

England's
Community
Forests

Trees for Climate Programme

Year 5 Impact Report (2024/25)

Funded by



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Supported by



Community
Forest
Trust



Introduction

Led by England's Community Forests and delivered in partnership with the National Trust, Woodland Trust, and Community Forest Trust, Trees for Climate is providing social, economic and environmental transformation across the country.

Year 5 of the programme saw our strongest delivery to date, with over 3 million trees planted across 2,209ha of new woodland. This success means that we are now responsible for a significant proportion of Government-funded tree planting, having planted over 8 million trees across 6,590 hectares and 2,720 local schemes since the programme began – that's over 35% of all government-funded tree planting since 2020*, which in turn is having a significant impact on community access to nature, flood prevention, carbon sequestration and nature recovery.

But we are committed to doing even more. Thanks to the partnerships, people, and processes developed through Trees for Climate, we are confident in our ability to deliver even more woodland creation in the coming years, all whilst maximising the positive impacts on people, places, and planet.



* based on Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators Report 2024-25

About England's Community Forests

We are a diverse and growing network of 15 unique Community Forests, each working in partnership with their local communities, landowners and businesses to help nature recover and regenerate the landscapes in and around our largest towns and cities.

Our roots go back over 30 years, with Community Forests now forming the biggest environmental regeneration initiative in England. We're recognised in the Planning Policy Framework and are highlighted in Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment, playing a key role in shaping woodland creation and nature recovery policy both nationally and locally.

We provide free guidance and support to landowners and managers to help plan, fund, and plant new woodland of all sizes in both rural and urban settings. Our long-term commitment to the areas where we work ensures trees and woodlands are at the heart of communities, unlocking countless benefits for people and places.





Carlisle

North East
Community Forest

Newcastle
Sunderland
Durham

Raise: Cumbria
Community Forest

Middlesbrough
Tees Community Forest

Barrow-in-Furness

White Rose Forest

Scarborough

York

Humber Forest

Leeds

Hull

Huddersfield

City of Trees

Liverpool

Manchester

The Mersey Forest

Chester

Derbyshire's
Heartwood

Greenwood
Community Forest

Derby

Nottingham

Forest of Mercia

Wolverhampton

Bedford
Forest of Marston Vale
Milton Keynes

Bristol

Bath

Forest of Avon

Swindon

Great Western
Community Forest

Upminster

Thames Chase
Community Forest

Plymouth

Plymouth and South
Devon Community Forest

Trees for Climate: background

The Trees for Climate programme launched in November 2020 and is playing a significant role in the Government's commitment to address climate change and carbon mitigation through tree planting and woodland creation.

It forms part of the national Nature for Climate Fund, which in turn aligns with the England Tree Action Plan and the Environmental Improvement Plan and their aims to increase tree cover, improve woodland management, and enhance forest resilience. The programme is also bringing about much wider social, economic and environmental transformation across the country.

Trees for Climate already has a healthy pipeline for 2025/26, with over 3,000 hectares on the pipeline as of September 2025 and with preparations already underway for a new phase of the programme anticipated for 2026-2030.




Benefiting people and planet

Through the planting of millions of trees, Trees for Climate is reducing the impacts of climate change, capturing carbon, and protecting communities from flooding.


What's more, the Community Forest approach has the power to connect more people and nature, bringing about much wider social, economic, and environmental transformation.

Engagement, Health, and Wellbeing



Our work engages tens of thousands of people in tree planting, connecting more people with nature and providing a wealth of health and wellbeing impacts. Many of our projects take place in the most deprived areas of the country, meaning we can benefit those that need it most.

Enhancing Wildlife




All our new woodland sites are designed to contribute to local ecological frameworks. We've already provided thousands of additional hectares of usable space for woodland species, greatly enhancing biodiversity.

Public Access and Value



Most new woodlands planted by us have either full or partial public access and once established, these woodlands could welcome millions of annual visitors.

