

North East Community Forest

Annual Report

2022 / 2023





Foreword from our Chair, Ross Weddle



Step outside your home and I guarantee you won't be too far from a tree. From pine and oak to willow and ash, we are blessed in the North East to have so many species as part of our beautiful landscapes. Trees are a vital component of our environment and our lives, providing us with oxygen, clean air, food, medicine and habitats for wildlife. They also play a crucial role in tackling climate change, preventing soil erosion and protecting biodiversity.

Since its inception in 2021, the North East Community Forest (NECF) has made great strides to increase tree cover in Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and urban areas of County Durham. I am delighted to see the progress we've made over the recent planting season, planting a further 41,048 new trees over 200 sites. Our vision is for all our communities to have strong, sustainable economies with a great quality of life and clean and green environments. And together, as a partnership of local authorities, environmental organisations and community groups, we are certainly on our way towards achieving that.

During the 2022/23 financial year, on average, for every £1 of core funding contributed to the NECF by our six local authority partners, £48 of additional funding was secured from other sources. This provides fantastic value for money to our local authority partners.

Something that I am particularly proud of during the past planting season was the fantastic level of community engagement and involvement. More than a quarter of our trees were planted by volunteers and community groups. A total of 1,194 volunteers took part in 58 tree planting events, planting 12,078 trees across the region. This included two of our flagship sites - 5,300 new trees at North Walbottle Woodland and a further 600 at the Tyne and Wear's first 'Miyawaki' Tiny Forest in West Denton, Newcastle.

As Chair of the NECF, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved and I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support towards creating a greener future.



North East Community Forest 2022/23 planting season



The North East Community Forest celebrated a successful planting season after 85.83 hectares of woodland – the equivalent of 70 football pitches – were planted across Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and urban areas of County Durham.

A total of 1,577 linear metres of hedgerows were also planted between November and March, while a further 17 hectares of open space was created.

Almost 1,200 volunteers supported the cause by rolling up their sleeves and taking part in 58 events, helping to plant 12,078 trees.

The increase in tree cover will bring many benefits to communities, including providing homes for wildlife, bringing people closer to nature, having a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing and contributing to efforts to tackle climate change.



New for 2023



England's Community Forests Conference

In June 2023 members of the North East Community Forest attended England's Community Forests Conference held in Manchester.

The event was the biggest conference to date with 140 delegates from all of the Forests across England sharing updates on the work taking place in their areas.

There was also the opportunity for everyone to visit the National Trust Castlefield Viaduct and see some of the planting by City of Trees in central Manchester.

At the conference, Woodland Officer Paul Hyde won the Sapling Award, which is given to the Young Forester of the Year who has joined within the last year.

Follow NECF online

This summer sees that launch of a brand new bespoke website for the North East Community Forest, where landowners can find out more about arranging their own planting project.

In support of this there are new social media channels where the NECF will be showcasing the work they do and encouraging local people to get involved. Residents and businesses can now help to grow our Forest through the 'Donate Now' button on the website.

Follow us on:



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn



X



The North East Community Forest achievements 2022/23

What is the North East Community Forest?

The North East Community Forest (NECF) is a multi-million-pound project, which will see tens of thousands of trees planted across Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and the more urban areas of County Durham. The NECF is supported by a 'Forest Partnership' of local and combined authorities, charities and organisations. A dedicated 'Forest Team' employed by Newcastle City Council manages the programme.



85.83 of gross hectares planted



41,048 trees planted



1577 linear meters of new hedgerow with in-hedge trees



200 sites with trees planted on



17 hectares of open space e.g. rides, glades, pathways, grasses, and herbaceous plants

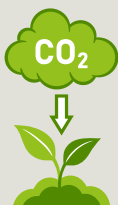


£3.68M of funding secured



Volunteer Planting events

- 58 volunteer tree planting events
- With 1,194 volunteers
- 12,078 trees planted by volunteers
- 1,864 hours of volunteer time planting trees



26,624 tonnes of carbon dioxide captured from the atmosphere by year 30



NECF Trees for Climate Case Study: Town Moor, Newcastle City Centre, Newcastle

During National Tree Week in 2022 the North East Community Forest team, along with the Sheriff and Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Veronica Dunn and other representatives from Newcastle City Council and the Freemen of Newcastle launched the latest tree planting programme on the Town Moor.

This ambitious project, which pays homage to the Queen's Green Canopy: Plant a Tree for the Jubilee, will increase the tree population by 3283 trees over 10 Town Moors by March 2023. Continued ambitious tree planting projects are programmed for subsequent years.

