

Government supported new planting of trees in England

Interim update for the half year
April to September 2020

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This statistical update reports the number of trees newly planted in England with central government support, excluding replacement and restocking. This update covers the half year period April to September 2020-21, enumerating tree planting for which data are available at the mid-year point. It shows progress made by government in meeting its commitments to newly plant more woodland and trees in England. The most recent previous report covered the full year 2019-20.

- **Key findings** including the area of land and equivalent number of trees newly planted with central government support in the first half of 2020-21, and the totals for the three and a half years since April 2017 when reporting of this indicator started, are presented from page 3 onwards.
- **The methodology** showing what sources of government supported planting of trees were selected to be counted, and those excluded, and the reasons why are set out in Annex 1 from page 5 onwards.
- **Further information**, such as the availability of other statistics on all new planting of woodland, including also that without government support, and on the overall area of woodland in England is also provided on page 8.

This statistical series is a part of the Forestry Commission's key performance indicators, and is based on administrative data computed, collected and collated by the Forestry Commission, and organisations such as Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Woodland Trust, and the National Forest Company.

Reports are published on our key performance indicators webpage on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forestry-commission-corporate-plan-performance-indicators>. We will consider all requests to make publication content available in alternative formats.

All the reports of this key performance indicator at each year end have been successfully assured by the Government Internal Audit Agency.

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Key findings: Government supported new planting of trees in England

Interim update for the first half of the 2020-21 financial year. Between 1 April and 30 September 2020: 763 hectares of land were newly planted with trees in England with support from central government, equating to about **1,324,000 trees**.

This means that in the three and a half years April 2017 to September 2020 for which this indicator has been reported, **5,036 hectares** of land were newly planted in England with support from central government, equating to about **8,286,000 trees**.

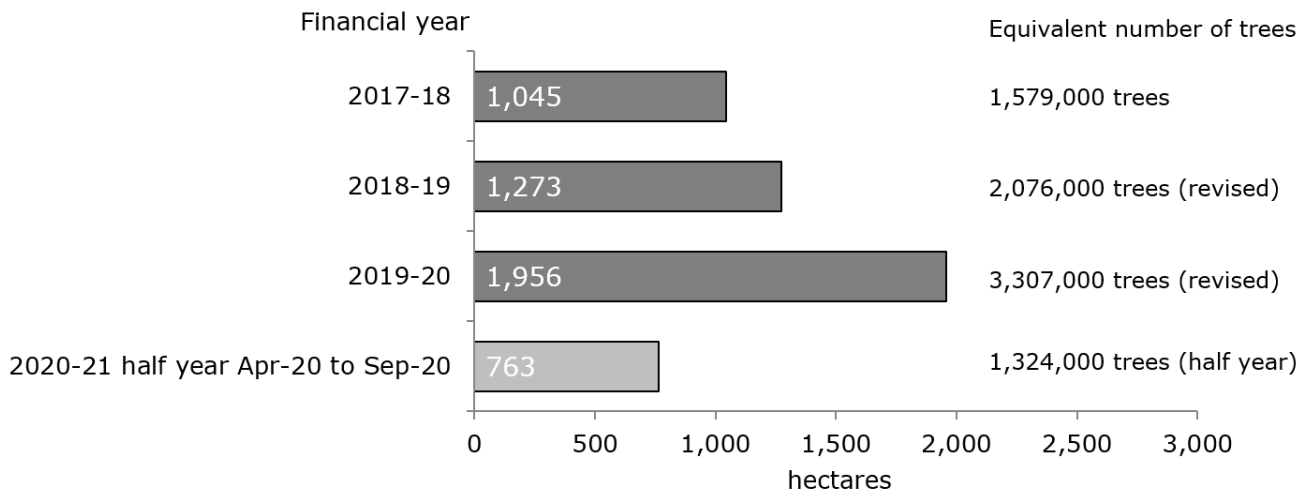
Table 1: Government supported new planting of trees in England, by source; first half of 2020-21 and the three and a half years April 2017 to September 2020

Source of Government support for new planting of trees ¹		Apr-Sep 2020: Area of land in hectares ^{1,2,3}	Apr-Sep 2020: Equivalent in number of trees ^{1,2,3}	Three and a half years Apr 2017 to Sep 2020: Area of land in hectares ^{1,2,3}	Three and a half years Apr 2017 to Sep 2020: Equivalent in number of trees ^{1,2,3}
1	Rural Development Programme for England: CS and EWGS woodland creation ⁴	534	925,000	3,696	6,057,000
2	Woodland Carbon Fund ⁵	156	277,000	356	708,000
3	High Speed 2 Woodland Fund	26	41,000	68	124,000
4	Forestry England ^{5,6}	0	0	125	343,000
5	Countryside Stewardship: other tree planting options	47	81,000	185	304,000
6	Environment Agency ⁷	Not available ⁷	Not available ⁷	314	341,000
7	Northern Forest	0	0	205	308,000
8	National Forest Company	0	0	85	100,000
9	Ministry of Defence	0	0	0	0
10	Highways England ⁸	No data ⁸	No data ⁸	-	-
Total^{1,8}		763 hectares	1,324,000 trees	5,036 hectares	8,286,000 trees