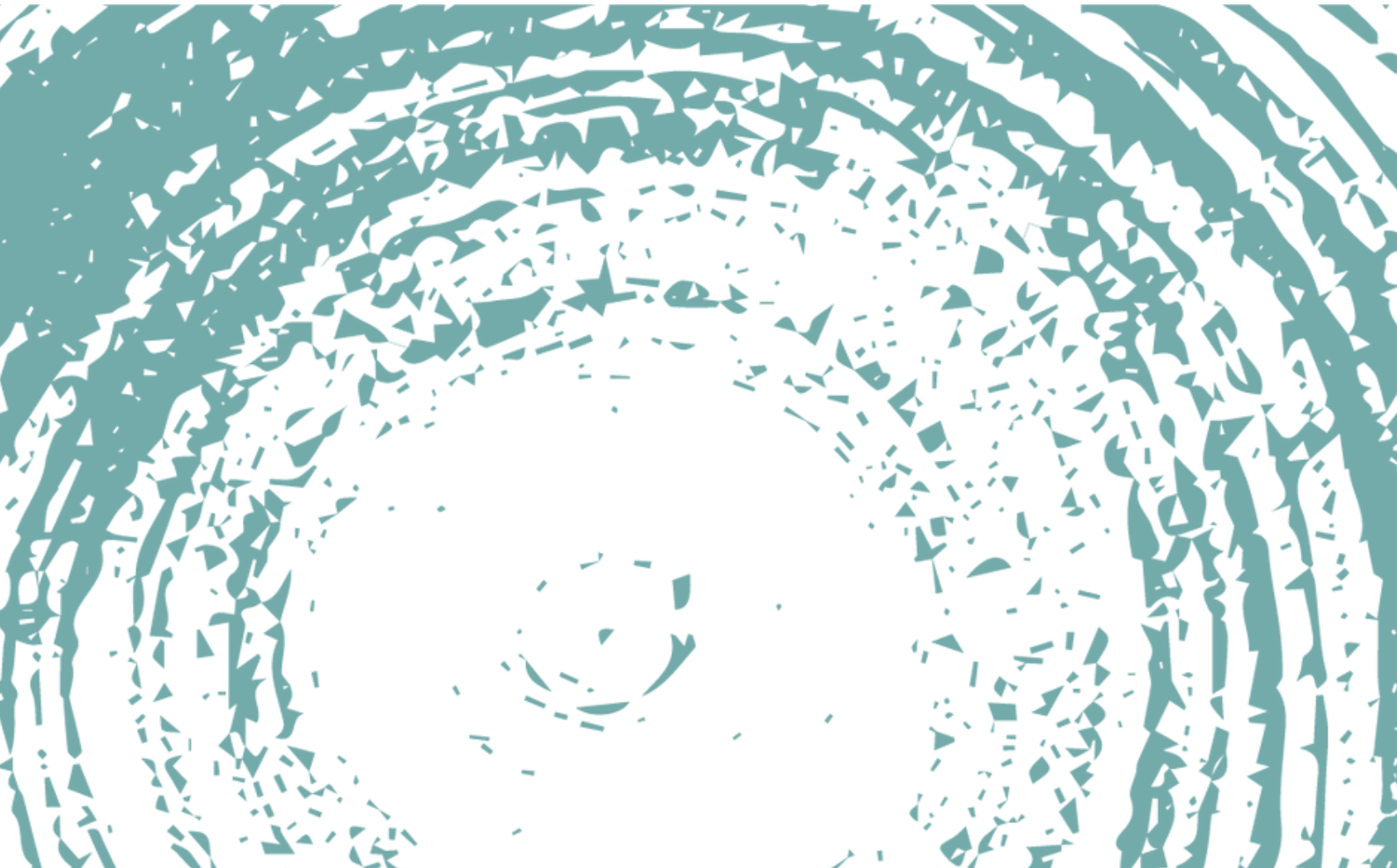
Education, employment, and skills



Our work creates and supports a range of green jobs, including those employed in the wider tree supply chain. We work with partners to support training and employment in green skills, as well as with schools and education providers, helping to inspire the next generation.

Trees for Climate: our commitments

- Mitigating carbon through tree planting, and making a significant contribution to net zero
- Improving climate resilience, by supporting natural flood management, providing shade and reducing the heat island effect
- Improving water and air quality
- Supporting increased public access to woodland, especially for those in areas of greatest need
- Enhancing habitats for wildlife and biodiversity
- Increasing opportunities for community engagement, supporting better levels of health and wellbeing, especially in areas of greatest health inequality
- Taking innovative approaches and delivery practices, and sharing learning to advance the whole sector
- Supporting employment and skills development, including aiding a reduction in reoffending through targeted schemes





Our last planting season in numbers

In year 5 of the Trees for Climate programme (2024/25), we worked together to deliver...

Over

3 million

trees planted



2,209ha

of new woodland created across 897 different sites



19,159

local people engaged - from farmers to school children



Over

234,000m

of hedgerow created



70%



of woodlands planted have full or partial public access

8%

of schemes are within the most deprived areas of the country



35%

of all new government-funded tree planting in England was carried out through Trees for Climate

Our achievements to date

And since the start of 2020, Trees for Climate has...



Planted over **8 million trees** across **2,720 different local schemes** and **6,590 hectares** of new woodland.



Provided an estimated **520,513m³ of flood water storage capacity** each year, equivalent to roughly 667 Olympic swimming pools.



Planted trees that are expected to **sequester 64,855 TCO₂e per year** – valued at £18.70m and roughly equivalent to what 47,200 cars emit each year.



Ensured that **849,734 households are now near accessible woodland**, unlocking £94.9m in welfare benefits.

