

Tree resilience efforts boosted as funds to improve forestry innovation reopen

Innovative approaches to tackling the greatest threats facing our trees and forests are set to be boosted by new Government funding, with applications for the Forestry Commission-delivered Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds and the Tree Production Innovation Fund reopening today (Tuesday 8 March).

This year, almost £4.5 million will be allocated to successful applicants across both funds, which together will boost nature regeneration efforts, promote biodiversity, and support innovative approaches to tree health, resilience and production amidst a changing climate. Investing in the long-term welfare of our forests will underpin wider efforts to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament and plant 30,000 hectares of trees across the UK per year by 2025.

Chair of the Forestry Commission, Sir William Worsley said:

As we enter an unprecedented era of tree planting, fostering resilient tree growth and management will be essential to realise the health, economic and ecological benefits that trees offer – now and in the future.

Both funds will drive innovation across the forestry and associated sectors to ensure our much loved trees and forests continue to thrive for generations to come in the face of a changing climate.

Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds

Approximately 40% of England's woodlands are not actively managed, which can be detrimental to biodiversity and leave neglected woodlands vulnerable to pests and disease. Projects which successfully apply for funding through the second round of the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds will receive a share of £3 million, as the Forestry Commission aims to bring an additional 20,000 hectares of existing woodland in England into active management by 2024/25.

Under the umbrella of the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds, the new Timber in Construction Innovation Fund will support projects which increase and facilitate the use of English timber from sustainably managed woods and forests in construction. Other funds will support new business models and supply chains for ash timber to help restore woodlands damaged by ash dieback, as well as for initiatives using temporary infrastructure to access neglected or degraded woodlands. Moreover, a series of regional funds will support forward-thinking projects that enable the active management of

woodlands where previously not possible. Applicants in the forestry and associated sectors, as well as local authorities, will be invited to submit multi-year proposals spanning up to three financial years (ending March 2025), with individual projects valued at up to £100,000 per year.

Tree Production Innovation Fund

Also reopening today, the Tree Production Innovation Fund will make over £1.4 million available to projects striving to enhance the quantity, quality, and diversity of tree planting stock available for planting in England. The Fund will support the research and development of new technologies and ways of working which will supply young trees in the quantities required to realise ambitious tree planting plans across the country. Projects previously supported with this fund include collaborations from researchers, nurseries, seed suppliers and industry, including the Future Trees Trust, the University of Oxford and Maelor Forest Nurseries. Applicants will be invited to submit multi-year proposals spanning up to three financial years (ending March 2025), with projects valued at up to £300,000 per year.

The second rounds of the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds and the Tree Production Innovation Fund are now open. For more information and to apply:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/woods-into-management-forestry-innovation-funds> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-production-innovation-fund>

Case study: Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds

- Routes to market for ash timber Innovation Fund

A collaborative effort between Grown in Britain and Axminster Tools, the 'Ash Bounceback: Homegrown hardwood into tool handles' project has secured a new supply chain for ash through the development of ash tool handles. This helps to reduce imports and utilise more UK timber. This project aims to see ash more widely viewed as high value, bringing more ash into active management.

- Regional woodland restoration Innovation Funds

Supported as part of the South East and London Innovation Fund, the myForest Woodland Assessor from the Sylva Foundation is an online UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) Evaluator Tool which supports woodland management activity. It will enable woodland owners and agents to critique their woodland management practices against the UKFS and be used to deliver advice to 50 owners of undermanaged woodlands, raising awareness to support the delivery of the UKFS.

Case study: Tree Production Innovation Fund

- Intelligent Growth Solutions Ltd and Maelor Forest Nurseries are investigating the feasibility and optimisation of Total Controlled Environment Agriculture (TCEA) systems to produce year-round forestry seedlings.
- David Farquhar, CEO of IGS, said: "Projects such as this offer

opportunities to undertake impactful climate-positive innovation. Our TCEA systems promise the highest quality seedling production, minimising wastage, reducing imports and accelerating reforestation. The forestry sector is evolving rapidly and is at the heart of the hugely exciting drive to tackle climate change, so we are excited about the positive role our systems could play in driving what we all know could be the right outcome."