

Press release: People are spending more time outside in the natural environment than ever before

New national statistics published today by Natural England show that more people than ever before are visiting and spending time in the natural environment.

The proportion of adults visiting nature at least once a week has increased from 54 per cent in 2010 to 62 per cent in 2018.

Natural England's [Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment](#) (MENE) report also found that this trend could be seen across population groups, including groups where levels of participation have historically been lower.

This year's report further found the proportion of people living in England's most deprived areas visiting the natural environment at least once a week has increased by 13 per cent from 38 per cent in 2009/10 to 51 per cent in 2017/18.

This year's report also found:

- In 2017/18 health and exercise was the main motivation for spending time in the natural environment (reported for over half of all visits).
- In 2017/18, 86% people were concerned about damage to the natural environment. Choosing to walk instead of taking the car is on the up (reported by 48 per cent of people in 2017/18 compared with 40% in 2009/10) but other pro-environmental behaviours remain predominantly static (such as volunteering for environment or conservation causes which has remained at 5 per cent over the last nine years).
- Despite high levels of concern, only a third of people think they are likely to make future lifestyle changes to protect the environment.

The government's 25 Year Environment Plan aims to connect more people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing and encourage them to take action to improve the natural world.

Principal Specialist for People and the Environment at Natural England, Rose O'Neill, said:

Over the last nine years there has been a real change in how people think about and experience the natural world.

It is great that more people than ever before, from across all sections of society, are spending increasing amounts of time

enjoying the natural environment.

Research has also shown that one of the main motivations for people engaging with the natural environment is the benefits to health and wellbeing, underlining the important role of nature in everyday lives.

The MENE survey is funded by Natural England, with support from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The MENE survey was first commissioned in 2009 and has provided a wealth of evidence relating to outdoor recreation, behaviour and attitudes. The biggest long-running survey of its kind in the world allows us to track changes over time and provides a valuable insight into how people use and relate to the natural environment.

Natural England uses the research to understand how people use, enjoy and are motivated to protect the natural environment and to help monitor changes in use of the natural environment over time.

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[Press release: Grants for creating woodland available all year round](#)

From today, it will be easier for landowners to access generous grants for creating new woodland, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has announced.

Applications are now being accepted for the latest round of the [Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant](#) – a scheme which provides up to £6,800 per hectare to help farmers, foresters and landowners tap into the environmental and financial benefits of tree planting.

In a drive to encourage more projects to come forward and give applicants longer to prepare, the funding will now be available twelve months a year – replacing a previously time-limited application window.

The extension supports the government's commitment to plant 11 million trees, which will provide habitats for wildlife, help to prevent flood risk and reduce carbon in our atmosphere.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

By planting more trees and creating new woodlands, landowners in England can help to protect and enhance the environment now and for future generations.

I look forward to seeing as many applications as possible come forward in support of our continued drive to grow woodland cover.

Richard Greenhous, Forestry Commission director of forest services, said:

By making it easier to apply for generous grant support we are ensuring that we deliver on the Government's and the forestry sector's ambitions to plant millions more trees across the country.

We look forward to hearing from applicants who want to reap the economic, environmental and social benefits of sustainable woodland creation.

The Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant is a Defra scheme delivered by the Forestry Commission and is a capital grant, where applicants can apply for one-off payments for the trees which will be planted and associated infrastructure.

The government has made a number of improvements to the scheme, including streamlining the application process and improving guidance for landowners looking to capitalise on the environmental and economic benefits offered.

This scheme forms part of the Government's ongoing efforts to grow woodland cover, alongside the publication of our ambitious 25 Year Environment Plan, funding towards the creation of a vast Northern Forest from Liverpool to Hull, and the appointment of a Tree Champion to drive forward commitments around tree planting and conservation.

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[Map: England Coast Path: plan of the Grain to Woolwich stretch](#)

See the Grain to Woolwich stretch page for more information about the work being carried out on this stretch of coast.