

800,000 trees set to be planted as Green Recovery Challenge Fund projects announced

- Funding will create over 300 hectares of woodlands, restore hedgerows, and plant trees in cities as we build back greener from the pandemic
- Nearly £40 million allocated to projects across England in this first round, with second round of funding to open in early 2021

Projects that protect landscapes, connect people with nature and help create and retain thousands of green jobs across England have been awarded a share of almost £40 million, the government announced today.

The 68 projects will see over 800,000 trees planted and help restore damaged habitats such as moorlands, wetlands and forests. The projects will also support conservation work and help to improve education about the environment.

This first round of funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund will award nearly £40 million. The second funding round will open for applications early next year. The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a key part of [the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan](#) to kick-start nature recovery, create green jobs and tackle climate change while helping the country build back better and greener from the pandemic.

The fund will be delivered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

The winning projects include:

- The Woodland Trust, which is being awarded £3,860,200 to restore ancient woodlands and trees in 63 landscapes across England. The funding will also go towards helping increase skills and capacity within the wider forestry and conservation sectors and reinvigorate UK timber markets.
- A partnership led by the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) in England and Wales, who will receive £2,543,600 to connect young people to nature and build a new workforce for the green recovery, targeting young people from deprived areas through virtual, field or class based learning, day and residential trips, citizen science programme and volunteering with experienced environmental tutors across 200 diverse natural heritage sites, such as conservation areas, AONBs, national parks and more.
- The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, which has been awarded £580,400 to improve access to green spaces at NHS sites across England, including by planting 10,000 trees at 50+ NHS sites, and providing outdoor ecotherapy sessions and even refurbishing a garden for a chemotherapy suite, which will allow patients to have treatment outside.
- The Conservation Education & Research Trust will receive £249,900 to help plant 12 'tiny forests' (the size of a tennis court) in urban areas

across England.

- The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's Owl Box Initiative is being awarded a grant of £123,700 to work with 100 farms and supply communities with Barn Owl boxes, monitoring their success and involving farming families in this process.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

These projects will drive forward work across England to restore and transform our landscapes, boost nature and create green jobs, and will be a vital part of helping us to build back greener from coronavirus.

I look forward to working with environmental organisations as these projects develop and help address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, while creating and retaining jobs as part of the green recovery.

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

Reaching net zero and achieving the government's 25 Year Environment Plan goals for nature can only be done by employing the right skills. The Green Recovery Challenge Fund will deliver on the ground benefits for local communities, and wildlife, by supporting jobs in the environmental sector.

This has been a tough year for everyone, but these projects give us reason for optimism and will help develop the skills needed to tackle the climate emergency, protect biodiversity and build back greener.

Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:

Having opportunities to experience wildlife-rich natural environments has never been more essential for the nation's health and wellbeing as it has been this year. Today we celebrate the tangible benefits for people and wildlife this fund will soon deliver, as we emerge from the coronavirus crisis.

It is inspiring to see how the fund will help aspiring ecologists take their first roles toward building careers in Nature recovery and the sustainable economy it is essential we now build. It is another step toward securing the wonderful landscapes and habitats upon which we all depend.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:

Supporting our natural environment is one of the most valuable things we can do right now. All these projects are of huge benefit to our beautiful countryside and wildlife, but will also support jobs, health and wellbeing, which are vitally important as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis.

Exchequer Secretary, Kemi Badenoch, said:

This investment will support growth right across England, creating and supporting thousands of new jobs and helping people develop valuable new skills.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a vital part of our efforts to support decarbonisation and restore biodiversity, as part of our transition to a green economy.

21 projects will receive the larger grants (over £250k – £5m) and 47 projects awarded funding for the smaller grants (£50 – £250k).

The fund will also drive progress on the government's wider [25 Year Environment Plan commitments](#), including plans to increase tree-planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. This is alongside the forthcoming [Environment Bill](#) which puts the environment at the centre of policy making to ensure that we have a cleaner, greener and more resilient country for the next generation.