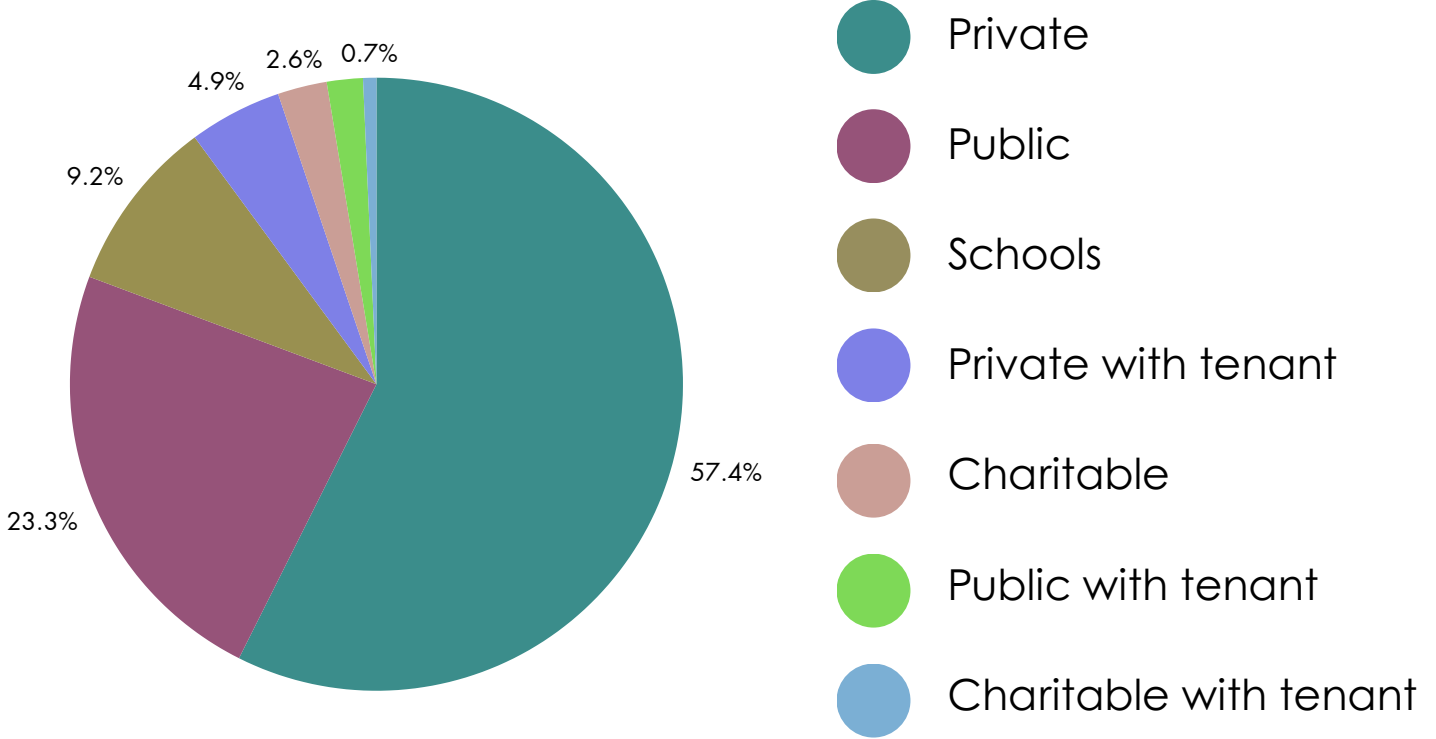


Delivered **£8 worth of economic benefit for every £1 invested** by Defra into England's Community Forests.

