

Over half a million trees set to be planted in our towns, cities and countryside

Hundreds of thousands of trees are set to be planted in communities across England as applications for the Local Authority Treescapes Fund and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund reopen today (Wednesday 2 March).

Over £9 million will be allocated to successful applicants across both funds, which will support tree planting efforts and improve the environment for future generations as we build back greener from the pandemic. Both funds form part of the Government's wider drive to treble tree planting rates across England by the end of this Parliament and plant 30,000 hectares of trees across the UK per year by 2025.

Now in its second round, successful applicants to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund will be allocated a share of £5.4 million for the planting of up to 650,000 trees in 2022/23. Projects will support local authorities to establish trees in different ways, from natural regeneration (where trees are left to naturally develop) to traditional planting.

Community engagement is encouraged, and local authorities can bring together local residents, schools and environmental groups to restore trees in areas outside woodlands. These include riverbanks, parks, beside roads and footpaths, and within vacant community spaces – areas where treescapes are often highly degraded due to neglect or disease.

Trees make our towns and cities healthier and more pleasant places to be, helping to moderate temperatures, reduce pollution, decrease flood risk and improve people's quality of life. If successful, applicants to the fourth round of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund will be awarded a share of more than £3.8 million – enough to fund the planting of over 28,000 large trees in both urban areas, and where rural and urban areas meet. This funding aims to grow the number of trees in and around deprived urban areas to bring people from all socio-economic backgrounds closer to nature.

There are several key differences between the Local Authority Treescapes Fund and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. These include: * The Urban Tree Challenge Fund specifically funds projects planting new, large 'standard' trees, whilst Local Authority Treescapes Fund projects can plant trees of any size – although 'standard' trees in urban areas can only be planted where they are replacing trees that have been lost, for example due to disease. * Whilst both funds support tree planting in urban areas, the Local Authority Treescapes Fund also supports the planting of trees outside of woodlands in rural areas. * All projects supported through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund must be led by a local authority, whereas the Urban Tree Challenge Fund is also open to projects led by charities, community groups and other organisations.

[A blog outlining these differences and offering guidance on how to apply for both funds](#) has been published by the Forestry Commission. In addition, the Tree Council, in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Forestry Commission, is [holding a Q&A session](#) offering guidance for local authorities on both funds.

Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Everyone across the country deserves to benefit from the cleaner air and natural beauty that trees offer. This funding will support inspiring projects in England to level up people's access to nature, support our wider ambitions to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament and achieve net zero by 2050.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley said:

Together, these funds will help to promote resilient tree growth in England for generations to come, whilst simultaneously addressing the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Research shows that trees planted on streets in urban areas help to decrease antidepressant costs related to mental health issues by £16 million. We are therefore committed to expanding and protecting our nation's treescapes through schemes like these for the health, social and economic benefits they bring.

The benefits of being close to nature are well-documented and have been emphasised over the course of the pandemic. [Evidence from Natural England](#) shows that almost half the population say that they are enjoying more time outside than before the pandemic. It also found that approximately a third of those on the lowest incomes visited a natural space in a typical week during the pandemic, compared with almost 60% amongst those on high incomes.

Applications for both funds are now open until 31 May 2022.

For more information and to apply, go to:

www.gov.uk/guidance/local-authority-treescapes-fund and
www.gov.uk/guidance/urban-tree-challenge-fund

Case studies from previous successful applicants/rounds:

Local Authority Treescapes Fund:

- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, alongside a range of local authorities across the Pennine Lancashire districts and local NGOs including the Ribble Rivers Trust, received a grant through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund to plant approximately 40,000 trees, covering more than 31 hectares.
- The 135 chosen sites across Pennine Lancashire include green spaces in

40 schools and 95 community spaces, as well as new “urban micro-woodlands” and a site adjacent to a new health centre.

- The project sought to promote outdoor activity and boost health and wellbeing for people of all ages, as well as to help tackle high levels of obesity found in some areas in Pennine Lancashire.
- Ellie Brown, of Ribble Rivers Trust, said: “Different partners have brought different things to the table...sharing knowledge, experience, and relationships really worked.”
- Gwen Kinloch, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, said: “From my perspective, the LATF did trigger something. It perhaps wouldn’t have happened – and wouldn’t have happened as quickly – had the grant not been available. It is helping to inspire our next generations and start some really meaningful conversations.”

Urban Tree Challenge Fund

- Slough Borough Council have planted over 8500 trees under the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. Through the delivery of diverse community-led tree planting projects, the Council have seen wider health and educational benefits to the general public, students and schools, stakeholders and community groups.
- Louise Handley at Slough Council said: “The funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has allowed us to bring post-Covid initiatives to the most deprived areas of our community, which focus on up skilling for employment, active lifestyles, citizen science and volunteering. The design of the Urban Forest has facilitated a move away from close mown grass cutting regimes to one of biodiversity improvement and habitat creation. This initiative has the potential to reach all of Slough’s population and its flora and fauna.”