Notes to Table 1:

1. Includes trees in areas counting as woodland, and some tree cover outside woodland.
2. The density of tree planting, in numbers of trees planted per hectare of land, varies between planting schemes.
3. Figures are to the nearest 1,000 trees. Figures may not sum due to rounding.
4. CS: Countryside Stewardship and EWGS: the former English Woodland Grant Scheme
5. That part of Forestry England new planting delivered with support of the Woodland Carbon Fund is included only in the Forestry England row of the table: 2018-19: 31 hectares (95,000 trees), 2019-20: 81 hectares (217,000 trees).
6. Figures for Forestry England have been revised to include improvements to records: 2018-19 to 99,000 trees (rather than 83,000 trees) and 2019-20 to 244,000 trees (rather than 218,000 trees). Total Apr-17 to Sep-20: 125 hectares.
7. Data for this source of tree planting are only available for each full financial year, after year-end.
8. No data so far for Highways England tree planting of the counted type.

Figure 1: Government supported new planting of trees in England by year, three and a half years 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2020



Sources: Data from the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Woodland Trust and the National Forest Company. Note: Figures may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Revision: Some of the figures for the equivalent number of trees have been revised to include later improvements to records. These now read as 2018-19: 2,076,000 trees (rather than 2,060,000 trees), and for 2019-20 it is 3,307,000 trees (rather than 3,281,000 trees). See note 6 on Table 1.

Interpretation

Government funding supported the new planting of 763 hectares of land with trees in England in the first six months of 2020-21, equivalent to 1.32 million trees. This is about the same as the area newly planted in the equivalent half year period of 2018-19 but only around 70% of the area planted this way in the first half of 2019-20.

Annex 1: Methodology

This annex lists the types of government support for new planting of trees in England selected to be counted by this indicator, and those excluded, and the reasons for the decisions made on this.

Scope of this indicator

1. There was previously no indicator that reported all government supported tree planting. Previously only tree planting funded by Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant (CS WCG), and its predecessor the English Woodland Grant Scheme Woodland Creation Grant (EWGS WCG), was reported as a Forestry Commission England Headline Indicator. In defining what else to include in this indicator, we worked to ensure that only appropriate new planting will be counted. The indicator has been used to report on delivery of the government's target for tree planting in England from 2017, then expressed as a target to plant 11 million trees by 2022. The statistics are also shown in area of land planted in hectares.

Principles of what new planting to count

2. The following principles have been applied. This indicator will count government supported new planting of trees in England that is:
 - a. New planting only, not replanting or replacement.
 - b. Largely and directly funded by government, recognising there may be match funding; for example, CS WCG applicants are expected to contribute 20% of planting and establishment costs.
 - c. Reporting should exclude:
 - i. Double counting; for example, National Forest Company new planting figures must exclude any funded by CS WCG and therefore already counted; or that identified for counting as a part of any wholly separate government new planting commitment;
 - ii. direct compensation for trees lost to development, illegal felling or open habitat restoration;
 - iii. trees planted as an integral component of schemes likely to have resulted in tree felling and woodland loss; and
 - iv. planting of types that the public would not recognise as trees or woodland.

New planting that is or will be counted

3. In line with these principles, **all** new tree planting through the following initiatives are counted as part of this government supported new planting of trees indicator:
 - a. **Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant** and **English Woodland Grant Scheme Woodland Creation Grant**; each part of the Rural Development Programme for England;
 - b. **Woodland Carbon Fund**;
 - c. **High Speed 2 Woodland Fund** woodland creation option;

- d. **Forestry England**-funded planting in the nation's forests managed by them.