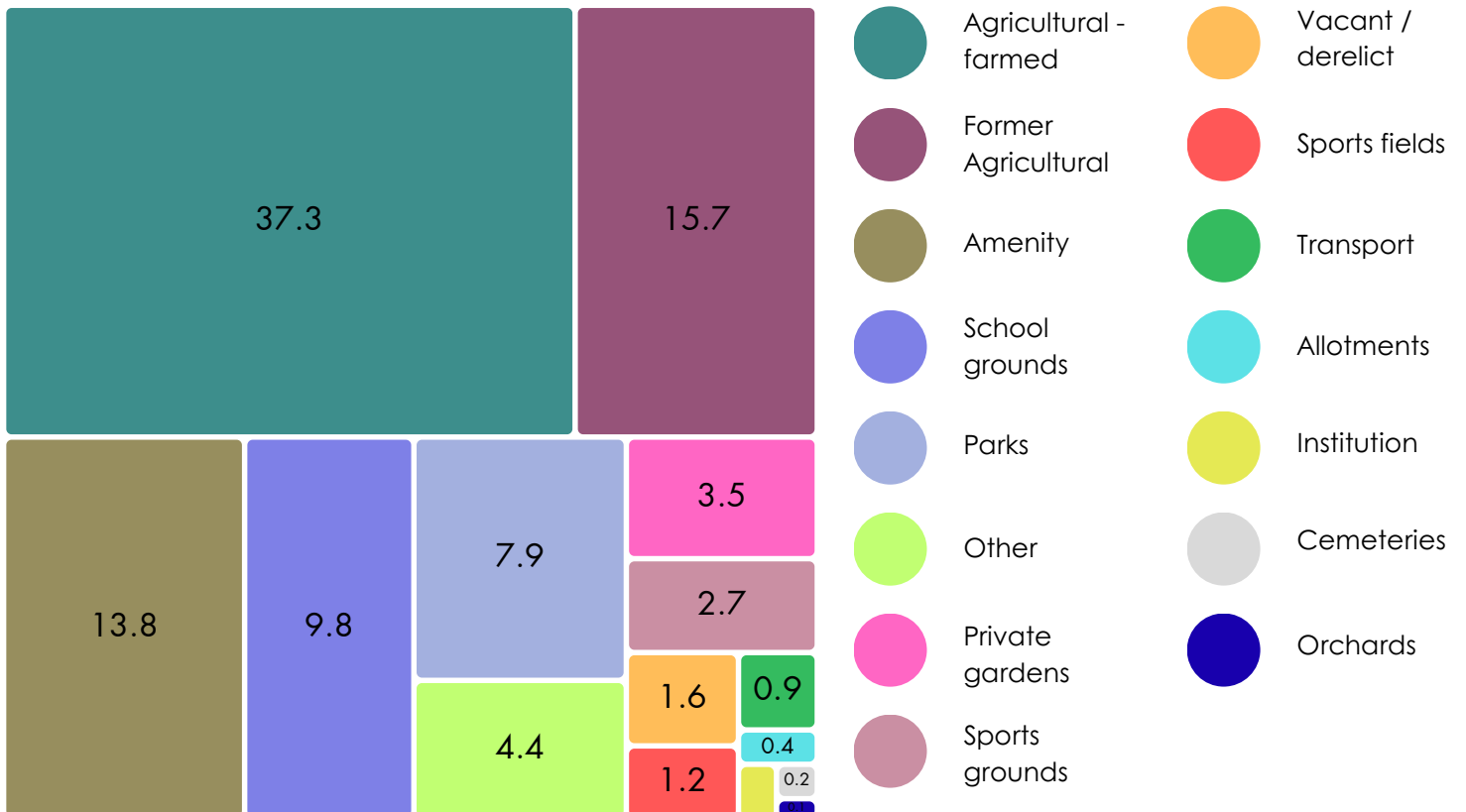


2024-25 delivery breakdown

Land ownership (%)

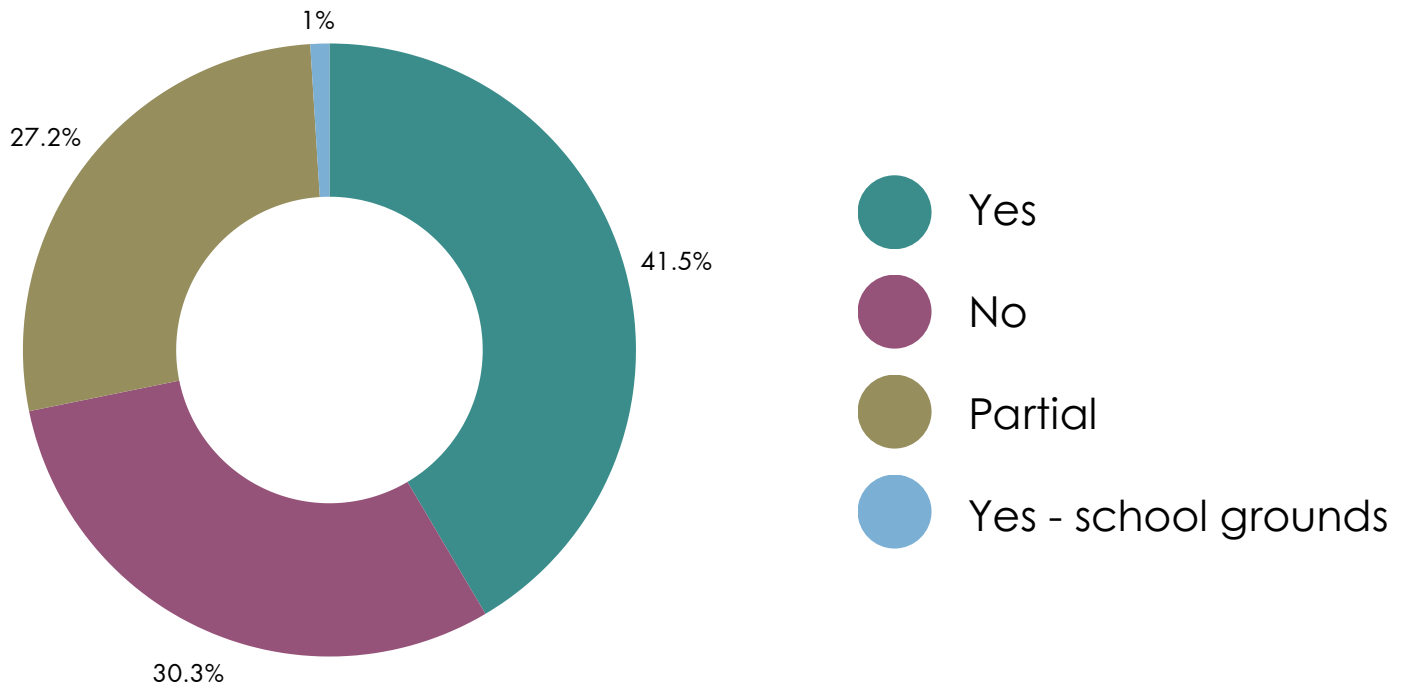


Prior land type (%)

