

Press release: Government delivers new £10m fund to plant over 130,000 urban trees



Urban trees.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove announces grants will be made available over the next two years to green town and city spaces.

A new £10 million plan will see more than 130,000 trees planted across England's towns and cities, Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced today.

Through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, grants will be made available over the next two years to green urban areas and help meet the government's target to plant one million urban trees by 2022.

Planting more trees is crucial in the fight against climate change, because trees store carbon and can help make our towns and cities more resilient. Trees in urban areas improve health and wellbeing, connect people with the outdoors, absorb noise, reduce flood risk, lower temperatures through shading, and create green spaces for communities to come together.

The scheme, which will be administered by the [Forestry Commission](<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission>), will be open to individuals, local authorities, charities and NGOs. Grants will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Trees are vital in the fight against climate change, which is why we must go further and faster to increase planting rates.

We need trees lining the streets of our cities and towns, not only to green and shade them but to ensure that we remain connected to the wonders of the natural world and the health and wellbeing benefits that it brings us.

Government Tree Champion Sir William Worsley said:

Trees are the lifeblood of our nation, and it is more important than ever to ensure they are rooted not only in our countryside, but in our towns and cities too.

The benefits of planting urban trees are endless, and I encourage anyone with the ability to apply for this fund to get involved and help green our towns and cities.

The grant will be delivered as a challenge fund, and therefore requires match funding from those who apply.

The scheme will support projects which can provide the greatest environmental and social benefits, and applications will be processed by the Forestry Commission. A map will be available to check eligibility before applying.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir Harry Studholme said:

I am delighted the Forestry Commission have been asked to deliver the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. The fund is an important part of the work that the Forestry Commission is doing to expand England's tree and woodland cover.

It allows us to plant more trees much closer to where people live and work, and where the many benefits of trees make the most difference. We look forward to lots of new planting happening this Autumn.

Chair of [England's Community Forests](#) and Director of [The Mersey Forest](#), Paul Nolan said:

There is an increasing understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play in helping to make our towns and cities better places for people and nature to thrive.

We need to be planting many more trees over the next 25 years, and England's Community Forests welcome this new investment that is being announced by the government.

The launch of the fund forms part of the government's [Year of Green Action](#), a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature.

This commitment forms part of the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) to instill a legacy for the future, with a focus on children and young people.

Earlier this year the government [consulted on a raft of forestry measures](#) which included proposals to ensure communities have their say on whether street trees should be felled, with legislation to be brought forward later this year.

The government is committed to growing woodland cover, and this year we will consult on a new English Tree Strategy to accelerate woodland creation and introduce a flagship Environment Bill to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age.

The fund will be open this week for applications.

[Press release: Statement on 10th anniversary of the end of conflict in Sri Lanka](#)

Mark Field, Minister for Asia said:

On the 10th anniversary of the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, we should take the opportunity to reflect and remember those from across all communities who lost their lives and suffered during the conflict. The UK is a long-standing friend of Sri Lanka and we will continue to support reconciliation and transitional justice in order to build a peaceful, prosperous and stable future.

We were all deeply shocked by the terror attacks on Easter Sunday, and I reiterate our deepest condolences to those affected, and our solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka. Now more than ever it is important to build on Sri Lanka's diversity, its multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and traditions, to promote peaceful relations among all communities and faith groups, so that the whole of Sri Lanka can thrive and prosper.

Further information

Press release: Statement on 10th anniversary of the end of conflict in Sri Lanka

Mark Field, Minister for Asia and the Pacific, has commented on the tenth anniversary of the end of long conflict in Sri Lanka

Press release: High streets to benefit from £62 million heritage boost

- Dozens of locations across the country will benefit from the investment.
- Culture Secretary says innovative programme will make our heritage work for modern life.

A new £62 million fund will breathe new life into historic high streets across the country, Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright announced today.

