



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

100 meadows across 100 historic sites over the next decade – English Heritage’s Coronation pledge

- Sites will include Stonehenge, Charles Darwin’s house and London’s Jewel Tower -
- English Heritage joins forces with Plantlife to deliver this natural legacy -

Embargoed until 00:01, Friday 31 March 2023 – To celebrate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, English Heritage will enhance and create one hundred meadows at its castles and abbeys, prehistoric stone circles and palaces, the charity announced today (Friday 31 March 2023). From Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain to the Jewel Tower right in the heart of Westminster, over the next decade, the charity will create a natural legacy at its historic sites – establishing flower-rich grasslands right across England, restoring those that have been lost, and enhancing those that already exist.

Since the 1930s and the advent of post-war modern farming practices, the UK has lost 97% of its meadows. Prior to this, much of England’s grassland – from meadows, road verges and lawns – would have been home to a much more diverse flora than we have today. Whilst the English Heritage estate is relatively unusual in not having been subject to changing agricultural policy, the grassland surrounding its historic monuments has become ‘municipalised’ over the past century; diminishing the botanical diversity enjoyed by earlier generations. There is an abundance of sites where – with the right management – meadows (both big and small) can be created and flourish. The creation and enhancement of wildflower-rich grasslands across England will not only benefit nature, but healthy grasslands are proven to tackle pollution and permanently lock away atmospheric carbon below ground. As well as the benefits to the environment, for visitors to the sites, the grasslands will evoke something with which the historic occupants of those sites would have been very familiar.

Kate Mavor, English Heritage's Chief Executive, said: "The King's coronation is a significant moment in history and we wanted to mark it in a meaningful way, in a way that combines two of His Majesty's passions – nature and heritage. We're creating more natural spaces at the heart of our historic properties, ensuring that wildflowers and wildlife can flourish there once again, and helping our visitors to step back into history and experience something with which the sites' historic occupants would have been familiar."

"In a decade's time, our coronation pledge will be an inspiring legacy of established, restored and new meadows at 100 of our historic sites – big and small – right across England. We hope that it will encourage local communities to get involved and help transform their local heritage sites into flower-rich meadows, which, in turn, will improve the quality and diversity of other grassland in the local area."

English Heritage is partnering with Plantlife – Europe's largest charity dedicated to saving wild plants and fungi – on this initiative. Plantlife will support English Heritage by providing resources and expertise, skills development training and knowledge exchange opportunities as the project progresses. A key component of the initiative is to involve and engage with local communities around each of our meadow sites. Working with wildlife groups and volunteers local to each site, English Heritage will source seed from existing meadows in the area to ensure the reintroduction of viable, local species of wildflower to each site. The range and diversity of the charity's sites, on different soils and geology, will enable this national programme to enhance a unique range of landscapes - from damp acid grasslands to dry chalk grasslands with shallow soils – thus enhancing local character and biodiversity. This will not only benefit local wildlife but also provide a more authentic historic experience for visitors.

Ian Dunn, Plantlife's Chief Executive, said, "Plantlife is delighted to be working with English Heritage on meadow creation. This new and exciting partnership offers a lifeline to a hundred key grassland sites and their associated wildlife, and focuses on a chapter of English natural history lost and all but forgotten. Together, we look forward to a future where England's best historic sites boast the highest quality grasslands, supporting a myriad of diverse meadow plants and wildlife. With so many of our grassland wild plant species facing severe risks, this insightful initiative is unquestionably a step in the right direction."

Examples of English Heritage sites that will be involved in the project include:

- **Barnard Castle in County Durham**

This 12th century fortress, with spectacular views over the Tees Gorge, has extensive lawns planted with a newly planted orchard. The castle's gardens team has already started to establish a small meadow below the trees, this will be extended and enhanced over the coming years.

- **Boscobel in Shropshire**

King Charles II took refuge in this picturesque hunting lodge in 1651 after Civil War defeat, famously hiding for a day in an oak tree whilst Cromwell's soldiers searched for him below. Latterly a thriving Victorian farm The Royal Oak field has recently been replanted as oak pasture, restoring the 17th-century setting, this included over-seeding the pasture with local green hay introducing local meadow flowers which will be further enhanced.

