

£3.9 million to drive innovative tree planting

A cash boost of nearly £4 million to plant more trees up and down the country has been announced by the government today (5 December). This will see hundreds of thousands of new trees planted, including in towns and cities and near rivers to reduce flood risk, and help meet the government's commitment to increase planting to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025.

A pot of £2.5 million will support schemes that establish new ways of planting trees in our cities, towns and countryside. Led by Defra, Natural England and the Tree Council, this will use five pilot studies delivered on the ground by Local Authorities to develop cost-effective and innovative approaches to planting trees outside woodlands over the next two and a half years. This could include schemes such as community tree nurseries, agroforestry and hedgerow management, or planting trees from locally collected seed. These new trees will help tackle climate change and create habitats for wildlife.

A further £1.4 million has been awarded to the Environment Agency to fund 'woodlands for water' – 15 projects to plant over 850,000 trees that will protect around 160km of river and help to reduce the risk of flooding to over 500 properties.

Tree planting can play a valuable role in reducing flood risk, slowing the flow of water to nearby communities. Tree planting near watercourses can also act as a buffer for agricultural pollution and improve water quality.

The 'woodlands for water' funding, which forms part of the £640 million Nature for Climate fund to support the government's tree planting commitment, will support projects such as:

- The biosphere woods project in North Devon, which will plant 15,600 trees to improve water quality in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
- 30,168 new trees in the Upper Thames and Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to help slow the flow of water and improve habitat connectivity.
- 17,687 new trees at three locations in Shropshire, helping to improve water quality, alleviate flooding, capture carbon and create wildlife habitat.
- 17,000 new trees at ten sites across Devon and Cornwall, creating and re-connecting habitats and improving water quality by reducing surface run-off.
- 10,257 trees to be planted in the Ure and Wharfe catchments in Yorkshire to improve wildlife habitat and connectivity.

Forestry Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:

We are going to have to break down the barriers to planting trees outside of woodlands if we are to deliver our ambitious tree planting commitments. Trees are the backbone of our urban and rural environments, and increasing planting is an effective way both to tackle climate change and stem the appalling collapse of biodiversity.

These ambitious new initiatives will help deliver tree planting on an unprecedented scale. They will help to regenerate our urban areas, as well as our watercourses and create a network of green corridors for both people and wildlife to thrive.

Sara Lom, CEO The Tree Council, said:

We are delighted to be working with local authority partners at the heart of this important project, in line with our mission to bring people together, to find creative solutions to establish more trees in our communities in a practical and sustainable way.

Chair of the Environment Agency, Emma Howard Boyd, said:

This £1.4 million fund is one part of the wide range of measures to improve the nation's resilience to the impacts of climate change. It will accelerate efforts to reach net zero and help achieve the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) goals for nature through effective nature-based solutions.

The projects chosen will provide invaluable benefits to communities and our environment – from reducing flood risk and protecting homes, to capturing carbon, improving water quality and encouraging biodiversity.

In addition to today's announcement, the government recently consulted on a new England Tree Strategy to accelerate tree planting and improve the management of our existing trees and woodlands.

The Prime Minister also recently announced a further [£40 million additional investment into the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) – this will go towards creating and retaining thousands of jobs in the environmental sector.

The £2.5 million to fund pilots for tree planting outside of woodlands are being taken forward as part of HM Treasury's £200 million Shared Outcomes Fund.