

Woodland Creation Case Studies

Helping local authorities respond to the biodiversity emergency

How trees can support your nature recovery plans



The challenge

People care about nature, and nature really matters. Our wooded landscapes provide a haven for wildlife, but woodlands and trees – along with other habitats such as grassland, wetland, and scrub – also provide a wide range of broader social and environmental benefits. They lock in carbon, protect our soils, reduce flood risk, improve our physical health and mental well-being, and create new green jobs to boost the local economy.

The government has committed to halting the decline in biodiversity by 2030 and to achieving net zero by 2050. Investing in nature's recovery, for example through woodland management and creation, plays

a crucial role in securing these goals whilst delivering a whole host of other benefits.

Local authorities are perfectly placed to lead by example, working with local communities, landowners and other partners to provide inspiring examples to others through the development of local plans and strategies.

Financial support is available through Forestry Commission grants and via our partners. Our expert advice can help you to create new woodland and make a difference – safeguarding a wildlife-rich legacy for your community and future generations to enjoy.

3 steps to developing your own Trees and Woodland Strategy (TAWs)

You can plan for the most effective planting and management of your trees and woodlands by producing a **Tree and Woodland Strategy (TAWs)**, which will also support your area's emerging **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** and/or [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#). The Tree Council **Trees and Woodland Strategy Toolkit** gives step-by-step guidance to develop your own TAWs, to provide the framework needed for local action. Visit: treecouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/science-and-research/tree-strategies

1. Get started

- Secure line management and political support for TAWs, including initial funding
- Identify stakeholders
- Assemble a team
- Define a project brief

2. Develop your strategy

- Gather the evidence
- Create a shared vision
- Set effective targets
- Agree what to include

3. Deliver your strategy

- Find funding
- Develop an action plan
- Consult and engage
- Monitor and evaluate



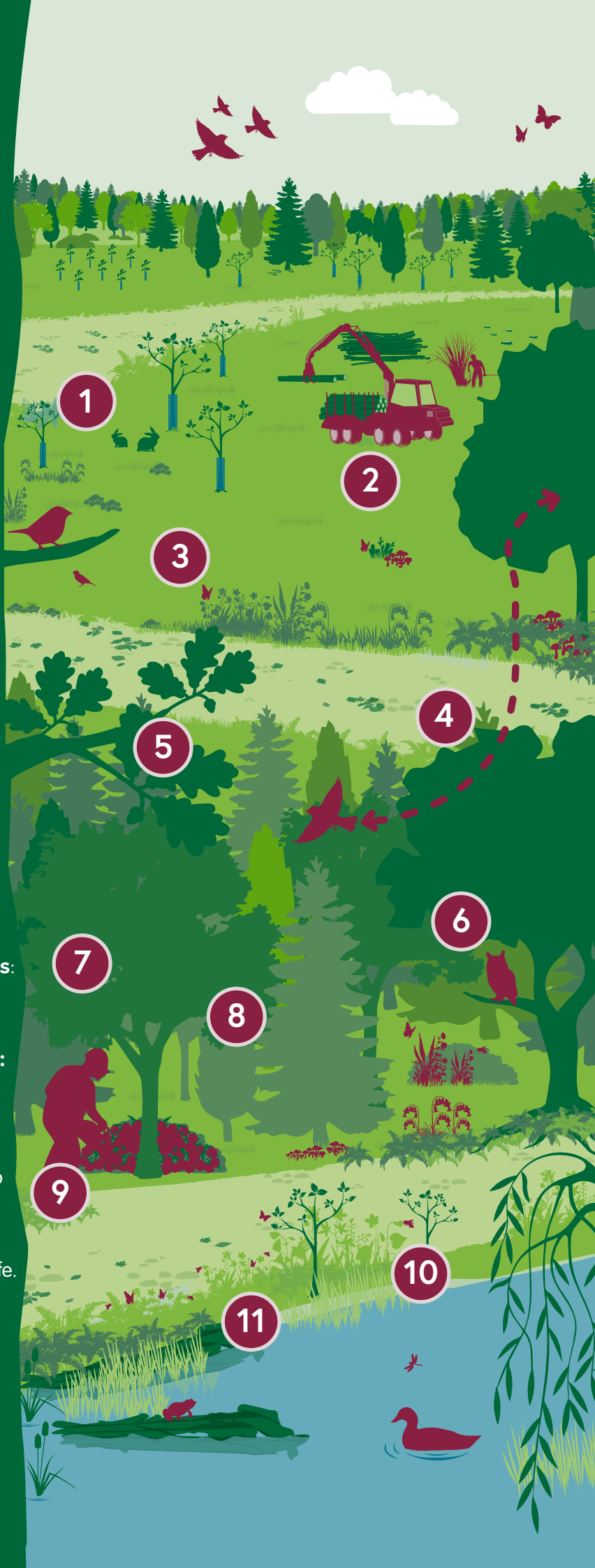
11 key considerations for nature recovery