- **Brodsworth Hall in South Yorkshire**

Built in the 1860s for the wealthy Thellusson family, the estate, house and garden sit on Magnesian Limestone which is found in only a few places in the North East of England. The decline of the estate in the 20th century led to some of the manicured Victorian lawns being managed as garden meadows. The thin, dolomitic lime-rich soil over time developed a rich and diverse flora that prospers in shallow alkaline soils. We will carry out botanical surveys to monitor the botanical diversity and assess opportunities for enhancement.

- **Castle Acre Priory and Castle in Norfolk**

One of the largest and best-preserved monastic sites in England, the 11th century priory sits alongside the impressive earthworks of a Norman castle. A meadow will be created from an existing area of grassland on the eastern edge of the site, working with local volunteers and wildlife groups to encourage more wildflowers, insects and birds.

- **Down House in Kent**

The home of Charles Darwin, Down House is surrounded by beautiful gardens that acted as Darwin's 'living laboratory'. Bordering the kitchen garden is the Great House Meadow, a 15-acre field owned by Darwin, who monitored its plant and insect activity. It was here in 1854 that he first orchestrated his children to watch for bumblebees buzzing

from plant to plant and discovered that red clover depends on the bees for fertilisation. The meadows were ploughed in the 1970 and the meadow lost. Since English Heritage took over Down House we have reverted the fields to traditional hay meadow management with the hay cut in July followed by autumn and winter grazing. English Heritage gardeners are continuing to enhance the meadow, including developing the presence of orchids.

- **Jewel Tower in London**

Built around 1365 to house King Edward III's treasures, the Jewel Tower is one of only two buildings from the medieval Palace of Westminster to survive the fire of 1834. A lawned area, formerly part of the Palace Garden, has been scarified and overseeded with wildflower to create a brand-new native species rich meadow in the heart of London.

- **St Mary's Church, Kempey, in Gloucestershire**

This simple Norman church has the oldest timber roof of any building in England and some of the country's best-preserved medieval wall paintings. It sits in a graveyard with unimproved neutral grassland which retains a locally native daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus ssp. pseudonarcissus* that can be found in local woods, orchards and meadows. English Heritage will continue to support the careful management of the churchyard to encourage the increase of the daffodils and other grassland wildflowers.

- **Okehampton Castle in Devon**

The remains of the largest castle in Devon, Okehampton was originally a Norman motte and bailey castle and subsequently converted into a sumptuous residence in the 14th century by the Earl of Devon. In addition to two existing meadows on the site, which are part of the county wildlife site, English Heritage will be restoring the castle's motte into a meadow through a careful programme of management.

- **Stonehenge in Wiltshire**

This world-famous monument sits on chalk down land, an unusually open landscape which may well be why it was chosen as an important site by Neolithic people. The banks of the monument are a county wildlife site, with wildflowers (including orchids) to be found in the outer grassland near the stones. A new meadow is also planned for an area outside the Visitor Centre, to welcome visitors as they arrive.

- **Walmer Castle in Kent**

Built on the orders of King Henry VIII to defend England's shores, Walmer Castle is a Tudor fortress turned country house. Amongst the eight acres of award-winning

gardens are established meadows, with the potential to diversify them further and extend them to the current sheep field. The unique habitat of shingle beach and wet grassland attracts plants including pyramid orchids, common spotted orchids and blue scabiosa.

For more details visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/coronation2023

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

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This initiative is partly inspired by The Coronation Meadows Project, an idea of the King's, then the Prince of Wales, back in 2013 to celebrate his mother's Diamond Jubilee by creating at least one new meadow in every county. That project was led by Plantlife with The Wildlife Trusts and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, and English Heritage is delighted to be partnering with Plantlife to deliver this initiative.

English Heritage cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments and sites - from world-famous prehistoric sites to grand medieval castles, from Roman forts on the edge of the empire to a Cold War bunker. Through these, we bring the story of England to life for over 10 million people each year. Registered charity no. 1140351. www.english-heritage.org.uk

Plantlife is the global voice for wild plants and fungi, with 17,000 members and supporters and 23 nature reserves covering nearly 4,500 acres across England, Scotland and Wales. Plantlife enhances, restores, protects and celebrates our natural heritage through working with landowners, other conservation organisations, public and private bodies and the wider public to secure a world rich in wild plants and fungi. A registered charity, Plantlife is funded by individual donations, through grants and charitable trusts and through its pioneering land management advice and projects.

