

Environment Agency celebrates planting over 80,000 trees in Cumbria

- Planting has been completed with the help of pupils from a number of schools and partners across the North of England
- Achievement supports the England Tree Action Plan and helps mark National Tree Week
- Volunteers sought to plant next 3,000 trees by March 2022

Over the last 12 years, the Environment Agency has co-ordinated the planting of over 80 thousand trees across Cumbria.

The trees have provided riverbank stabilisation, created shaded areas to boost fish populations, helped to slow the flow of rivers during high rainfall and brought countless benefits for biodiversity and wildlife.

This momentous achievement supports the new coastal community forest being created in Cumbria announced by Defra, England's Community Forest and Cumbria County Council on Saturday 27 November at the start of National Tree Week and will help deliver the [England Trees Action Plan](#), published earlier this year.

The tree planting years was funded by money from the sale of Environment Agency fishing licences and a number of partner organisations including local angling associations, Natural England, Lake District National Park, Rivers trusts and Forestry England.

Mike Farrell, spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

"Planting over 80,000 trees is a significant achievement that brings countless benefits for people, the environment and the wildlife that depend on it.

"I would like to thank all our partners for the support and commitment that they have shown over the years. Without them, this achievement would not have been possible.

"Our combined efforts to create new woodlands have boosted biodiversity, helped safeguard our environment for future generations and supported sustainable rural communities.

"We are always on the lookout for volunteers to spend the day tree planting with us and with three thousand trees ready to be planted between now and March 2022 I would like to urge anyone interested to get in touch."

Potential volunteers should contact mike.farrell@environment-agency.gov.uk to find out more.

- The Environment Agency is not stopping at 80,000 trees. As part of the £76million Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme, the Environment Agency

has committed to planting 4,000 trees in Kendal with a further 15,000 being planted throughout the River Kent Catchment over the coming years. Different sized trees will be planted in order to serve different functions to best suit locations. Native species will be planted in more rural locations and in the town centre locations ornamental trees that are suitable for urban planting will be planted to suit the character of the town. The Environment Agency has also been working with community groups in Kendal to take cuttings from the existing trees along the river. These cuttings will be replanted around the town once construction of the £76million flood risk management scheme is complete.

- As part of Skirting and Whangs Beck Flood Risk Management Scheme and Carlisle Flood Risk Management Scheme, the Environment Agency will be working with partners to plant even more trees and improve the local environment for future generations.
- The Cumbria Natural Flood Management programme has contributed by planting over 30,000 trees in the last four years, with even more still to be planted. These trees help increase water infiltration into the ground, create areas of wet canopy evaporation and absorb carbon, they are a key tool in helping reduce flood risk and keeping our climate cool.
- The tree planting has been completed with the help of pupils, from a number of schools across the North of England, local angling clubs, University students in Cumbria, associations and environmentalists adding up to thousands of volunteer hours.

A spokesperson for the Oak Field Special Needs school said:

“Oak Field School is a school for children with severe learning difficulties aged 3 to 19 years. For over 10 years, sixth form students and old students have had the great opportunity to work with the Environment Agency team.

The students have planted trees and cleared Himalayan Balsam, it has been an amazing and successful project to be involved in over the years, giving the young people the confidence and the experience of working together to put something back into the environment.

The students learnt a lot about the need to care for the countryside and the impact that conservation has on the local environment. Many of the students return every year and look forward to meeting the friendly and helpful Environment Agency team.

- As well as the planting of over 80 thousand trees, school children have helped to plant over 5000 wildflowers and bulbs including bluebells, primrose, and great burnet, across 7 sites in Cumbria, including the River Greta, River Cocker and the River Glendermackin. This supported the children’s John Muir award, an environmental award scheme focused on

wild places completed with Derwent Hill outdoor education centre. The scheme supports people to connect with, enjoy and care for nature, landscape, and the natural environment.

Matthew Ellis Centre Director & Outdoor Education Advisor at Derwent Hill said:

“Derwent Hill opened in 1962 and is owned by Sunderland City Council. The Centre is one of the Premier Outdoor Education Centres in the UK and holds the AHQEC Gold Standard Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge. Our primary aim is to provide high quality outdoor education residential for young people.

“For several years we have worked in Partnership with the Environment Agency on our John Muir Award Programmes. These courses have a specific environmental focus and encourage youngsters to Discover, Explore, Conserve the natural world and share their experiences.

“The Environment Agency has been instrumental in supporting these children to plant over three thousand trees, help to limit erosion of riverbanks and worked to protect fragile habitats and eco systems. Their support has been invaluable in helping participants to realise the threats and challenges facing our flora and fauna and to educate them on what can be done to help.

“We very much hope that this Partnership continues to do such vital work and we continue to be very grateful for their support.”

Pete Leeson Partnership Manager for the Woodlands Trust in Cumbria said:

“Working with communities, partners and landowners to create woodland and hedgerows for people and wildlife is mutually beneficial to the environment.

“In the last decade we have worked extensively with the Environment Agency particularly focusing on riparian habitat which supports natural flood management and fisheries improvements. We have supplied tens of thousands of trees for this purpose and look forward to planting many more in the years to come!”