

44,000 trees to be planted as Urban Tree Challenge Fund reopens

Thousands of trees will be planted near schools and healthcare centres and in areas with fewer trees and higher social deprivation, as the [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#) has re-opened for applications, Defra and the Forestry Commission announced today.

Across the country 44,000 large trees will be planted in towns and cities. These will support areas to improve health and wellbeing and help connect people to the outdoors.

[Evidence from Forest Research](#) shows the majority of adults surveyed agreed that their level of happiness when in nature has increased compared to before the pandemic. The new trees will also play a crucial role in the fight against climate change, supporting the UK's journey to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and commitment to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees a year by 2025.

Today's announcement comes ahead of the government setting out its wider plans on how it intends to deliver on its tree planting commitment. A new action plan for trees and woodland will be published shortly to outline how government will plant new high-quality, well-managed trees and woodlands and improve the condition and resilience of existing ones.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund has reopened following the [success of the first two rounds](#) where a combined total of up to 134,000 new trees will be planted across England's towns and cities.

Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

I am delighted to announce the reopening of this hugely successful fund, made possible by £6 million from our Nature for Climate Fund. Ahead of our forthcoming ambitious action plan for trees, woodland and forestry, and to complement our manifesto ambition to have every new street lined with trees, the Urban Tree Challenge Fund provides a fantastic example of how trees can be planted, managed and enjoyed to provide the greatest impact – in areas where they are needed most.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley said:

The pandemic has shown us just how important trees and nature are, wherever you live.

Through targeting funding toward areas where they will have the biggest benefits, including near healthcare and educational

facilities, this fund will deliver increased benefits for health and wellbeing, as well as contributing towards the government's ambition to increase woodland creation across England.

Illustrating the success of the fund to date, Slough Borough Council have planted over 8,500 trees under the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. Through the delivery of diverse community-led tree planting projects, the Council have seen wider health and educational benefits to the general public, students and schools, stakeholders and community groups.

Louise Handley at Slough Council said:

The funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has allowed us to bring post Covid initiatives to the most deprived areas of our community, which focus on up skilling for employment, active lifestyles, citizen science and volunteering.

The design of the Urban Forest has facilitated a move away from close mown grass cutting regimes to one of biodiversity improvement and habitat creation. This initiative has the potential to reach all of Slough's population and its flora and fauna.

Over the next two years, up to £6 million will be available for planting in addition to necessary maintenance payments. The grants are administered by the Forestry Commission, and successful applicants are match-funding the money they receive.

Grants will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

Also being announced today is a new £1 million Woods into Management Innovation Fund which is due to open in May and will focus on improving the condition of existing woodlands. The aim of this scheme, as part of government's Nature for Climate Fund, is to increase the area of woodland in active management to improve their ecological condition, help them adapt to a changing climate and recover from the impacts of pests and diseases. The scheme is aimed at forestry businesses and conservation organisations who are in a position to help owners better manage their existing woodlands.

This is part of a series of Nature for Climate Fund announcements this spring, leading up to the publication of the government's action plan on trees, woodland and forestry.

In recent months, we have announced the opening of the [Local Authority Treescapes Fund](#), [£12.1 million of investment for tree planting in Community Forests](#) across the country, as well as a [funding boost and new woodland creation partnership between Defra and Forest for Cornwall](#), and a [£3.9 million pot to support innovative planting schemes](#) in towns and cities and near rivers to reduce flood risk.

[Apply for the Urban Tree Challenge fund here.](#)