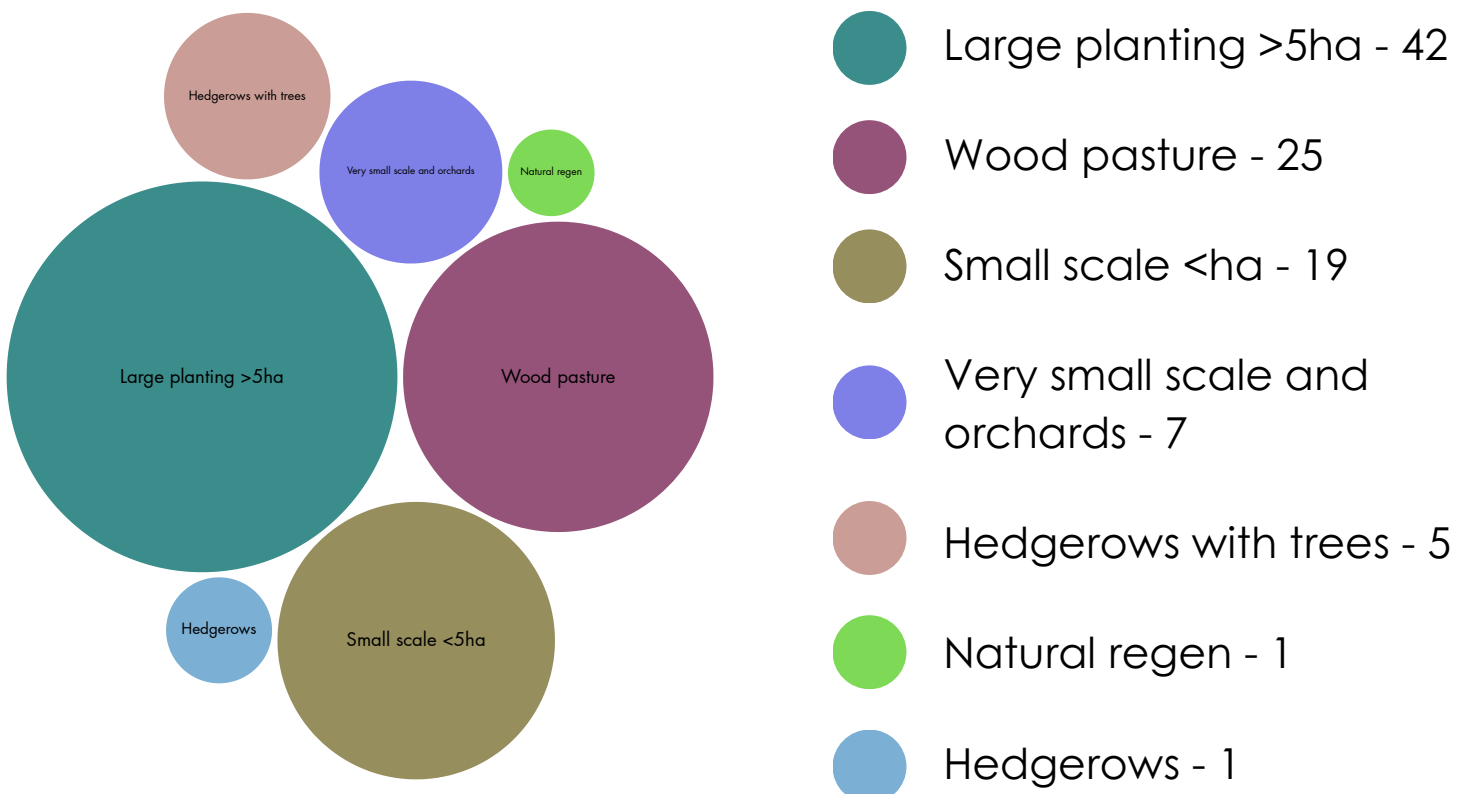


2024-25 delivery breakdown

Land access (ha)



Planting type (number of sites)



Natural Flood Management and Water Quality

The Environment Agency has produced a prioritisation map identifying where nature-based solutions such as tree planting are likely to be most effective in slowing the flow of water and reducing flood risk. We use this map to assess how our planting through Trees for Climate supports flood mitigation and water quality.

In the fifth year of Trees for Climate, we planted **473 sites (1,102 ha)** on land identified as having high suitability for natural flood management. And since the beginning of the programme, **3,364 ha** have been planted on high-priority natural flood management land.

