



HM Government

A plan to recover England's temperate rainforests



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Published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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Introduction

The United Kingdom is home to globally rare temperate rainforest habitat (also known as Atlantic woodlands) influenced by the seas and oceans to form its humid and damp climate. We have a very suitable climate for this unique habitat, which is home to many rare species of plants and other wildlife, but research indicates it now covers less than 1 % of land in Great Britain.

Like all woodlands, these important habitats also capture large amounts of carbon, and can help alleviate flooding, while providing beautiful places for the public to enjoy. Protecting and enhancing them will contribute towards government commitments to restore nature, tackle climate change and protect 30% of our land by 2030.

Most of our temperate rainforests are also ancient woodland, over 400 years old, which form an important part of our natural heritage. The UK has suitable climate for temperate rainforest in parts of Northern Ireland, the west coast of Scotland, North and West Wales.

Within England they occur in Devon, Cornwall and Cumbria. Even within the UK, the nature of temperate rainforest differs in the species they support and by average temperature. Research undertaken estimates approximately 18,000 hectares remain in England.

Working with local communities in England, we will enhance our temperate rainforests through:

- 1. investment**
- 2. protection**
- 3. partnership**

Temperate rainforests are home to many rare species of plants and other wildlife



Temperate rainforests are home to many rare species of plants, lichens and bryophytes



1. Investment

Training

We will support funding for training in identifying and managing temperate rainforests through the Forestry and Arboriculture Skills Fund.

Research and Development

We have provided Forest Research with £16 million in funding for vital research to help support the resilience of our trees and woodland. In addition, through the Nature for Climate Fund we will invest up to £750,000 in research and development in improving the resilience, management, and protection of temperate rainforests.

Management and expansion of existing ancient woodland

The England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) provides funding for the expansion of existing ancient woodland and the creation of new woodlands in areas that have the potential to develop temperate rainforest. We have committed to continue our woodland creation offer through Environmental Land Management schemes in the future, ensuring there is no gap in funding.

Natural expansion

Natural colonisation can allow woodlands to extend from existing seed sources, which protects the resilience and biosecurity of temperate rainforests. Grants are available under EWCO to naturally expand rainforest, providing a buffer to support and protect them.

Innovation funds

We have invested £7.6 million to date through 4 Woodlands into Management Forestry Innovation Funds. These funds incentivise innovations in woodland management to help restore vulnerable woodland habitats, including making funding available for temperate rainforest.

We will continue to invest in temperate rainforest management and restoration



Countryside Stewardship

Countryside Stewardship will continue to support landowners to restore ancient woodlands which were converted to plantations, including potential temperate rainforest sites - bringing back English rainforests.

We will support more farmers and land managers to manage their precious temperate rainforest habitat, rewarding them for the environmental benefits they deliver alongside food.

Eliminate Rhododendron

Non-native invasive species like Rhododendron are choking our precious rainforests. We are providing funding for land managers to eliminate rhododendron from temperate rainforest sites through Countryside Stewardship, so our native tree and shrub species can bounce back.

Private investment

We are already seeing significant private investments into temperate rainforest in Britain, including £38 million from Aviva as part of their net zero commitment. We will encourage private green investment into temperate rainforests.

Public-private impact fund

We have committed to invest £30 million to kick start a new public-private impact fund to invest in restoring nature, through our Big Nature Impact Fund, which could invest in temperate rainforests.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain, which will be implemented from January 2024, has the potential to bring private investment into woodland creation, including temperate rainforest sites.



2. Protection

Strengthening protections for ancient woodlands

We have already taken steps to strengthen protections for ancient woodland through the **Keepers of Time** policy on ancient and native woodland which includes temperate rainforest. This policy recognises the value of these habitats, restates our commitment to evaluate the threats facing these habitats and sets out our updated principles and objectives to protect and improve these habitats for future generations.

We will go further to improve the condition of our oldest and most important habitats

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also outlines that any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodlands and ancient and veteran trees should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and only if a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Long established woodland

We have introduced a new category of 'Long Established Woodland' in planning policy. These are woodlands that have existed since at least 1893. We will consult on the protections these woodlands are afforded in the planning system to ensure the strongest protection of ancient woodlands, including temperate rainforest.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

There are 66 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England which are supporting, or could be supporting, temperate rainforest components, covering a total area of 7,637 hectares. In our Environmental Improvement Plan we committed that all SSSIs will have an up-to-date condition assessment by 31 January 2028 and that 50% of SSSIs to have actions on track to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.



Deer Management

Grazing by deer is one of the main pressures on existing temperate rainforests. We will reduce pressure from deer to allow our rainforests to recover.

Funding is currently available through Countryside Stewardship grants for deer management, including for erecting fencing to exclude deer. We are currently undertaking a review of the deer offer to improve it and will publish more information in due course. We will also take further steps through our upcoming deer management strategy.



3. Partnership

Landscape Recovery

The first competitive round of Landscape Recovery in 2022 awarded funding to 22 projects covering a range of habitats, including restoration of around 500 hectares of temperate rainforest. Round two focuses on net zero, protected sites and habitat creation and closed on 22 September 2023. Seven of the 34 shortlisted projects aim to restore precious temperate rainforest.

Rainforest Lichen Recovery

We have invested over £450,000 in the Rainforest Lichen Recovery (South-West) project through Natural England's Species Recovery Programme Capital Grant Scheme. This project, operating across 12 sites in Devon and Cornwall will support the conservation and recovery of 20 threatened lichen species, many of which are highly dependent on veteran trees. This project is being match funded by Plantlife.

Countryside Stewardship Plus

Countryside Stewardship Plus will reward farmers and land managers who deliver joined up, targeted action to address local priorities including protecting and enhancing important habitats.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Local Nature Recovery Strategies, developed by 48 appointed responsible authorities across England, will identify suitable locations for creating or restoring habitats like temperate rainforest to help meet national and local environmental priorities.

We will ensure rainforest contributes to our global goal to protect 30% of land for nature



Protected Landscape management plans

New Protected Landscape management plans will be required to contribute to national targets including species-rich habitat and woodland creation. New duties introduced through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act will require relevant authorities to help deliver these plans, providing an opportunity for rainforest restoration projects in our National Parks such as the Lake District.

Nature Recovery Projects

In the Environmental Improvement Plan we committed to establish 25 Nature Recovery Projects by 2025, with 12 already underway. These projects bring together partners to restore local nature sites, with the potential for future temperate rainforest projects to be included.

Devolved Administrations

Forestry policy is devolved, so the protection and restoration of temperate rainforests outside England is a matter for the devolved administrations. We will continue to collaborate with the devolved administrations, at both Official and Ministerial level, to enhance temperate rainforests across the UK.



Temperate rainforest in
Bovey Valley Woods in Devon