You can help support nature recovery through your woodland design by considering 11 ways to help boost biodiversity:

- 1 Protecting trees:**
from browsing mammals with appropriate fencing, tree guards, or tubes.
- 2 Designing with future forest management in mind:**
such as continuous cover forestry or coppicing to encourage diverse tree heights and ages.
- 3 Incorporating open space:**
within and around the forest, to encourage different species to nest and feed.
- 4 Reconnecting existing woodland:**
to create vital nature networks allowing wildlife to move between habitats.
- 5 Integrating native woodland:**
to retain wildlife-rich habitats. Oak trees alone support over 2,300 species.
- 6 Buffering ancient woodlands:**
to support this irreplaceable ecosystem that covers just 2% of the UK's land.
- 7 Incorporating diverse tree species:**
to increase woodland resilience against pests and climate change.
- 8 Protecting priority habitats and species:**
to ensure woodland fits within the broader ecological landscape.
- 9 Controlling non-native invasive species:**
by removing them quickly to limit any impact on biodiversity.
- 10 Allowing natural processes to occur:**
to shape and create diverse and rich habitats to benefit many species.
- 11 Maintaining wet woodland features:**
to support a wealth of plants, insects and wildlife.

Expert advice is on hand

When planning your woodland creation project, speak to your local Woodland Officer to ensure your woodland design meets the [UK Forestry Standard](#). The Forestry Commission can also help to protect woodlands from illegal felling and deforestation.





Local community planting woodland in Barnstaple.

North Devon Council to create a larger, nature-rich woodland habitat

North Devon Council are planting 24,000 trees by March 2024 in a community woodland in the Barnstaple area, after purchasing land in 2020 to offset its carbon emissions and help reach net zero by 2030. There are significant gains for nature as the trees link three existing woodlands together to create a larger, more connected woodland habitat – expanding vital nature networks to allow wildlife to move freely and adapt to future climate conditions. The site is located on a ridge with steep sides and planting trees in this area will help to prevent water run-off into the nearby Barnstaple Yeo river. Public access to the new community woodland is also expected to boost the physical and mental well-being of nearby residents.

The community woodland is estimated to sequester 3,500 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 100 years, which equates to the removal of around 2,300 cars from the county's roads.

The England Woodland Creation Offer has made it possible for North Devon Council to plant a mixed woodland containing 90% broadleaf trees such as oak, hornbeam, and small leaved lime with the remaining 10% to include conifer species to increase the carbon capture of the woodland. Specially selected areas of the site are to be planted at a low stocking rate to establish wood pasture and for grass to be managed to encourage a meadow of wildflowers. Connecting hedgerows across the site will encourage species from neighbouring woods to travel between the three wooded habitats until the woodland canopy closes over time. Badger gates will also be installed to allow animals to move freely across the site.

“We are committed to doing everything we can to create a thriving natural environment which also locks in carbon.”