We estimate planting from the Trees for Climate year 5 will provide an additional **510,912 m³ of flood water storage capacity every year** once established. Total planting to date will provide an additional **1.7 million m³ of annual flood water storage capacity**, contributing to flood risk mitigation. That is equivalent to roughly 663 Olympic swimming pools!



Case study

Cummersdale Near Carlisle



Cummersdale is a meeting point of fields, factories, and the River Caldew. This site is of vital importance to the local community as it connects the village to the river and is used regularly by walkers and those accessing other paths and rights of way networks from the village. The land is council-owned and was previously used for grazing by local tenant farmers, which left it as a blank canvas for woodland creation and a huge opportunity to improve access.

In planning the project, a consultation process was carried out by the Raise Collective, a concept that pulls together perspectives not traditionally found in forestry settings. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including the parish council, local residents, schools, historians, artists, and practitioners, allows for a broad view of the project and informs the plans and decisions made about the site. This collaborative effort aimed to ensure we were addressing the needs and aspirations of the community as thoroughly as possible.

With a project aim to contribute to the improvement of water quality in the River Caldew, planting included wet areas identified near the river and in other areas of poor drainage, with species chosen to include birch, alder, willow, and hazel.

Public Access and Value

We operate where the need is greatest; our footprint contains an estimated 1.8 million households in the top 10% most deprived nationally. More trees and accessible woodlands contribute to healthier, more liveable and more economically rewarding places.

The **Woodland Access Standard** states that:

- No person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland at least 2ha in size
- There should be a woodland of at least 20ha in size within 4km of people's homes

Around **143,391 households** are meeting now the standard thanks to intervention by the Trees for Climate programme.

Estimates made using the Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool (ORVal) predict that sites from Year 5 of the Trees for Climate programme's woodland planting will receive **10.3 million visits per year**, with an **annual welfare benefit of £32.1 million**. Trees for Climate sites across all years are expected to receive **29.6 million visits annually**, with an estimated **welfare benefit of £93.7 million**.

Wider greenspaces in the footprint of the programme are estimated to receive around **1.3 billion visits per year**, with an **annual welfare benefit of approximately £4.1 billion**.

Case study

Lower Chew Forest Compton Dando



The land at Compton Dando was purchased in May 2024 with an innovative public-private funding structure, combining a grant from the Trees for Climate fund, a loan from Triodos bank and £171,955 from over 1,000 individuals and businesses who supported a crowdfunding initiative.

The land will become home to 100,000 trees planted as a mixed habitat combining woodland, wetland and grassland which will benefit nature and local communities, as well as helping to tackle the climate emergency, improve habitat connectivity and provide a place for people to volunteer, learn and connect with nature

“The Lower Chew Forest will be the South West’s largest new woodland in a generation and one of huge significance to our region, particularly as we have just 7.8% woodland cover in the West of England, which is critically low compared to 13.2% average across the whole of the UK.”

Dave Wood, Chief Executive Officer, Avon Needs Trees

Enhancing Wildlife

Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the Nature Recovery Network aim to create more joined up habitats to promote biodiversity. An ecological network is a system of habitat patches connected via surrounding parts of the landscape, within which a species or group of species can disperse.

This indicator evaluates the potential of planting by the programme to improve the connectivity of woodland habitats by quantifying the projected change in the extent of ecological networks.

Once established, Trees for Climate planting from Year 5 is predicted to provide **between 1,804 ha to 3,788 ha of additional usable space for woodland species**, depending on their dispersal ability.

This contributes to a total of **5,605 ha to 11,892 ha of new ecological network**, which in turn will increase the total size of the woodland network over the footprint of England's Community Forests to **between 502,710 ha and 1,792,985 ha**.



Case study

Knowsley Estate Merseyside



**THE MERSEY
FOREST**
more with trees

The 1,000 hectare Knowsley Estate in Merseyside has a fantastic mix of landscape and habitat, with pockets of woodland and ancient trees incorporated. Unfortunately, during the winter of 2024 over 30 ancient trees on the site were lost following Storm Darragh.

The Estate was keen to ensure the trees that came down were replaced and had already been in contact with The Mersey Forest to explore tree planting support on the site. The Mersey Forest Team worked closely with the Estate's rangers to help them to replace these trees during the first phase of their planting project. 47 standard trees were planted in total, with funding from the Trees for Climate programme funding the parkland fencing around them to help with their establishment.

The Estate was also keen to enhance biodiversity around two existing ponds on the site, working with our Woodland Advisor to create a design to plant 190 whips around the pond, whilst leaving gaps for wading birds. Repairs were also made to the pond fencing using funding through the Trees for Climate programme.

The trees planted as part of this project will capture approximately 300 tonnes of CO₂ by the time they are 50 years old.

Contributing to Net Zero

Trees can sequester substantial amounts of carbon in biomass and soils, as well as reducing urban air pollution by absorbing gases, capturing particulates and altering ambient airflow. In urban areas, they can also play a significant role in mitigating the urban heat island effect.

