

# There is not enough available land to hit UK tree-planting targets, NGOs urgently call on Corporate Landowners to get involved to accelerate action

Submitted by: ProjectVana

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New eco-transparency platform Vana finds the corporate landowners who own 130.9% of potential woodland opportunities land needed to hit England tree-planting targets

The UK[1] has set out ambitious targets to establish forests in areas where there was no previous tree cover. For England, this is 180,000 hectares (336,372 football fields) by 2042. Recently the UK Government has committed to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this Parliament[2]. But the targets are behind plan[3], as it is proving difficult to access available land. Whilst officials have knowledge of where suitable land is geographically located[4], the challenge is the lack of knowledge of who owns it[5].

However, the game changed when HM Land Registry made their corporate land ownership data[6] for England and Wales available for innovative start-ups. CEO Jaya Chakrabarti of B Corp[7] tech social enterprise Semantrica Ltd devised a cunning plan to rapidly increase the rate of afforestation and nature restoration in the UK, using that data and supply chain transparency legislation to do it[8].

The app, named Vana (the Sanskrit word for forest, wood, grove, spring, abundance), aims to bring together tree-planting climate activist groups, government funding and corporate entities with environmentally critical landholdings. The land identified using the Vana system will then be used to drive projects to increase tree coverage and/or other rewilding action in the UK where landowners are willing. Whilst still a prototype it has already been dubbed a “carbon inset[9] dating agency” by some. Corporates committed to proactive climate action are invited to take their first step by registering their interest with the Vana platform (<https://projectvana.org/>).

Data Cuttings from the Vana Prototype:

The Vana prototype connects multiple open data and silo data sources with live supply chain data, enabling the team to confirm that 29,792 corporate entities own 130.9% of the right type of land required to achieve afforestation targets in England alone[10]. This is only 5% of total corporate landholdings, hardly making a dent in those aggregated land assets. Put another way, Vana has confirmed that corporates are overwhelmingly the best hope of enabling the UK to hit its tree-planting targets.

Unsurprisingly their prototype confirms that the top three sectors owning woodland opportunity land were Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, Real Estate Activities and Construction. But more importantly, Vana has identified fragments of land all over England and Wales across all sectors[11] that could be used to hit those ambitious targets. This “long tail” fills in many of the missing puzzle pieces, including which group structures and supply chains some of those entities are a part of.

Drawing from their experience in corporate compliance[12] the team have identified which of the companies

in scope of the UK Modern Slavery Act (companies over £36M turnover) own 23.8% of the 2042 target for England[13]. The data can also be cut regionally, showing that in the South West of England 6601 organisations own 26% of the England 2042 target[14].

The Vana engine is already powerful enough to pull in other data sets and overlay them to address other environmental targets. Everything from flood risk mitigation to district heating planning proposals can be analysed through the corporate land and building ownership lens. Vana will use all available data to prioritise the lowest hanging fruit to achieve the most impact quickly.

What Vana is doing next and how to support it:

Now that Vana has successfully established the business case, the team needs funding to transform the prototype into a fully functioning platform to support working with corporates leading on afforestation and reforestation. Organisations wishing to support Vana can do so by pre-subscribing to the platform at a significantly discounted rate, or by sponsoring a live reporting map, region by region, showing afforestation and nature restoration opportunities and live projects as they get going.

<https://techfund.tiscreport.org/project/vana-the-afforestation-and-reforestation-data-app/>

Says Jaya, “We felt that the best place to start is by providing complete visibility on what is happening in the country right now. Not only would it help organisations and activists decide where they should be putting their efforts, but it would also help policymakers see the impact of current policy geospatially. As a B Corp social enterprise in need of funds to achieve our mission, this kills two birds with one stone.”

Project Vana aims to help on-the-ground technologies connect faster with climate-conscious corporate customers, again to accelerate impact. Innovative solutions companies are encouraged to make contact to form part of what Vana calls its “mycelium network” of high impact cleantech companies.

Time is of the essence. As Jaya says: “The human race is on. It’s the only one we have to win and it cannot be won without going beyond fixing what we have broken.”

Vana Background:

The Vana team, who are members of the tech accelerator Geovation (an Ordnance Survey initiative in association with HMLR), started with the hypothesis that corporate landowners were significant in the fight against climate change. In November 2020 they received funding from South West Creative Technology Network, SWCTN (funded by Research England & the University of the West of England) in order to test that hypothesis using corporate land ownership data from HM Land Registry and the groundbreaking Woodland Opportunities dataset developed by Friends of the Earth[15].

Says Jaya Chakrabarti “We were so very lucky that SWCTN recognised that Vana had enough potential to give us seed funding. Because we’re creating data infrastructure, we were worried it would be undervalued compared with frontline technologies. Yet without the right data infrastructure in place, we can never measure the true impact of our climate actions. We need an accurate baseline to avoid green-washing our metrics.”

#### Data Accuracy:

None of the publicly available data sets are 100% correct. But the Vana development team have expanded on their work in legislation compliance, to develop systems that understand the inaccuracies and adapt and correct them, whether they be from human error or the data being old and out of date. The team, led by data scientists, are confident that this strengthens the case for businesses to take evidence-based action.