Netti Pearson, lead member for the environment, North Devon Council

“The England Woodland Creation Offer grant recognises the scheme's value in helping nature recovery by significantly expanding and connecting native woodland habitat, improving water quality and providing access to nature – all this while sucking up carbon to combat climate change.”

James Fry, Area Director for the South West, Forestry Commission



Woodland Creation Ranger Chris and volunteers planting the former South Leeds golf course.

“We are proud to be delivering the Woodland Creation Initiative across the city with funding partners and this project is a fantastic opportunity to increase woodland and biodiversity for residents to enjoy now and in the future. Leeds is committed to addressing the climate emergency and to be carbon neutral by 2030.”

Councillor Salma Arif, Cabinet Member Public Health & Active Lifestyles, Leeds City Council

Leeds City Council plants 62,500 trees – benefitting biodiversity, people, and the wider environment

During the 2021-22 winter planting season, an army of volunteers planted an impressive 15.89 hectares of new woodland across five sites in South Leeds. The five sites included a memorial wood called ‘The People’s Woodland’, the former South Leeds Golf Course, West Wood (an ancient woodland), Padstow Gardens, and Sissons Farm – all delivered as part of Leeds City Council’s Woodland Creation Initiative, planting 50 hectares of woodland every year.

The project underwent extensive consultation with residents, councillors and businesses which led to a positive response towards woodland planting, wetland creation, and re-wilding.

The Leeds City Council Parks and the Countryside Area Teams and Rangers assembled over 150 public and corporate volunteers to plant trees, alongside a dedicated team of regular tree planting volunteers. The projects were funded by England’s Community Forests’ Trees for Climate programme, part of the Defra Nature for Climate Fund (NCF), and included Trees for Cities and Leeds City Council, and support from White Rose Forest, West Yorkshire Joint Services, and the Forestry Commission.

The project has increased total tree cover across all five sites to 33.35 hectares, including over 1 km of new hedgerow, and 18 hectares of open space

incorporating meadows, wetland, and access paths for people to enjoy. Designated areas were also fenced off where there were signs of natural regeneration – later supplemented with planted trees grown from locally sourced seed stock, collected by the local community, and grown at Leeds City Council nursery, The Arrium.

The projects have boosted biodiversity by joining up fragments of a nearby ancient woodland with West Wood – providing a direct link to Middleton Park Woods and establishing new woodlands on reclaimed land. A mix of tree ages and species including scrub, alongside a variety of tree planting schemes, shrubs, natural regeneration, and improved grasslands, has created a mosaic of vital habitats to support a wide variety of wildlife. The creation of a wet woodland will not only benefit nature but will help to reduce flooding further downstream, by slowing the flow of surface water run-off around Sissons Farm.

The new woodlands will sequester carbon and contribute towards Leeds City Council’s aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. Residents will also benefit from newly created green spaces across the district, improving the health and well-being of those living close by.

Read a more detailed account of the [Leeds City Council case study](#).



Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) tree planting in Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Rossendale, Burnley, and Pendle Borough Councils alongside the Ribble Rivers Trust.

Local authorities across Pennine Lancashire districts join forces to plant 40,000 trees

Blackburn, Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, and Rossendale Borough Councils gathered local volunteers to help plant 40,000 trees in 2022 to create accessible green spaces to support nature and improve mental and physical well-being. The project was able to engage with a large number of schools to help educate the next generation on how to plant and care for trees, as well as promote the benefits of increased outdoor exercise.

The Ribble Rivers Trust and Prospects Foundation provided the expertise needed to plant a total of 31.2 hectares of trees which involved 95 council-owned sites and community spaces, as well as 40 schools. Many volunteers of all ages and abilities took part in planting trees and were able to contribute to tree planting activities that would benefit a neighbouring NHS healthcare centre. Positive feedback was received after just six months from the schools involved, and children attending a Special Educational Needs school are using their new outdoor space far more than before.