The 100 meadow sites are listed below:

East of England	
Berkhamsted Castle	Hertfordshire
Castle Acre Priory and Castle	Norfolk
Denny Abbey and the Farmland Museum	Cambridgeshire
Framlingham Castle	Suffolk

Grimes Graves	Norfolk
Hadleigh Castle	Essex
Houghton House	Bedfordshire
Isleham Priory Church	Cambridgeshire
Leiston Abbey	Suffolk
Thetford Warren Lodge	Norfolk
Tilbury Fort	Essex
Wrest Park	Bedfordshire
London	
Coombe Conduit	London
Eltham Palace and Gardens	London
Harmondsworth Barn	London
Jewel tower	London
Kenwood	London
London Wall	London
Marble Hill	London
West Midlands	
Boscobel and White Ladies Priory	Shropshire
Kenilworth Castle and Elizabethan Garden	Warwickshire
Longtown Castle	Herefordshire
Moreton Corbet	Shropshire
Rotherwas Chapel	Herefordshire
Wenlock Priory	Shropshire
Witley Court and Gardens	Worcestershire
Wroxeter	Shropshire
East Midlands	

Bolingbroke Castle	Lincolnshire
Chichele College	Northamptonshire
Mattersey Priory	Nottinghamshire
Peveril Castle	Derbyshire
Sibsey Trader Mill	Lincolnshire
Sutton Scarsdale Hall	Derbyshire
North West	
Beeston Castle	Cheshire
Brougham Castle	Cumbria
Carlisle Castle	Cumbria
Furness Abbey	Cumbria
Piel Castle	Cumbria
Sawley Abbey	Lancashire
North East	
Barnard Castle	Durham
Berwick-upon-Tweed Castle and Ramparts	Northumberland
Brodsworth Hall	South Yorkshire
Dunstanburgh Castle	Northumberland
Easby Abbey	North Yorkshire
Etal Castle	Northumberland
Gisborough Priory	North Yorkshire
Heddon-on-the-Wall - Hadrian's Wall	Northumberland
Helmsley Castle	North Yorkshire

Hylton Castle	Sunderland/Tyne and Wear
Monk Bretton Priory	South Yorkshire
Mount Grace Priory	North Yorkshire
Norham Castle	Northumberland
Prudhoe Castle	Northumberland
Richmond Castle	North Yorkshire
Rievaulx Abbey	North Yorkshire
Spofforth Castle	North Yorkshire
Thornborough Henges	North Yorkshire
Wharram Percy	North Yorkshire
Whitby Abbey	Yorkshire
South East	
Battle Abbey	East Sussex
Bayham Old Abbey	Kent
Carisbrooke Castle	Isle of Wight
Dover Castle (and Western Heights)	Kent
Down House	Kent
Flowerdown Barrows	Hampshire
Fort Brockhurst	Hampshire
Netley Abbey	Hampshire
Osborne	Isle of Wight
Pevensey Castle	East Sussex
Portchester Castle	Hampshire

Reculver Towers and Roman Fort	Kent
Richborough Roman Fort and Amphitheatre	Kent
Royal Garrison Church	Hampshire
Silchester Roman City Walls and Amphitheatre	Hampshire
Titchfield Abbey	Hampshire
Walmer Castle and Gardens	Kent
Waverley Abbey	Surrey
South West	
Bant's Carn	Isles of Scilly
Blackbury Camp	Devon
Bratton Camp and White Horse	Wiltshire
Chysauster Ancient Village	Cornwall
Farleigh Hungerford Castle	Somerset
Garrison Walls	Isles of Scilly
Hailes Abbey	Gloucestershire
Harry's Walls	Isles of Scilly
Knowlton Church & Earthworks	Dorset
Launceston Castle	Cornwall
Maiden Castle	Dorset
Muchelney Abbey	Somerset
Okehampton Castle	Devon
Old Sarum	Wiltshire
Pendennis Castle	Cornwall

Restormel Castle	Cornwall
Sherborne Old Castle	Dorset
Silbury Hill	Wiltshire
St Mary's, Kempley Churchyard	Gloucestershire
St Mawes Castle	Cornwall
Stonehenge	Wiltshire
Tintagel Castle	Cornwall
Totnes Castle	Devon
Winterbourne Poor Lot Barrows	Dorset
Woodhenge	Wiltshire