Stuart Gallemore, CTO of Semantrica says, "We're confident now that we have the most accurate data set available through cross-referencing multiple public and private data sets. The rest we can confirm through human intelligence gathering. We have a rising land army of on-the-ground activists willing to get their hands dirty."

Supplementary Information/Notes to the Editor

Enquiries

For press/media enquiries about Vana please contact: [vana@tiscreport.org](mailto:vana@tiscreport.org)

Semantrica Ltd Background

Semantrica Ltd is a #DoingGoodWithData tech social enterprise and accredited B Corp. Its flagship platform TISCreport.org is a Transparency In Supply Chains Open Data platform built on the foundations of Section 54 of the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015. Its mission is to eradicate exploitation (modern slavery, human trafficking, labour exploitation) and corruption from supply chains. TISCreport.org uses open data, AI/ML and automation bots to track compliance and related risk factors of corporates all over the world.

Vana is built on data infrastructure on transparency platform TISCreport.org in order to plug and play directly into UK supply chains.

Vana video of co-founder's intro (2mins): [https://youtu.be/ZucsMuBJT\\_0](https://youtu.be/ZucsMuBJT_0)

Vana explainer video (5 mins): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5-clMpJYGA>

Vana stakeholder briefing deck (5 mins):

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17s6kYO\\_1zX3OWsxIF3iFYCAj4dgc6peRZg7I\\_z0eTiE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17s6kYO_1zX3OWsxIF3iFYCAj4dgc6peRZg7I_z0eTiE/edit?usp=sharing)

#### Steering Board Members Available for Comment:

Available for comment - please request via [vana@tiscreport.org](mailto:vana@tiscreport.org)

Nina Skubala, West of England Initiative, Business West: Nina engages with leaders from the private, public, voluntary & third sectors, enabling them to have a voice in shaping the region. Nina was Vice-Chair of the Bristol Green Capital Partnership during Bristol's year as European Green Capital in 2005.

Louise Nicholls, Suseco, Bread & Butter Thing, IEMA: After 29 years at Marks & Spencer plc leading Corporate Human Rights, Food Sustainability & Food Packaging teams, Louise was instrumental in founding & scaling Sedex Global as Chair, establishing SMETA, and is currently IEMA Vice-Chair.

Dr Mary Stevens, Friends of the Earth: Mary is the Experiments Programme Manager at Friends of the Earth. Her previous experience is in the community, public & research sectors, including six years in central government policy, at Defra & DCLG.

David Elliott, Trees for Cities: David was a management consultant for Accenture before Trees for Cities. David is also a Commissioner for the London Sustainable Development Commission.

Paul Nebel, Geovation: Paul's deep knowledge of UK Land Registry & Ordnance Survey data & technical

expertise provides Vana with a solid foundation upon which to build.

Dr Jaap Velthuis, Bristol University: Reader and Physics Department Impact Director aiming to stimulate collaborations with industry, policymakers and the general public to support a culture of collaboration between Bristol academics and the wider world.

Our full steering board can be found here: <https://projectvana.org/about-us-our-steering-board/>

Jaya Chakrabarti, CEO of Semantrica

Jaya Chakrabarti is a physicist-turned-data-scientist and a passionate advocate for engaging business with communities through technology to improve people's lives, and was honoured with an MBE in 2014's Queen's honours list 'For services to the Creative Digital Industries and the community in Bristol'. Jaya set up social enterprise Semantrica Ltd to develop TISCreport.org (Transparency In Supply Chains Report) in 2016, to tackle slavery in supply chains. In 2018 TISCreport was a finalist for two anti-corruption technology awards and is the world's largest anti-slavery register. In 2018 Jaya was named one of the top 100 Corporate Influencers in Modern Slavery and also one of the 2019 top 100 Asian Stars in Tech.

Semantrica Ltd

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[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

[2] 2021-2025

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/987061/england-trees-action-plan-2021-2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987061/england-trees-action-plan-2021-2025.pdf)

[3]

<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/tree-planting-environment-bill-labour-b1853726.html>

[4] <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/c5aa9ae9-4aa0-4059-a256-421a7958ab1d/priority-places-for-england-2016>

[5] <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/finding-land-double-tree-cover>

[6] UK companies that own property in England & Wales

<https://use-land-property-data.service.gov.uk/datasets/ccod>

[7] Companies that are accredited to be profit-with-purpose <https://www.bcorporation.uk/>

[8] Vana is built on the foundations of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act and the UK's fertile open data infrastructure.

[9] Insetting means evaluating, reducing and offsetting the climate and environmental footprint of a company by developing impactful socio-environmental projects within its value chain, and using them to build a sustainable society.

[10] 235,605 Hectares, Source, TISCreport>Vana, <https://projectvana.org/>

[11] Breakdown by SIC code is available on request. Corporates include public, private & voluntary sector entities

[12] <https://tiscreport.org/>

[13] Statistics for other regulation overlays are also available on request.

[14] Journalists are invited to ask the Vana team if they need figures for other regions of England.

[15] <https://takeclimateaction.uk/woodland-opportunity-mapping-england>