“From my perspective it [Local Authority Treescapes Fund] did trigger something. It perhaps wouldn't have happened – and wouldn't have happened as quickly – had the [LATF] grant not been available. It is helping to inspire our next generations and start some really meaningful conversations.”

Gwen Kinloch, of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

The group made their Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) bid through partnership and innovation – a grant that harnesses each partner's individual strengths and enables partnerships formed by local authorities to drive an increase in non-woodland tree planting. The LATF is also serving to regenerate

urban areas in green spaces, many of which were previously derelict or reclaimed to provide pockets of greenery.

Across two sites in Hyndburn, volunteers gave nature a helping hand by protecting new saplings in designated areas with natural materials, after an ecological survey recommended natural colonisation – the process by which trees naturally seed into surrounding open habitat, gradually turning into new woodland. Insects, bats, and birds will benefit as the trees grow and we can expect mature oak to link up with nearby ancient woodland.

Read a more detailed account of the [Pennine Lancashire districts case study](#). Find out more information about the [Local Authority Treescapes Fund and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#).



Local Authority Treescapes Fund planting with schools by the Ribble Rivers Trust, in partnership with the Blackburn with Darwen group bid.



Local Authority Treescapes Fund tree planting by the Ribble Rivers Trust, in partnership with the Blackburn with Darwen group bid.

How we can help

Speak to your local Woodland Officer for guidance on woodland creation and information on grants and available support. We would also recommend speaking with neighbouring authorities to locate any opportunities to contribute or collaborate with other local tree planting initiatives.

Visit: gov.uk/forestry/tree-planting-overview



Financial and practical support

Woodland creation has a key role to play in nature recovery, and you can be part of the solution. Expert advice and financial support are available now to help you create woodlands. There are several grants available to you:

The Forestry England Woodland Partnership:

Creates new woodlands across England in partnership with you through a leasehold scheme. The partnership offers commercial rent and provides a guaranteed rental income for 60 or 120 years, with Forestry England responsible for designing, planting, and managing your woodland. Find out more by visiting: forestryengland.uk/woodland-creation

Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF):

LATF funds the establishment of trees in non-woodland settings which may include parks, riparian zones, copses, shelterbelts, green lanes, small linear woodlands alongside roads and footpaths, and vacant and disused community spaces. Find out more by visiting: gov.uk/guidance/local-authority-treescapes-fund

Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf):

Provides funding for anyone who wants to plant trees in urban or peri-urban areas, and has full management control or consent to use their land for the duration of their agreement. The fund provides 80% of the published standard costs for planting and establishment. The remaining costs supported under the UTCf must be met by the

recipient, who will only need to supply 20%. Find out more about the UTCf by visiting: gov.uk/guidance/urban-tree-challenge-fund

England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO):

Supports new woodland creation that is at least 1 hectare in size or woodland blocks of 0.1 hectares, by covering standard capital costs up to £10,200/ha, providing annual maintenance costs of £350/ha for 10 years, with additional contributions available up to £8,000/ha when delivering wider benefits to society, nature recovery, and the environment. Applicants can receive a contribution towards the costs of access infrastructure. For more information visit: gov.uk/guidance/england-woodland-creation-offer

Partner grants: Read our brief overview of the support, grants and incentives that are available for woodland creation as part of the England Woodland Creation Partnerships. For more information visit: gov.uk/government/publications/england-woodland-creation-partnerships-grants-and-advice-table

Local authorities may be able to take advantage of the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme: refer to Defra's website for the latest updates.

For the latest updates on Forestry Commission grants and regulations sign-up to our [eAlerts](#).

Useful resources

- [Helping local authorities respond to the climate emergency](#)
- [Responding to the climate emergency with new trees and woodlands](#)
- [The benefits of woodland creation – Woods for Nature fact sheet](#)
- [The Tree Council: Trees and Woodland Strategy Toolkit](#)
- [The UK Forestry Standard](#)

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