

From landowner to land steward – how companies can use data to enhance nature

We talk to digital activist and tech entrepreneur Jaya Chakrabarti about connecting business to communities to regenerate nature.

Joanna Watson | 18 Mar 2021



“If corporates were human, I’d say they were basically sociopathic” says Jaya Chakrabarti from Vana, [the afforestation data app](#). “Because they exist to maximise shareholder value and minimise risks, they often prioritise profit over the needs of the people and the environment”.

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So how does a digital activist and tech entrepreneur harness her drive for corporate transparency and open data and get through the door to talk to businesses about planting trees and nature regeneration?



Engaging business with communities to transform the natural environment

Although her previous work had taken her into the dark side of human rights abuse², Jaya had a lightbulb moment when her research into company data showed unused potential in their land holdings. Could she use digital technology to identify woodland potential on this land and connect to community groups wanting to plant trees and help regenerate nature? This is Vana in a nutshell - engaging business with community to take practical steps to transform the environment.

“I think of a company as a body. The head is the Board, making decisions about finance, and profits and money. But the heart is its people. They’re community members, parents, humans who want a safe place to live and rear their children, who want to feel they’re doing good”.

Using the heart to get to the head

As Jaya delved in land registry data, she realised that over 20% of land identified by Friends of the Earth as potential woodland² is owned by corporates but often just sits on their books, with very little understanding of how it is currently being used. This insight led her to research options and prototype a user experience that could persuade a company to move from being a passive landowner to an active land steward, championing regenerative practices.

