

Thousands of trees to be planted in England's towns and cities

Thirteen projects in urban communities across England have been awarded a share of the £10m in the first round of the [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#).

Across the country over 22,000 large trees and 28,000 small trees will be planted in urban areas, from Thanet to Middlesbrough, and Merseyside to Bristol. These will help areas improve health and wellbeing, as well as playing a crucial role in the fight against climate change, supporting the UK's journey to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The Government is committed to plant 30,000 hectares of trees a year across the UK by 2025, and the fund is helping increase canopy cover in and around our towns and cities where they bring a wide range of benefits.

Launched in May 2019, the £10 million scheme will see 130,000 trees planted across England's towns and cities by 2021.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Trees are vital in the fight against climate change, to tackle air pollution and help us achieve our net-zero target by 2050. But for local communities they are so much more. They allow green spaces to come together, help both physical and mental wellbeing, and connect children and young people with nature.

Our manifesto sets our ambition to have every new street lined with trees, and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund complements this ambition, benefiting thousands of people for years to come.

Sir Harry Studholme, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

It is such great news that the first year of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has been so successful and able to reach so many places.

The fund focuses on areas of high deprivation and low tree canopy cover where every tree planted has the chance to provide the greatest impact.

Not only do trees in urban areas help to improve wellbeing but they also offer benefits in many other ways like helping tackle climate change and mitigating flood risks. I look forward to seeing the second year of the fund re-opening for smaller scale planting later this year.

Successful projects in the first round include:

- The Trees for Cities project which will receive support for over 9,000 trees to be distributed across the country.
- Over 8,000 trees will be planted by Slough Borough Council, almost 7,000 large trees will go to London Street Trees and 6,000 trees to The Mersey Forest.

Examples of what these projects are looking to achieve include:

- The Urban Trees in The Mersey Forest project focuses on recreation and health – improving the quality of access routes, encouraging active travel and recreation, and improving wellbeing and mental health through increased physical activity and greener neighbourhoods.
- Funding for Slough Borough Council's 'TEC' Urban Forest project will support the Council's wider plans to tackle air pollution, reduce particulate matter levels and increase flood protection. Trees will be planted in urban areas that directly benefit local air quality and protect the town from floods.

Thanet has one of the lowest tree canopies – 4.4 per cent – in the country and one of the highest levels of deprivation so I have always seen the planting of trees in the area a priority of mine. The response from our community in Thanet has been incredible and has shown it is an important issue for everybody.

Thanks to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, the Isle of Thanet Trees and Woods Initiative is going to be the catalyst for positive change in Thanet for future generations, increasing biodiversity, increasing tree canopy coverage and providing all the health benefits that trees provide.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund is made up of two parts. In year one, the fund was open for block bids from local authorities or larger organisations, and bidding closed on 31 August 2019. In year two, the fund will reopen for applications from individual tree planters, commencing in spring 2020.

Ahead of this, applicants can currently [submit an Expression of Interest](#) to the Forestry Commission to state their interest and receive the latest up-to-date information on the fund before the opening of the year two application window.

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.

Since 2010 government has planted over 15 million trees, and we have a clear commitment through our 25 Year Environment Plan to increase woodland cover further. Our recently introduced Environment Bill gives communities a greater

say in the management of street trees.

The successful applicants were:

- Middlesbrough 10,000 trees
- Tree-ing Urban Northumberland
- Slough Borough Council – TEC Urban Forest
- London Street Trees
- Thanet Community Forest School CIO
- Space for Trees (Durham)
- Urban Trees in The Mersey Forest
- Green Street Community Planting (Bristol and North Somerset)
- Trees for Cities (London and across England)
- City of Trees (Greater Manchester)
- Luton Borough Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Cornwall Council