

500 hectare planting boost for England's Community Forests

Over 500 hectares will be planted with trees across England's ten Community Forests, from Yorkshire to Somerset, backed by £12.1 million of investment, the government announced today (6 December). This will also build the pipeline of projects for community planting in future years.

The new programme – Trees for Climate – will see trees planted in community forests across the country over the next five months. When mature, the trees will eventually store over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, playing an important role in the meeting the government's net zero emissions by 2050 target. The project will also reduce flood risk, increase sustainable UK grown timber, provide more places for nature and biodiversity to thrive, and increase people's access to and enjoyment of woodland. The funding will also create new jobs and secure existing ones within the forestry and environmental sector, helping to boost local economies as part of a green recovery.

Forestry Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:

Through this exciting new programme we will build back greener, as more communities – particularly those in urban environments – will have access to nature, with real benefits for health and wellbeing.

Trees are the backbone of our urban and rural environments and essential in tackling the climate emergency. This vital programme will plant trees where they are most needed to stem flooding and provide more places for nature to thrive.

Paul Nolan, Director of The Mersey Forest and the Chair of England's Community Forests, said:

Our Trees for Climate programme will plant millions more trees around England's town and cities, targeted at areas where they can make the greatest difference, in particular to local quality of life and levels of health and wellbeing.

The national network of Community Forests has been working for over 25 years to bring nature closer to people and local communities and is perfectly placed to deliver real change, on the ground.

Chair of the Forestry Commission, Sir William Worsley, said:

This exciting new programme will benefit local communities all

across England – helping to increase access to nature, creating much needed jobs in the environmental sector and bringing invaluable benefits to people’s health and wellbeing.

The £12.1 million boost will be a huge help both for getting trees in the ground, but also enabling each of the Community Forests to ensure they are well-managed in the long term, making sure these new woods can thrive to the fullest extent.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Kemi Badenoch, said:

This investment will support growth right across England by creating new local jobs. It will also reduce flood risk, improve air quality and help make areas more attractive places to live. We are committed to supporting Britain to build back better and greener – and projects like this play a key role in doing so.

The programme is being delivered by a collaboration of ten Community Forest organisations, supported by the national charity The Community Forest Trust. The following Community Forests will carry out the planting:

- The Forest of Marston Vale, Bedfordshire
- Great Western Community Forest, covering the North Wessex Downs to the River Thames
- The Greenwood Community Forest, west Nottinghamshire
- The Mersey Forest, which covers Merseyside and North Cheshire
- City of Trees, Greater Manchester
- Forest of Avon Trust, which covers Bristol and Avon
- HEYwoods, which covers Kingston upon Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire
- Thames Chase Trust, which covers East London and South West Essex
- White Rose Forest, which covers Leeds city region and North and West Yorkshire
- Forest of Mercia, which covers Staffordshire and the West Midlands

Trees for Climate will help deliver against goals in the government’s [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and support Nature Recovery Networks across England.

The government recently consulted on a new England Tree Strategy to accelerate tree planting and improve the management of our existing trees and woodlands. The new Strategy will help shape policies to plant and look after more trees for the climate, nature, people and the economy.

The £640 million Nature for Climate fund will help us deliver the English portion of the government’s manifesto commitment to increase tree planting to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025, alongside peatland restoration and nature recovery.

The Prime Minister also recently announced a further [£40 million additional investment into the government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) – this will go

towards creating and retaining thousands of jobs in the environmental sector, such as ecologists, project managers, tree planters and teams to carry out nature restoration.

Joint Statement from European Commission President von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson

Press release

A joint statement from European Commission President von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.



In a phone call today on the on-going negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom, we welcomed the fact that progress has been achieved in many areas. Nevertheless, significant differences remain on three critical issues: level playing field, governance and fisheries. Both sides underlined that no agreement is feasible if these issues are not resolved.

Whilst recognising the seriousness of these differences, we agreed that a further effort should be undertaken by our negotiating teams to assess whether they can be resolved.

We are therefore instructing our chief negotiators to reconvene tomorrow in Brussels.

We will speak again on Monday evening.

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UK and Egypt sign Association Agreement

The British Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Geoffrey Adams, today signed an agreement with Egypt's Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe, Badr Abdelatty to strengthen political and trade ties between the two countries.

The agreement will allow British businesses and consumers to benefit from continued preferential access to the market after the end of the transition period – which will help boost vital trade and investment.

