

# 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](mailto: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 AHOEC 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!”

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## [Letter to the Prime Minister on investment in innovative science and technology companies](#)

In a letter to the Prime Minister sent in September 2021, the Council for Science and Technology (CST) explores how the government can encourage scale

up investment in innovative science and technology companies.

The recommendations in this letter focus on the cultural, behavioural, and structural changes needed to help unlock scale up investment.

We have added the Prime Minister's response to the CST letter on investment in innovative science and technology companies.

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## [OSCE Mission to Moldova report: UK statement](#)

Thank you Madam Chairperson. I join other speakers in welcoming Ambassador Neukirch to the Permanent Council and thanking him for his report.

The United Kingdom continues to support the Permanent Conference on Political Issues ("5+2") as the mechanism most conducive to a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognised borders, and with a special status for Transnistria. The UK welcomes the fact that OSCE Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to this well-established goal at the Stockholm Ministerial Council on 3 December.

As Ambassador Neukirch's report makes clear, the period since his last appearance at this Council in October has been marked by a number of challenges including, but not limited to, the recent energy procurement crisis, ongoing human rights abuses in the Transnistrian region, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are grateful to you, Ambassador Neukirch, for the energy and creativity you have shown in leading the Mission during difficult times. We note, for example, the very active Mission presence in the Security Zone, and intensive shuttle diplomacy which helped to keep channels of communication open.

The UK has regularly expressed its concern at the ongoing presence of the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. We repeat that concern today. We also take this opportunity to call on the Russian Federation to urgently formulate a proposal for resumption of the process of removal and destruction of ammunition from the Cobasna site. The UK affirms that this process must include the OSCE, in accordance with the 1999 Istanbul Declaration and subsequent extension of the mandate of the Mission to Moldova.

We note the Russian Federation's previously stated position that withdrawal will take place when conditions are right. Given the danger that Cobasna represents to citizens in the region, we invite the Russian Federation to

clarify, as a matter of urgency, what would constitute the “right” conditions. Cobasna is not solely a political issue, but also an issue of personal safety to large numbers of citizens.

As Ambassador Neukirch highlights, there has been good cooperation across the Nistru on provision of Covid vaccines. The UK believes that such co-operation provides an example of what can be achieved in other areas, including implementation of outstanding Berlin-plus package measures.

The UK notes with concern that a resolution of the issue of access for commercial vehicles from Transnistria to international road traffic remains elusive.

We applaud your efforts to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda through initiating a capacity building project for female members of the Joint Expert Working Groups and cooperating with UN Women on the establishment of an information Women Advisory Board- featuring women’s voices and perspectives from across Moldova. The UK notes with satisfaction that our Embassy in Chisinau played a part in the initial analysis which contributed to development of this important project.

The UK continues to have concerns regarding the Extremism Strategy implemented by the de facto authorities in Transnistria. The manner in which this Strategy defines extremism does not meet internationally accepted standards and limits freedom of expression and association in Transnistria. The UK welcomes the work of the Mission to promote dialogue on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and notes the positive movement regarding the release of Boris Babaian and Ghennady Ciorba. However the cases of Oleg Horjan and Gennady Kuzmichev remain a serious concern, as documented in Ambassador Neukirch’s report. We appreciate your efforts to promote confidence-building measures in the field of human rights. We welcome the joint human rights monitoring webinars the Mission organised for staff of the ombudspersons’ offices on both banks on the topic of human rights institutions in public emergencies, as well as the consultations provided to residents of Transnistria on issues related to documentation.

We are grateful for the work of the Mission and this insightful report. We note, and agree with, your closing assessment that standing still “can easily lead to regression”. The UK hopes that in the weeks and months ahead, the spirit of collaboration and cooperation on vaccine provision can be extended to other, important matters– such as outstanding Berlin Plus measures.

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## **Planning Inspectorate Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update 09 December 2021**

## Coronavirus Plan B: Latest position on casework arrangements for the Planning Inspectorate



Following the government enacting its “Plan B” to combat the Omicron strand of the coronavirus, we have [updated our guidance to reflect new measures in place](#).

Graham Stallwood (Director of Operations) has today [written to chief planning officers at local planning authorities \(LPAs\)](#) to remind them that they need to be ready to host virtual-only hearings and inquiries.

From 13 September 2021, [LPAs resumed the pre-pandemic practice of facilitating face-to-face casework events](#) while also providing a virtual option in case pandemic restrictions change.

With the new coronavirus variant emerging and positive cases rising, it is increasingly likely that participants may need to take part virtually either to protect other participants or to protect vulnerable people in their own families.

Our latest position on casework arrangements is:

- site visits will continue and inspectors will adhere to government guidance on the use of face coverings
- hearings and inquiries are being arranged by local planning authorities, order making authorities and others
- as previously advised, local planning authorities need to be ready to host all events virtually
- there may be a small number of cases where the Inspector considers the event can only proceed following a face-to-face element. They will make a case-by-case decision as to how to proceed in those cases. It is the responsibility of the local planning authority to ensure there are adequate safety measures in place as per government guidance

We want to ensure that casework can keep moving wherever possible while keeping our staff and customers safe. To help us, customers are requested to:

- inform us as soon as possible if they are unable to attend, or feel that it is unsafe for an inspector to attend, a site visit for any reason
- use the [appeals casework portal](#) for new appeals
- use the [appeals casework portal](#) for making comments on appeals

- email/ ring their case officer directly
- do not post written correspondence to Temple Quay House if possible – this delays the process

In November, Professional Lead for Appeals, [Rebecca Phillips wrote about a project to establish a new operating model for events](#). Our goal is to build a sustainable model for the future that:

- is accessible for all parties involved and offers opportunities to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in our events
- ensures we maintain our values of fairness, openness, impartiality and customer focus
- meets our public sector equality duty responsibilities
- meets our environmental policy requirements

We expect to share our new operating model in early 2022.

Published 9 December 2021

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## [Permanent Ofqual Chair appointed](#)

News story

The Education Secretary has appointed a permanent Chair of Ofqual to take up the role for three years.



Ian Bauckham CBE has been appointed as Chair of Ofqual by the Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi today (9 December).

Mr Bauckham has held the position of Interim Chair of Ofqual since January, and will start his three-year position as permanent Chair in the new year.

Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi said:

I am pleased that Ian will be taking on the role of Ofqual Chair permanently. His extensive experience of the education and qualifications systems means he is the ideal person to guide Ofqual through the critical work ahead.

Ofqual Chair Ian Bauckham said:

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to continue as Chair of Ofqual. Our aim is to act in the interests of all those taking qualifications and apprenticeships.

It is a privilege to be able to work with a team so focused on this priority, as we respond to the demands created by the pandemic and play our part in delivering important reforms to make sure qualifications and apprenticeships stand the test of time and equip those who take them for the future.

Dr Jo Saxton, Chief Regulator of Ofqual said:

I welcome the appointment of a Chair with such a wide range of experience across the education sector. Students of all ages can be confident that we have the leadership we need for the years ahead. I very much look forward to continuing to work with Ian in the new year.

Mr Bauckham is the CEO and Director of Tenax Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust, and Chair of Oak National Academy. He has been a member of the Ofqual board since March 2018 and a member of the Ofqual Standards Advisory Group since 2015.

Published 9 December 2021