Trees greatly benefit the people living around them by having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, reducing stress and encouraging outdoor exercise. This is in addition to the benefits they will receive from an improved environmental quality and improved amenity which comes with planted areas

The tree planting across the Town Moor sites this season will be a mix of urban greenspace planting, wood pasture, and fruit trees.

Overview

- Total of 3286 trees planted
- Planted over 10 Town Moor sites
- Thousands of more trees to follow on the Town Moors in future planting seasons



[Watch the Town Moor project video](#)



NECF Trees for Climate Case Study: The Creation of the Quebec New Woodland, Durham

The project is located entirely within a small 2 hectare paddock that adjoins a small ex mining terrace of houses, that are an annex of the tiny County Durham Village of Quebec. The new woodland lies adjacent to the village's recreation field as well as close to a small existing semi mature woodland that grows on the site of the former village allotments.

During several public discussions held on site, initially with interested parties and then with a wider section of the community several issues were raised and subsequently addressed. Prime among these were some long outstanding issues with regards to supposed inaction to improve the exiting woodland that lies adjacent to the immediate residents of the terrace as well as adjacent to the informal village green.

The issues were, the overhanging nature of the existing woodland over the unadopted drive that leads down to the terrace, the parking of vehicles on the informal village green and the general litter and mess that lies across the floor of the existing woodlands and perhaps the main one, the potential use of the unadopted road by people visiting the new woodland.

Overview

- 1.2 hectares planted of native Broadleaves. Alder, Birch, Hazel, Hawthorne, Crab Apple, Scots pine, Bird Cherry, Oak, Dog rose and Rohan.
- 1863 whips planted.
- 0.25 hectares of managed open space provided.
- 0.5 hectares of existing woodland made more accessible and left in an improved condition for future management.



Each of these was dealt with in turn apart from the parking issue on the green as it was felt that it was preferable to people parking on the roadside blocking the road.

The main issue of access to the site past the houses was the most novel solution as it saw us putting on a community day whereby, we built a path through the adjacent woods, clearing scrub and internal fences and tidying up detritus from the last 50 years making for a new and very attractive new path that linked the new woodland with the existing car park to the recreation area and so avoided people walking down the unadopted road and in front of the terrace. Since its creation we have had many compliments from local people as to how enjoyable and attractive the new facility is.



Key impacts

- New high quality public access to 2 hectares of land
- 2x public events where over 40 people attended to firstly tidy the woodland and create 50 metres of new path and then the second event, where 10 local people helped plant over 100 trees.
- 3x schools' events where the OASES organisation worked with over 100 school children from 3 different local schools to plant over 120 trees.
- The benefits for wildlife saw this species poor grazing paddock planted with native deciduous trees that in the medium to long term will provide greatly improved habitat.
- The planting of over 1 hectare of trees on relatively fertile soils will see in excess of 7 tons of carbon each year over a 40-year period removed from the atmosphere.

“ As a resident of Quebec it has been a pleasure to be involved in the tree planting project in the adjacent field . With collaboration we have been able to open up the once unused existing woodland to create an albeit short but enjoyable mindfulness walk which is now well used and an asset to our small community . How wonderful to hear passing walkers & families with children comment on the woodland sounds and notice how the saplings are growing knowing some of them planted them and they know exactly which one it is !and of course our dogs love it too . ”



NECF Trees for Climate Case Study: Downhill Sports Complex, Sunderland

A former football pitch on Green Belt land has been transformed into a small woodland, with the help of local residents. The westernmost part of Downhill Sports Complex has not been in operational sporting use for some time and has now been planted with 2,000 native deciduous and coniferous trees. This has coincided with additional work being carried out with funding from the local Area Committee which has enabled butterfly scrapes to be created, as well as a bridleway to be resurfaced.

In addition, 25 heavy standard trees were also planted at the entrance to the sports area and 4 raptor posts have been erected, together with new fencing around the southern portion of the site. Maintenance funding enables the heavy standards to be watered intensively for 3 years, whilst maintenance arrangements are in place for the 2,000 whips for 15 years.

A community planting day was arranged in March 2023, and local residents (including the Downhill Pond Group) assisted with the tree planting and installation of the mulch mats. The charity, Trees for Cities, provided funding to pay for the purchase and installation of the whips, together with funding for the first year of maintenance.

Overview

- 25 heavy standard trees planted
- 2000 native deciduous and coniferous trees planted
- Butterfly scrapes created
- Bridleway resurfacing



NECF Trees for Climate Case Study: St Mary's RC Primary School, Sunderland

Pupils from St Mary's RC primary school received a visit from a group of special guests this week, as part of a royal tree planting ceremony. Dozens of pupils from the primary school planted 100 trees to coincide with the 'Queen's Green Canopy'. Peppercorn trees planted across school grounds, the trees which included 10 new orchard trees and a further 20 heavy standards (paid for by the North East Community Forest) will grow to form a small orchard and increasing the school 'Forest Classroom' area. The orchard produce in time, will be collected by schoolchildren and used for cooking and eating in the school, and for local distribution

Forest classroom is key to child's development, and core part of curriculum, as well supporting urban biodiversity and helping to combat flash flooding and providing increased shelter in times of climate extremes.