The trees planted in Year 5 of the Trees for Climate programme are expected to sequester an additional **19,359 tonnes CO₂e per year** over their lifetime (ca. 100 years), **valued at £5.6 million annually** using the non-traded price of carbon.

The trees planted under the programme since 2020 are expected to sequester an additional **64,419 tCO₂e per year** over their lifetime (ca. 100 years), **valued at £18.6 million** using the non-traded price of carbon. That is roughly equivalent to what 46,900 cars emit each year!

As a whole, natural habitats in the footprint of the programme are projected to sequester around **9.1 million tCO₂e each year**.



Case study

Thorney Abbey Southwell, Nottinghamshire



In late 2024, Greenwood Community Forest took the opportunity to bid for the purchase of this 49 hectare site which had limited public access, hoping to create a new community woodland adjacent to Southwell in Nottinghamshire.

The proximity to Southwell, adjacent to existing woodlands including PAWS and local wildlife sites, with a footpath running through part of the site and with a few relic fruit trees and derelict ponds, the site was ideal to create a new woodland and other habitats.

Approximately 87,000 trees were planted using contractors, community volunteers, and a delegation of agricultural students from Brackenhurst Campus of NTU, culminating in the planting of the first four trees of a community orchard by local dignitaries, residents and partners. The vast scale of the project should capture over 9,500 tonnes of carbon per annum.

With sponsorship from the Woodland Trust and the assistance of local contractors, a mixture of native broadleaves and conifers will provide habitat for brown hare, deer, badgers, birds, butterflies, and aquatic species, as well as public access, economic and learning opportunities and carbon sequestration in this previously hidden landscape in the heart of Nottinghamshire.

Engagement, Health and Wellbeing

60% of the most health-deprived neighbourhoods are within a Community Forest catchment. By improving the quality of both our environment, and our daily lives, England's Community Forests are reducing the burden on NHS resources and empowering people to maintain or regain employment, which in turn supports families and the economy.

In year 5, **19,159 members of the community were actively engaged in tree planting** through the Trees for Climate programme.



Case study

Citizen Forester volunteer programme Greater Manchester



City of Trees Community Forest in Greater Manchester is engaging volunteers across the city-region through Citizen Forester, a year-round programme of woodland creation and maintenance events.

With an aim of growing the Greater Manchester urban forest – for and with the people of Greater Manchester, Citizen Forester engages people from all walks of life in urban nature recovery at planting sites across the city-region.

One such site is Haslam Park in Bolton, which saw 55 adult Citizen Foresters involved over three planting days. 250 local school children from schools with no space for woodland creation were able to get involved in tree planting, as well as a mixture of local residents, Bolton Lions Club and Bolton businesses.

This activity resulted in 1,360 trees planted at these events, turning what was previously amenity grassland in a residential area into a newly wooded area.

“It makes you feel like you are giving back to society and you are part of a community.”

Danny, Citizen Forester

Education, Employment and Skills

Trees can play a vital role in education, helping students and children understand the natural environment and the impact that woodlands can have on our places, health, and wellbeing.

The woodland creation sector is also an increasingly vital employer, helping deliver and maintain vital trees in the places where they are needed most.

In year 5 of Trees for Climate, **9% of all projects were in collaboration with schools**, allowing opportunities to support wider working with educational partners through projects such as Forest School and Woodland Outreach, which help to connect children to nature.

Over 140 posts were directly employed in Year 5 of Trees for Climate, with even more roles being supported through the programme, including land agents, woodland contractors, and those employed in the tree supply chain.



Case study

Camphill Wakefield College Wakefield



White
Rose
Forest

Set in 38 acres of green space in Chapelthorpe, Camphill Wakefield is a specialist college supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Education at Camphill is structured around three pathways – communication, independence, and employability – and environmental care is increasingly central to all of them.

Funding from Trees for Climate and Northern Gas Networks has now enable Camphill Wakefield to plant woodland that will be used as an outdoor learning space, giving students vital green skills.

