

Heritage responds -  
**Taking positive action  
on climate change**

## Case study

# Holkham Estate Sustainable Tourism and Renewable Energy

Holkham Hall & Estate, Historic Houses

**T**he historic Holkham Estate in Norfolk puts sustainability at its core. Holkham has implemented a zero-waste strategy across the estate, installed biomass boilers and solar farms to power commercial enterprises, and the new 'WONDER' strategy seeks to embed low-carbon living, environmental recovery and zero waste at the heart of its operations.

### Background

The historic Holkham Estate covers 10,000 hectares of land, including 18km of North Norfolk's coastline. The entire Estate, including some of its key business activities, are vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels.

At Holkham we've called our sustainability strategy 'WONDER'. We believe Holkham is remarkable, somewhere more than a million people visit each year to admire and enjoy, and this strategy is essential in ensuring that Holkham continues to be a wonderland in years to come. We are now working on our three main sustainability focusses: pioneering environmental gain, championing low-carbon living, and stamping out waste.



Image:

Holkham Hall & Estate

### Our heat and energy supply

Two biomass boilers were installed in 2013, which use wood from the Estate to heat the Hall, the stables offices, the Courtyard Café, the gift shop, the visitor reception, the Estate Office and the Holkham Stories exhibition. Elsewhere, a 100-acre solar park consisting of 84,500 photovoltaic panels generates enough electricity to power 6,200 average homes, saving 8,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. In addition, solar panels at the Beach Café and Pinewoods Holiday Park generate their own electricity. An anaerobic digester takes maize and rye grass grown on local farms and converts it into natural gas, which heats 2,500 homes in the winter and 40,000 homes in the summer.

### Our approach to plastic and waste

In 2018, Holkham Enterprises opened The Lookout on Holkham National Nature Reserve, a visitor centre providing much needed visitor facilities and interpretation to 800,000 annual visitors. Sustainability is at the heart of this operation; all packaging and catering consumables are made from compostable materials, free water is available from a drinking fountain, where possible all products are sourced from local suppliers, the estate's vehicles are electric, and ice-lollies are even wrapper-free. All visitor cafes at Holkham have adopted compostable packaging, removed single use plastics and practice recycling, sustainable procurement and waste management.

### The challenges we face

Holkham's rural location offers limited and infrequent public transport (meaning cars are essential) and a lack of businesses to work with (such as recycling collections), plus we struggle with unsustainable standards within some industries (e.g., all caravans are designed to use bottled gas for cooking and heating). But this is where the concept of 'supply and demand' is important, and we can use our influence to try to change some of these things.

Another challenge is ensuring that our staff, volunteers and visitors are on board. Team Holkham truly loves a challenge and individual teams are empowered to make changes both big and small. Inspirational communication is key with our visitors.

Stately homes are well placed to respond to climate change: we are local employers; we farm; we look after woodland and landscapes; we provide housing; we have space; and we have visitors. We can help to sustain our local communities with employment, housing and support; we can make the right decisions about the way we farm and manage our landscapes; and we can use our power and status to advocate and influence from policymaking right at the top, to decisions by our visitors at an individual level.

### Our message to others

Don't be put off by the scale and breadth of this challenge, you can start small and take on bigger challenges as your confidence and knowledge grow. Gain as much data as you can as a basis; with this you can make informed decisions on where best you can direct your efforts to deliver the biggest sustainable improvements. There is plenty of support out there – spend a little time researching great ideas and examples. Lastly, but most importantly, don't forget that staff and volunteers are the greatest asset – they love where they work, and their skills and passion are just what is needed to get the momentum going and start making those changes.

### Our next steps

Land management trials at our Great Farm project; reduced grass mowing; bird trails on the nature reserve; carbon audits across all our businesses; partnering with Good Journey to promote public transport, cycling and walking; low-carbon weddings; reducing our waste and improving our recycling rates; phasing out single-use plastic. If you'd like to find out more, click here to take a look at our projects.

Holkham's vision is 'to be the UK's most pioneering and sustainable rural estate'. This vision recognises that the estate has a responsibility to protect and enhance its incredible buildings, collections, diverse landscapes and wildlife for future generations, and that there is an opportunity to inform and inspire others on their own sustainability journeys.