The pupils were also joined on the day by a delegation of special guests to mark the occasion. This included the Deputy Lieutenant, John Mowbray OBE; the Mayor of Sunderland, Cllr Alison Smith; Ross Weddle, the Chair of the North East Community Forest and José-Luis Linares of the Forestry Commission.

Overview

- 100 trees planted
- 10 new orchard trees planted
- 20 heavy standard trees planted
- Increase to the school 'Forest Classroom' area



NECF Case Study: Tyne and Wear's first Tiny Forest, Newcastle

2023 saw the launch of a new project to create the first Tiny Forest in Newcastle at Apperley in West Denton. The initiative is a partnership between Earthwatch Europe, The Queen's Green Canopy, Newcastle City Council and the North East Community Forest.

Based on the 'Miyawaki Method', which uses species of trees that would occur naturally in that area and that work together to create a diverse, multi-layered forest community, the Tiny Forest will provide the local wildlife and community with a new area of woodland to enjoy.

Ben Williams, Tiny Forest Senior Project Manager at Earthwatch said: "We're so pleased to be planting our first Tiny Forest in Newcastle. We have had such a great time planting this forest with all the local volunteers. There are over 150 Tiny Forests across the UK and each one is unique because it has been planted and cared for by the local community. We're looking forward to returning to Newcastle in years to come to help the community monitor and enjoy this wonderful green space."

Overview

- First 'Tiny Forest' project in Tyne and Wear
- 600 trees and shrubs planted
- 95 local volunteer took part on the day



[Watch the Tiny Forest project video](#)



NECF Trees for Climate Case Study: Walbottle Waggonway, Newcastle

In February 2023 the team from the North East Community Forest partnered with Northumberland Wildlife trust to run a number of community planting events to create new woodland in the Walbottle area of Newcastle. The project included 1.27ha of woodland creation and hedgerow planting.

The planting area has 2 sections, a 427 meters long hedgerow and 0.71ha of woodland planted. Trees were used to alleviate flooding and create a wildlife corridor connecting onto an existing woodland. Skylark birds were considered leaving most of the field as open grassland, tailored to their natural habitat.

The entire project was planted by volunteers over 13 planting events / days, including 181 volunteers and 527 hours of volunteer time. The project was delivered in partnership between the North East Community Forest, North Walbottle Waggonway Group, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, The Forestry Commission, Trees for Cities, The Queen's Green Canopy and Newcastle City Council.

Overview

- 1.27 hectares of woodland and hedgerow planting
- 5300 trees planted
- 13 planting events
- 181 volunteers
- 527 hours of volunteer time



[Watch the Walbottle project video](#)



The local North Walbottle Waggonway Group were integral in helping with the design and rallying local volunteers. The woodland was officially launched by the deputy Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne.

The project would not have been possible without innovative match funding from Trees for Cities, combined with Trees for Climate grant funding. The additional funding was spent on an enhanced community engagement package which included a letter box drop and engaging Northumberland Wildlife Trust to run the volunteer planting days.



“

A great partnership, involving the local community, which preserves and enhances the natural beauty of the area now and in the future.

”

Iain Scott, North Walbottle Waggonway Group



NECF Trees for Climate Case Study: Brunswick Green, Wideopen, North Tyneside

Brunswick Green in Wideopen is a large area of amenity grassland which runs parallel to the A1. An existing tree line separates the Green from the main road however, multiple gaps expose the noise and visual impact of the passing traffic.

The aim of the new tree planting is:

- To promote conservation and biodiversity
- Help reduce the likelihood of flooding
- Improve the visual amenity of the local area and provide opportunities for recreation
- Reduce the audio and visual impact of the A1

Summary of the project

The Council identified the site as an opportunity to enhance the existing tree line along the A1 and reduce its impact on people using the amenity land. After consulting with local residents and ward members, the trees were planted in January 2023. In collaboration with Northumberland Wildlife Trust, over 40 individuals and families of all ages got their gloves on to plant 550 mixed native species whips.

Overview

- 550 trees planted
- 40 volunteers took part



The new planting adds to the existing tree line to filter pollutants from the A1, improves the visual aesthetics of the area, and provides additional habitat for biodiversity within a wildlife corridor.