High streets lie at the heart of communities but are under increasing pressure as more people choose to shop online.

Building on successful programmes, the funding will be used to regenerate places by turning disused or underused buildings into creative spaces, offices, retail outlets and housing.

It is part of the Government's ongoing work to help high streets adapt to changing consumer habits.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

Our heritage makes communities more attractive places to live, work and visit.

This £62 million investment will breathe new life into high streets right across the country, benefiting local people and businesses, as well as providing assistance to much-loved historic buildings.

It is right that we do all we can to not only protect our heritage,

but make it work for modern life so it can be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Today's initiative is part of the government's comprehensive plan for High Streets announced at last year's Budget, including a £675 million Future High Streets Fund and a £1 billion business rates discount for small high street retailers. Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

We're absolutely committed to seeing our high streets thrive now and in the future.

That's why we put a plan to secure the future of the high street, and are taking action to ensure they can adapt to changing consumer demand and the rise of online shopping.

This welcome announcement will help the high street to capitalise on local heritage by restoring treasured historic buildings for economic use. This is a proven way to drive footfall, increase further investment and generate even greater civic pride in our high streets.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

High streets are the lifeblood of towns and cities across the country.

By reviving older, disused buildings, we're ensuring high streets can not only adapt and change to suit our modern lives – but remain at the heart of our communities for years to come.

Research has shown that for every £1 invested in heritage in England, £1.60 is brought into the wider area.

The funding includes:

- £44 million of government and [Historic England](#) funding to create dozens of High Streets Heritage Action Zones overseen by Historic England. From today, local authorities can apply to the scheme, which will give councils, businesses and community groups access to expert advice and investment to bring historic buildings back into use and support historic high streets to adapt to the challenges they face.
- £3 million from the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) to support a cultural programme to engage people in the life and history of their high

streets. □

- £15 million for the [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) to support social enterprise organisations like Historic Coventry Trust to take ownership of and bring buildings of local importance – such as pubs, libraries or theatres, as well as shops – back into use. The Transforming Places Through Heritage Programme will open for applications in June. □

Also in the run up to [UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry](#) will receive £2 million for a new project in shopping street The Burges. It is one of the few remaining parts of Coventry to survive the Second World War and post-war redevelopments of the city, which saw large numbers of ancient buildings destroyed. The money will be used to acquire, restore and regenerate Coventry's historic buildings to help create a sustainable future for each building.

ENDS□□

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England said:

We know that people value their high streets and town centres as spaces where they can meet and feel a sense of communal ownership and belonging. We are therefore delighted to be opening up for applications grants for High Street Heritage Action Zones.

Through physical improvements and cultural and community activities, we will work with partners to find new ways to regenerate our historic high streets. We recognise the scale of the challenge with empty shops and the significant shift in retail trends and we will combine our experience with the knowledge and passion of local councils, businesses and community groups, to help revive the streets which form the hearts of our historic towns.

Liz Peace CBE, Chairman, Architectural Heritage Fund:

With the right funding and expertise, thriving social enterprises can inject life into our high streets and the heritage assets around them. The Transforming Places through Heritage programme will help accelerate investment into many other places like Coventry and begin to reimagine our high streets as once more places of both social and commercial prosperity.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the National Lottery Heritage Fund said:

We know from our track record of investing in the heritage of our high streets that economic activity increases and people feel a greater sense of pride about the place they live and work in. The

National Lottery Heritage Fund is delighted to be working in partnership with Historic England to deliver a significant programme of cultural activities to bring these essential parts of our community to life.

