

New Community Forest for Cumbria will see thousands of trees planted along Cumbria's west coast

A new coastal community forest will be created in Cumbria to help bring people closer to nature, Defra, England's Community Forest and Cumbria County Council announced today as National Tree Week begins, under plans to level up communities across the UK.

Up to 150 hectares (or around 210 football pitches) of trees, woodlands and forests will be planted, with the equivalent of one tree planted for every resident in Copeland, Barrow and Allerdale over the next five years. Ultimately, the aim is to create a minimum of 5,000 hectares of new woodland along a 56 mile stretch of the western coast of Cumbria over the next 25 years – that's the size of almost 7,000 football pitches.

The project has received a £220,000 boost from Defra's Nature for Climate Fund to kickstart planting in the next year. By growing trees where they are most needed, corridors of woodlands will be created along the west coast of Cumbria from Barrow to Carlisle which will better connect 65 miles of coastal communities to nature, helping people to enjoy the benefits of being out close to trees and woodlands.

The proposed area of Cumbria where the forest will be planted has high levels of economic and social deprivation and only 9.9% woodland cover – 3% below the national average, and so the new forest will contribute towards the government's mission to level up across the country by improving living standards and wellbeing, increasing access to nature and providing job opportunities in new woodland creation through planting, establishing and managing trees in rural and urban settings.

The Government is committed to trebling tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament. The [England Trees Action Plan](#), published earlier this year, sets out plans to deliver unprecedented rates of tree planting, helping to create diverse treescapes across the country which will benefit wildlife, the environment and people's wellbeing. This is the third new Community Forest to be created this year, along with Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest and the North East Community Forest, fulfilling a key commitment set out in the England Trees Action Plan to build at least three new Community Forests where they are needed most, benefitting communities in and around towns and cities. This will help us to meet our net zero emissions target by 2050 – by 2025, England's Community Forests will contribute over 6,700ha of woodland in total.

Lord Goldsmith, Forestry Minister, said:

This announcement further expands and strengthens England's network

of Community Forests. All across the country, we are growing more trees and woodland than ever before, including in and around some of England's most deprived communities.

Forests are vital for the future of our planet and this exciting new project will contribute towards our commitment to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament.

Sir William Worsley, Forestry Commission Chair, said:

The incredible value of trees has never been clearer, and it is my personal passion to make sure as many people as possible get to experience their benefits. This initiative will offer local opportunities for people to enjoy nature from their doorstep, providing people of all ages and abilities with fresh air and spaces to breathe.

I look forward to working with all partners involved and will ensure that, through careful planning and expert management, the trees of Cumbria and elsewhere can continue to thrive as they grow.

The new community forest will cover the districts of Barrow, Allerdale, Copeland and South Lakeland, and will be delivered by Cumbria County Council, in partnership with organisations including the Forestry Commission, Cumbria Woodlands and the National Trust.

Paul Nolan, Chair of England's Community Forests, said:

I'm extremely pleased today to welcome Cumbria Coastal Community Forest into our thriving network of Community Forests, which reach right across the country and collectively form the largest environmental regeneration initiative in England.

Cumbria Coastal Community Forest will create corridors of connected, wildlife-rich woodland, and will ensure coastal communities from Barrow to Carlisle have better access to nature, allowing them to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of being out in nature. The work of this new Community Forest will also play a crucial role in tackling the local impacts of climate change, and will support the Community Forests' collective mission to increase tree planting across the country in the next 5 years, as a key part of the government's journey towards net zero.

England's Community Forests look forward to working closely with all partners involved in the new Cumbria Coastal Community Forest, to help realise both local and national ambitions for environmental and social transformation through community-centred forestry.

Since the strategic England Trees Action Plan was published, [more flexible grants have been introduced](#) to offer better financial incentives for planting trees where they are most needed. This includes grants offered through England's Community Forests' [£12 million Trees for Climate programme](#), funded through Defra's Nature for Climate Fund. Further details of the [Trees for Climate grants are here](#).

This announcement forms part of the Government's wider action to recover and restore nature, as part of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitments to reach net zero by 2050.