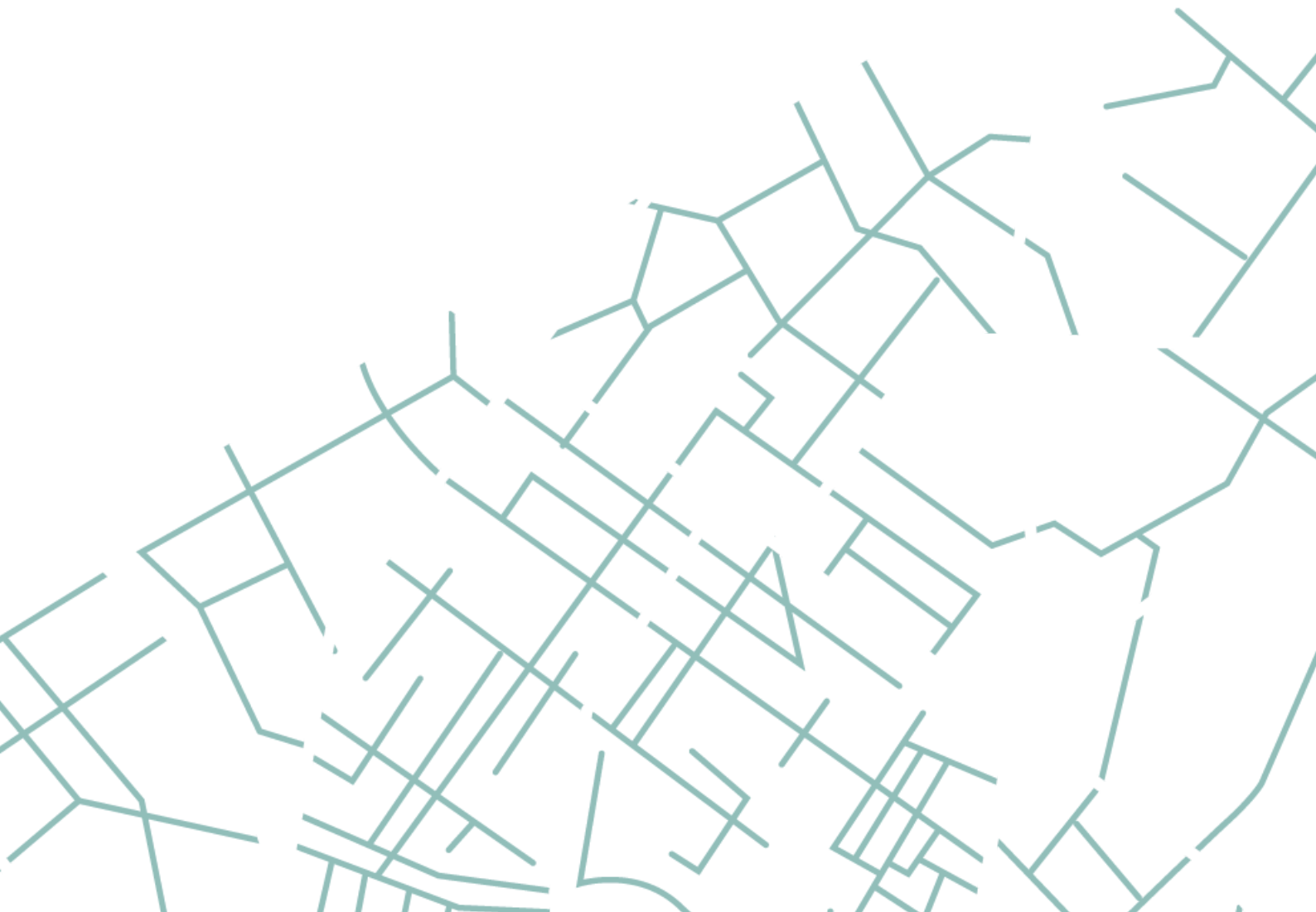
“We had five acres of land that we weren’t using as effectively as we wanted to, and so it was an enormous opportunity to work with the White Rose Forest to be able to turn a vision that we had into reality. Our students can engage with nature, be in an environment that is incredibly calming, and undertake activity that is really important to the local labour market.”

James Heaton-Jennings, CEO of Camphill Wakefield.

Looking to the future

Our ambitious but achievable plans will continue to make a significant contribution to Government's national goals, increasing woodland cover, improving biodiversity, and creating a healthier and happier society. We will continue to establish thousands of new woodland areas, bring existing woodland under sustainable management, connect with and engage a million people, and increase access to woodland for more than 40% of the population. In addition, we will increase habitat connectivity by 25% and support species recovery helping to reverse nature loss whilst delivering £1 billion of natural capital benefits.

England's Community Forests network is innovative and adaptive – and with a new phase of the Trees for Climate programme anticipated for 2026-30, we are ready to help shape a future where trees and woodlands are an even greater priority for us all.





Want to get involved?

Whether you are a landowner keen to plant trees or an organisation eager to establish partnership opportunities with your nearest Community Forest, we'd love to hear from you.

Get in touch:

englandscommunityforests.org.uk/contact-us/

Follow us on social media:

@CommForests

#EnglandsCommunityForests

#TreesforClimate

England's 15 Community Forests are:

City of Trees

Derbyshire's Heartwood

Forest of Avon

Forest of Marston Vale

Forest of Mercia

Great Western

Greenwood Community
Forest

Humber Forest

North East Community Forest

Plymouth and South Devon

Raise: Cumbria Community
Forest

Thames Chase

The Mersey Forest

Tees Community Forest

White Rose Forest

Thank you

The success of Trees for Climate is all thanks to the partnership approach we take, from collaborating with our many local communities and delivery partners to working alongside national colleagues including at Forestry Commission, Natural England, National Trust, and Woodland Trust, and of course the ongoing support from Defra and national government.

So we'd like to thank all our partners for working with us to make Trees for Climate such a success!

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Cheshire West
and Chester

Working in partnership with



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