In addition to securing trade, today's agreement provides a framework for cooperation and further development of political, economic, social and cultural links. The UK is committed to strengthening its relationship with Egypt and building co-operation on important issues including education, the environment and human rights.

The agreement will provide tariff-free trade on industrial products, as well as liberalisation of trade in agriculture, agri-foods and fisheries which will make trade easier and deliver significant savings to businesses in both the UK and Egypt.

Total trade on goods and services between the UK and Egypt was worth £3.5 billion in 2019, which we will seek to expand.

Welcoming the agreement, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

This agreement highlights the strength of the UK-Egypt partnership, and reflects our shared ambition to build our cooperation on a range of important issues.

Stronger trade links and more investment will grow our economies and help both our countries build back better from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

This agreement is a clear signal of the UK's enduring commitment to our close bilateral relationship with Egypt and will help strengthen trade and investment ties in the future.

It will help provide both British and Egyptian businesses with new opportunities and provide them with the certainty they need to keep trading.

The UK remains committed to securing deals that support British jobs, deliver significant savings and help drive the post covid-19 recovery.

Egypt is an important market for UK exports worth £2.3 billion in 2019 (£1.5 billion in goods exports, £0.8 billion in services exports). Major goods exports to Egypt last year included metal ores (£235 million) as well as medicinal and pharmaceutical products (£111 million). Consumers and businesses will continue to benefit from more choice and lower prices on goods imported from Egypt. Major imports to the UK in 2019 included intermediate electrical goods (£193 million), and vegetables and fruit (£160 million).

General Manager at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) North Africa, Nabil Besri said:

As a large British Healthcare company in Egypt, GSK Consumer Healthcare welcomes the signature of this trade agreement between Egypt and the UK. This important agreement will undoubtedly ensure the continuity of the strong business partnership between our two countries and allow British investors to continue to benefit from a strong and healthy investment environment in Egypt.

We continue to be very optimistic about the future development opportunities in Egypt and look forward to more growth under the terms of this agreement, serving the interests of both the British & the Egyptian economies.

Anthony Pile, Chairman at Blue Skies Holdings said:

As a British business that has invested significantly in Egypt over the last 18 years, a continuation of the free trade agreement between Egypt and the UK is of critical importance to Blue Skies.

The agreement is vital to securing jobs, prosperity, sustainability and indeed driving much needed economic growth in both Egypt and the UK. Now, more than ever in the current international climate, we need the security of a seamless continuation of free trade to safeguard the future of our business.

- This Agreement is designed to take effect when the EU-Egypt Association Agreement ceases to apply to the UK.
- This Agreement will now be subject to domestic parliamentary procedures in both the UK and Egypt.
- In under two years, the UK Government has signed or agreed in principle Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with 54 countries. Total UK trade with these countries was worth £166 billion in 2019.
- A regularly updated list of all signed agreements is available on GOV.UK.

- Source of trade statistics: ONS 'UK total trade: all countries, non-seasonally adjusted April to June 2020 release'. Figures are provided on a nominal basis.
 - Source of trade in goods statistics: ONS 'UK trade: September 2020 release'.
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£3.9 million to drive innovative tree planting

A cash boost of nearly £4 million to plant more trees up and down the country has been announced by the government today (5 December). This will see hundreds of thousands of new trees planted, including in towns and cities and near rivers to reduce flood risk, and help meet the government's commitment to increase planting to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025.

A pot of £2.5 million will support schemes that establish new ways of planting trees in our cities, towns and countryside. Led by Defra, Natural England and the Tree Council, this will use five pilot studies delivered on the ground by Local Authorities to develop cost-effective and innovative approaches to planting trees outside woodlands over the next two and a half years. This could include schemes such as community tree nurseries, agroforestry and hedgerow management, or planting trees from locally collected seed. These new trees will help tackle climate change and create habitats for wildlife.

A further £1.4 million has been awarded to the Environment Agency to fund 'woodlands for water' – 15 projects to plant over 850,000 trees that will protect around 160km of river and help to reduce the risk of flooding to over 500 properties.

Tree planting can play a valuable role in reducing flood risk, slowing the flow of water to nearby communities. Tree planting near watercourses can also act as a buffer for agricultural pollution and improve water quality.

The 'woodlands for water' funding, which forms part of the £640 million Nature for Climate fund to support the government's tree planting commitment, will support projects such as:

- The biosphere woods project in North Devon, which will plant 15,600 trees to improve water quality in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
- 30,168 new trees in the Upper Thames and Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to help slow the flow of water and improve habitat connectivity.
- 17,687 new trees at three locations in Shropshire, helping to improve water quality, alleviate flooding, capture carbon and create wildlife habitat.