Key impacts

Public access and management: Brunswick Green is open to the public and can be accessed from multiple entrance points. As the planting enhances the existing tree line, the majority of the area has been retained for amenity use.

Resilience: A variety of native species were planted to create a woodland which is resilient to disease and diverse in nature.

Enhancing wildlife: The planting reinforces the existing wildlife corridor to promote biodiversity and provide habitat for a range of species, including bats, birds, and small mammals. This supports the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan to encourage the breeding and roosting of native species.

Contribution to Net Zero: The creation of a North East Community Forest is an important strategic objective in the Council's Carbon Net Zero 2030 Action Plan and this project supports that aim through carbon sequestration.

Engagement, health and wellbeing: The new woodland and natural habitats provide spaces for informal outdoor recreation and improved visual amenity. Local residents have an improved space that can where they can benefit from interacting with each other and with animals, such as birdwatching and walking dogs, which contribute to a sense of well-being and active lifestyles. Families were each invited to plant a holly bush which they were encouraged to visit during the festive season.



NECF Case Study: Baltic Quarter, Gateshead

As part of the landscaping of the Baltic Quarter link road in urban Gateshead 187 extra heavy standard and semi-mature trees, 2308 whips, and over 11,000 shrubs were planted within a blue-green infrastructure corridor. Combining native broadleaf and conifer trees with ornamental planting, the landscape project will be valuable to both people and wildlife. The project was undertaken by Gateshead Council and the Northeast Local Enterprise Partnership.

Project Impact

Enhancing Wildlife: The new planting provides habitat for wildlife and enhances opportunities for biodiversity in the urban environment.

Alongside the trees, the landscaping includes meadow seeding, wetland meadow seeding and grass seeding, creating a diverse mix of habitats.

Natural Flood Management and Water Quality:

The tree planting forms part of an area of strategic and innovative blue-green infrastructure incorporating vegetated SuDS features which will contribute towards an improvement in the quality of surface water run-off from the new link road and neighbouring development sites.

Overview

- 187 trees planted
- 2308 whips planted
- 11000 shrubs planted



Public Amenity and Access: The development contains landscaped walking and cycling routes which will connect to the Gateshead Quays, as well as seating areas within the developing green space.

Contribution to Net Zero: The project will contribute to the council's aim to plant 100,000 trees by 2030 and increase woodland cover in the borough from 15% to 17% by 2050 (an increase of approx. 250ha).



Trees for Climate Case Study: Campbell Park, Hebburn, South Tyneside

In February, South Tyneside Council undertook tree planting of 2,600 additional trees within Campbell Park, Hebburn.

This was funded through the North East Community Forest and the planting was assisted by volunteers. The park was once the location of heavy industry and reclamation works to improve the site started in 1990 and this latest phase is to take the next steps in overall improvement to the parkland for community.

The additional tree planting is to increase the size of the existing woodland groups within the parkland, with the long term intention to unify the disjointed woodland groups together, to improve connectivity of the wildlife corridors and enhance biodiversity of the park for the long term environmental benefits for the community.

Overview

- 2,600 trees planted.
- Latest phase of work to improve the parkland for the community.





Trees for Climate Case Study: Urpeth High Handenhold, Durham

A new woodland area was planted at High Handenhold during winter/Spring 2023 with the grant support and guidance of the North East Community Forest.

The scheme was designed to follow the existing boundaries and to create a 'shelterbelt' with a path through the middle of the newly created woodland. The species choice was chosen through use of the Ecological Site Classification (ESC) to ensure that the correct species were chosen for the site and trees sourced from a local tree nursery.

Over 1600 trees were planted of which a large percentage of the species chosen were fruit/berry bearing trees. These were selected to encourage more biodiversity in the area and to encourage more bird life across the site. Three roundels were installed within the larger field to create future copse and shrub area and to aid the visual aesthetics of the site with these having apex species choice in the centre enshrouded by woody shrubs.

Overview

- Over 1600 trees planted
- Large percentage of fruit/berry bearing trees



“

As a landowner and one who loves animals and the outdoors, we wondered if there was some way we could use our land to improve the environment. With the help of Jack from Tilhil and a grant from Trees for climate we have been able to achieve our vision. With only the boundaries planted we have created a beautiful woodland walk. The field, previously used for hay, has been completely transformed and the amount of wildlife already attracted, grouse, pheasants, hedgehogs, butterfly's and moths has been phenomenal. We love the outcome so much it is our intention, with the support of Tress for climate and Tilhil to further transform our field into a woodland.

Nic Shaw (Landowner)

”



North East Community Forest Partners

Local Authority Contributors



Local Authority Supporter



Combined Authorities



National Supporters



Regional Supporters