New planting that is counted when conditions are met

4. **Some** tree planting through the following initiatives is also counted, subject to the relevant conditions described being met:
- a. **Countryside Stewardship other tree planting options**, administered by Natural England, and excluding where possible high density planting of trees to establish new hedgerows, which the public would not recognise as trees or woodland¹.
 - b. **Environment Agency (EA)**. Tree planting included:
 - EA only funded tree planting in some catchment flood risk management schemes to help achieve Biodiversity 2020 targets.
 - EA only funded Water Environment Grant.
 - Woodland creation directly funded by the Natural Flood Management (NFM) scheme.
 - c. **Northern Forest**. Some £5.7m government funding has been allocated to support the development of the Northern Forest. We will count this new planting of trees in this indicator, excluding those identified for counting as a part of any wholly separate government new planting commitment.
 - d. **National Forest Company (NFC)**. The NFC and its Changing Landscape Scheme are sponsored by Defra. This delivers woodland and parkland trees. Discussions with the NFC's Head of Forestry concluded that all NFC planting is supported by government and should be counted towards this indicator. Trees funded by any other initiative listed here, or those identified for counting as a part of any wholly separate government new planting commitment, are excluded.
 - e. **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**. Any tree planting on MoD land funded largely and directly by government will be counted in this indicator, ensuring there is no double-counting with other sources counted. Trees planted on MoD land through the tree-planting partnership with The Woodland Trust, through which The Woodland Trust sponsors tree planting on MoD land are excluded.
 - f. **Highways England (HE)**. HE plant significant numbers of trees associated with road-building and road widening schemes, many of which are likely to be associated with areas of woodland being felled. Most HE funded planting therefore falls outside the principles outlined above that define this indicator and are therefore excluded. However, trees planted outside the curtilage of road widening schemes and new planting planned to manage highway flood risk will be included.

¹ *Additional note (November 2019):* Some high density planting of trees for hedging is necessarily included until such time that reporting systems enable us to report without this.

New planting that is not counted

5. Further in line with these principles, the following trees are **not** counted as part of this indicator:

- a. **Trees for Schools.** This is a Defra initiative delivered by The Woodland Trust and Community Forests. The government said that trees planted through this initiative are identified for counting as a part of any wholly separate government new planting commitment. They are therefore excluded from this indicator.
- b. **High Speed 2 compensatory tree planting.** HS2 Ltd has allocated significant funds to tree planting over HS 2 Phase One (London to the West Midlands), to 2024. These are excluded from the counting towards this indicator, because they are to compensate for trees lost to development. This is different from trees planted through the separate HS2 Woodland Fund, which are counted.
- c. **Local Authorities.** New planting of trees on Local Authority owned or managed land can be funded through partnerships, which may sometimes include central government funding, such as the Woodland Carbon Fund. Thus new planting of trees by Local Authorities is included where a part of this or other schemes listed above in sections 3 and 4; as new planting that is or will be counted, or is counted when conditions are met.
However, Local Authorities act largely independently of central government and there is no national reporting structure for their other tree planting. Until there is an agreement that it would be feasible, reasonable and cost-effective to provide reliable reporting it is not possible to count any other Local Authority new planting towards this indicator, and so those sources of tree planting will not be included.

Definition of a tree

6. This indicator counts the new planting of a) individual trees, b) trees in groups and c) trees in woodlands, each in plantings comprising predominantly 'tree' species.
7. The definition of a 'tree' used is that required to meet eligibility criteria for government support for woodland creation/tree planting, which vary slightly from scheme to scheme.
8. Typically, the definition is equivalent to the eligibility for Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant² (CS WCG), in which 'trees' means plants with at least one woody stem capable of achieving a total height of five metres or more. All of the ca. 130 species listed in the CS WCG documentation Annex 2 list are therefore included.
9. This definition is comparable to that of 'trees' used in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN FAO, 2012) *'Forest Resources Assessment Working Paper 180: FRA 2015 Terms and Definitions'*, Rome: UN FAO, page 27, available from here: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/ap862e/ap862e00.pdf>
10. It is recognised that planting schemes sometimes include a proportion of shrubs. These are counted when planted as a proportion of tree planting schemes.

² Natural England (2017) *Countryside Stewardship Manual: Woodland Creation Grant 2018*, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/countryside-stewardship-woodland-creation-grant-manual-2018>

Further information

Media enquiries

For media enquiries about these statistics the contact is 0330 041 6560.

Other statistics on new planting of trees and woodland area

The Forestry Commission's Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Headline Indicator Updates, include detailed quarterly reports on new planting of trees supported by the Rural Development Programme for England (source 1 in Table 1). These are available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forestry-commission-corporate-plan-performance-indicators>

Forestry Commission statistics on **all** new planting of woodland including that supported in other ways, and the total woodland area in England (each updated annually), are available from:

- a. Provisional Woodland Statistics (each June) at <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/woodland-statistics/>
- b. Confirmed statistics in Forestry Statistics and Forestry Facts and Figures (each September) at <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/>

Release schedule for these statistics

Reports of this *Government supported new planting of trees in England* statistical series are released twice per year. The next anticipated release, a full report covering new planting for all of the 2020-21 year is expected to be published in June 2021.

Official Statistics

This key performance indicator update provides statistical data that are part of an Official Statistics series.

This indicator has been developed to meet the standards set out in the new Code of Practice for Statistics (Office for Statistics Regulation and UK Statistics Authority, 2018) available from <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>

For more information about Official Statistics and the UK Statistics Authority visit www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk.

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