- 17,000 new trees at ten sites across Devon and Cornwall, creating and re-connecting habitats and improving water quality by reducing surface run-off.
- 10,257 trees to be planted in the Ure and Wharfe catchments in Yorkshire to improve wildlife habitat and connectivity.

Forestry Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:

We are going to have to break down the barriers to planting trees outside of woodlands if we are to deliver our ambitious tree planting commitments. Trees are the backbone of our urban and rural environments, and increasing planting is an effective way both to tackle climate change and stem the appalling collapse of biodiversity.

These ambitious new initiatives will help deliver tree planting on an unprecedented scale. They will help to regenerate our urban areas, as well as our watercourses and create a network of green corridors for both people and wildlife to thrive.

Sara Lom, CEO The Tree Council, said:

We are delighted to be working with local authority partners at the heart of this important project, in line with our mission to bring people together, to find creative solutions to establish more trees in our communities in a practical and sustainable way.

Chair of the Environment Agency, Emma Howard Boyd, said:

This £1.4 million fund is one part of the wide range of measures to improve the nation's resilience to the impacts of climate change. It will accelerate efforts to reach net zero and help achieve the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) goals for nature through effective nature-based solutions.

The projects chosen will provide invaluable benefits to communities and our environment – from reducing flood risk and protecting homes, to capturing carbon, improving water quality and encouraging biodiversity.

In addition to today's announcement, the government recently consulted on a new England Tree Strategy to accelerate tree planting and improve the management of our existing trees and woodlands.

The Prime Minister also recently announced a further [£40 million additional investment into the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) – this will go towards creating and retaining thousands of jobs in the environmental sector.

The £2.5 million to fund pilots for tree planting outside of woodlands are being taken forward as part of HM Treasury's £200 million Shared Outcomes Fund.

JETS fuels support for more than 40,000 jobseekers

In its first fifty days, Work Coaches across the country have acted quickly to deliver the additional support, signposting tens of thousands of Universal Credit and New Style Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants to the programme – providing job hunters with the boost they need to return to employment.

Targeting those made jobless by coronavirus, the support has already had early successes in finding participants roles. Jobseekers have received specialist advice on how they can move into growing sectors where jobs are available, as well as CV and interview guidance.

The tailored programme also sees those out of work for three months or longer agree an action plan with their Work Coach, receive peer support and be signposted to opportunities helping them build vital skills.

Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP said:

Many people are sadly facing unemployment due to the pandemic, for the first time in years, and will need help to build their confidence, get back on their feet and apply for new roles – JETS gives people the tools and support they need to succeed.

During such a challenging time, our new employment support is already helping thousands of jobseekers to get back into work and I've met with JETS providers to see first-hand the vital help this programme has already given people across Britain.

Our Plan for Jobs is supporting people of all ages – we're doubling the number of Work Coaches across our Jobcentres, creating thousands of opportunities for young people through our Kickstart Scheme and our SWAP scheme is helping people retrain in new industries.

JETS has taken off across the nation and is already benefitting jobseekers, including Kyran, 31, who was referred to the scheme in early November 2020.

Kyran felt the full impact of the coronavirus and, in the seven months to November, was homeless and living in a hostel. However, after finding accommodation and being referred to the JETS programme, he secured a job that suited his needs to care for his daughter.

Kyran said:

You could say I haven't made some of the best choices in life and I didn't want help because I thought I could do everything myself. I acted too proud at times. But I needed help and had to swallow that pride after being in a hostel for nearly 7 months, never knowing what would be next.

I was approached to join the JETS programme and from the moment contact was made they have helped me get on my feet. They made me feel welcome with friendly polite phone calls, not just wanting to get me into work but also wanting to know I was okay. It took a matter of days before work was already looking likely and I managed to secure a job where I would still be able to look after my daughter.

I would recommend them and, to anyone ever in my position, their number would be the first I give.

The £238 million programme is part of the government's Plan for Jobs, and follows the launch of the £2billion Kickstart scheme which will create thousands of new high quality jobs for young people, and Restart, aimed at helping those unemployed for over a year.

Further information

- Work and Health Programme (WHP) Job Entry: Targeted Support (JETS) provides employment support to Universal Credit (UC), All Work related Requirements (AWRR) and New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who have been unemployed for at least 13 weeks and will launch in Scotland early next year.
- This data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics publication standards.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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