability.
- Interviewed by both the BBC’s Today Programme and the Financial Times in different years for his views on the government’s Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
- Published in various rural and agricultural magazines about renewable heating as well as speaking at the Low Carbon Agriculture event on Courteenhall's heat pump journey.

Johnny’s focus for the business is constantly on long-termism, sustainability and legacy.



Dame Andrea Leadsom DBE MP with Johnny Wake and Rosie Davies on Estate walk



BBC Northampton interview about Courteenhall Snowdrops

