

134,000 trees to be planted through Urban Tree Challenge Fund

More than 50 projects led by community and volunteer groups, councils and individuals have been awarded a share of a £10 million pot to increase tree numbers in urban areas through small-scale planting projects.

The funding has been awarded as part of the second and final round of the Forestry Commission's [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#).

The second round will result in the planting of over 84,000 trees in towns and cities across England. The new trees will provide benefits to health and wellbeing, connect people with the outdoors, improve biodiversity, as well as play a crucial role in the fight against climate change.

Today's announcement means that there will be a combined total of up to 134,000 new trees planted across England's towns and cities, which surpasses the [Fund's original target to plant 130,000 trees](#).

Successful projects include:

- The Darlington Forest project in County Durham, which will extend an existing green corridor in the area with the planting of 6,800 trees to improve the environment for wildlife as well as local communities. The area runs alongside the trackbed of the first passenger steam railway and will help showcase Darlington's heritage.
- 7,500 new trees in Eastbourne, East Sussex, to form part of a wider programme of natural environment improvement across the area.
- 952 new trees across two sites for the Christchurch project in Dorset. The planting of native species will provide a natural traffic noise and pollution buffer, improve their look and provide a refuge for wildlife.
- 8,234 new trees in Durham which will be planted at a number of locations to extend and link existing woodlands to enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity, and improve areas of reclaimed land whilst also benefiting local communities.

Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

Community tree planting is a passion of mine which is why I am so excited to see projects like these benefitting from our Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

Trees give life to our streets and our parks, help improve the health of communities, and provide homes for precious wildlife, and the thousands of new trees that will be planted will bring many benefits for generations to come.

Forestry Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:

Trees play a crucial role in the fight against the climate and biodiversity loss. In urban areas they can link up our valuable green spaces and connect local communities with nature – something which has never been so important.

Ahead of our forthcoming England Tree Strategy, and to complement our manifesto ambition to have every new street lined with trees, the success of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund provides a fantastic example of how trees can be planted, managed and enjoyed, wherever you live.

Cllr Brian Stephens, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for neighbourhoods and local partnerships, said:

The funding we have received from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has been a wonderful opportunity to plant in our county's urban environment, in places where tree cover is low. Trees are so important – they help to enhance existing green areas, bring back lost open space, support and increase biodiversity, as well as give significant benefits to our own health and wellbeing.

Grants from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund are administered by the Forestry Commission, and successful applicants are match-funding the money they receive. The money will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

The Government is committed to plant 30,000 hectares of trees a year across the UK by 2025. Our £640m Nature for Climate fund will help us deliver the English portion of this tree planting commitment, alongside peatland restoration and nature recovery. The Prime Minister also recently announced [£40 million additional investment into the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) – this will go towards creating and retaining thousands of jobs in areas including tree planting, horticulture, and equipment and seed supply.

Today's announcement comes ahead of National Tree Week, the UK's largest annual tree celebration, which is taking place between 28 November and 6 December 2020. For more information visit: <https://treecouncil.org.uk/take-action/seasonal-campaigns/national-tree-week/>

The Forestry Commission will continue to contact additional successful applicants who may be awarded funding in the coming weeks.