Notes to editors:

- Information on applying for Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones is available [here](#). □
- The funding builds on the success of projects in Margate, Grantham and Derby where the redevelopment of Derby Cathedral Quarter brought nearly 100 properties and more than 2,700 m2 of commercial floor space back into use through Historic England's Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas. □
- There are currently 18 Heritage Action Zones across England including Grimsby, which was announced as a key part of the Grimsby Town Deal in 2018. It is expected that this new funding will see the creation of 40 – 50 more across England. □

Ways the Government is backing the high street:□

- The Budget saw business rates relief cut small retailers' bills by a third, building on over £13 billion of business rates support since 2016. □
- In response to recommendations from the independent expert panel, the Government has launched a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help improve infrastructure and access to high streets, put historic buildings back to use and make town centres fit for the future. □
- We have also announced a Town Centre Task Force to give local leaders expert advice and support in implementing their plans to revitalise their local high streets. □
- The Open Doors scheme will see empty shops being opened up to community groups offering services to the most vulnerable in our communities. □

The [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) helps communities across the UK find enterprising new uses for the old buildings they love. It has supported a number of high street and town centre regeneration projects in recent years, including Havens Department Store in Southend, which is being revitalised by Age Concern Southend as a hub for older people. □

[News story: Funding granted for new global platform to protect children](#)

from online abuse

A £635,000 investment from a Home Office-led consortium has been awarded to The Marie Collins Foundation (MCF), to support its vital work to help children who have been sexually abused online.

MCF has developed the Global Protection Online Network (GPON), a programme to help countries take steps to respond to the threat of online child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSEA).

GPON will help train safeguarding professionals to develop best practice on how to intervene in CSEA cases, including new guidelines and help to design new legislative measures. This will go alongside ongoing targeted interventions such as training and consultancy from MCF for professionals who work with young people and give access to an online portal for knowledge sharing, advice and research updates.

The £635,000 has been provided by the Global Fund to End Violence Against Children (EVAC) – of which the Home Office is the major donor.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins said:

The Marie Collins Foundation do invaluable work in providing support for victims and survivors of online child sexual abuse. Providing guidance and resources for governments to tackle this sickening crime will make a huge impact in stamping it out at source.

Child sexual exploitation is a global problem and one which requires a global response. The government is absolutely committed to tackling this horrific abuse wherever it occurs and we are working closely with governments and organisations across the world to protect children from harm.

Founder and CEO of the Marie Collins Foundation, Professor Tink Palmer MBE, said:

We are thrilled to have been awarded this funding, which will allow us to activate GPON and begin to have real impact on the global community enabling colleagues to do more to protect their children through new knowledge, resources and infrastructure.

Our vision is to ensure that all children who suffer abuse via the internet and mobile technology are able to recover and live safe and fulfilling lives. The nature of the internet means that the sexual abuse of children online is a global problem yet currently the service response is ad hoc, ill-informed and sparse.

Our unique portal will enable the international professional community to share knowledge, gain advice and have access to the most recent research, as well as training materials and templates for relevant policy, legal and practice guidance developments.

The MCF will work in partnership with other NGOs in priority countries. Vietnam has been identified as the first country that will receive bespoke support through training for professionals in how best to help children who are sexually abused online. Vietnam is recognised as a prominent source country for children trafficked for sexual purposes, while online child sexual exploitation is also a growing concern.

The EVAC grant will be used to employ staff to lead and manage the GPON platform and ensure safeguarding professionals across the globe have access to its resources and to develop training programmes.

During a speech in September, the Home Secretary set out that it was his “mission” to help eradicate CSEA, including children being abused on live streams around the world.

In the speech he said that children were often abused to order, sometimes for as little as £12.

In addition to the End Violence Against Children fund, the Home Office is a leading member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance, a global movement that brings together the influence, expertise and resources required to transform how online child sexual exploitation is dealt with worldwide.

The WePROTECT Global Alliance is driven and funded by the UK Home Office and forms a key element of our international response to this crime. 87 countries are members of the alliance along with 20 global technology companies and 25 leading Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), including the Marie Collins Foundation. The Home Office has also secured £2 million funding from the 2018 to 2020 Commonwealth Fund to fund capacity building projects in commonwealth countries to tackle online child sexual exploitation.