

# North East Community Forest



## Annual Report 2023/24



# Foreword from our Chair



We are absolutely committed to retaining, maintaining, and enhancing North East England's Woodlands, trees outside of woodlands, and hedgerows, which are the green lungs of so many of our communities.

Throughout the last year we have worked with a wide range of volunteers and partners to plant new trees so they can be enjoyed by people for years to come

The North East Community Forest (NECF) continues to make great progress in its goal to increase tree cover in Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and urban areas of County Durham. The recent planting season has seen us plant a further 239,916 new trees and 17.4 kilometres of hedgerows with in-hedge trees, over 117 sites, the 5th largest amount of hectares planted in the network of 15 Forests within the England Community Forest network.

We have further expanded with the introduction of The Tree Council, Tyne Rivers Trust, and Wear Rivers Trust to the North East Community Forest Partnership . It is fantastic to see the partnership grow and we look forward to working together alongside our other partners and valuable volunteers to continue our ambitious plans to retain, maintain, and enhance the regions treescapes, improve the natural environment, and create happier and healthier places for us all to live, work in and visit.

**R o s s   W e d d l e**

Chair, North East Community Forest

# 2023/24 planting season

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## Community Forest celebrates impressive growth

The North East Community Forest is celebrating the results of another successful tree planting season.

In the last year the Forest, made up of planting projects across Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and urban areas of County Durham have planted almost 300,000 trees.

This equates to an area of over 164 gross hectares, the 5th largest amount planted in the network of 15 Forests within the England Community Forest network.

A total of 17.4 kilometres of hedgerows were also planted with the support of over 2,124 volunteers from local communities across North East England.

The newly planted trees and hedgerows are estimated to capture approximately 50,872 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere over 30 years.

One of 15 Community Forests across England, the North East Community Forest is a multi-million pound project that has seen six local authorities join forces with environmental organisations to plant tens of thousands of trees across the region.

The forest works alongside its partners and valuable volunteers to continue its ambitious plans to plant thousands of hectares of trees to improve the natural environment and create happier and healthier places for everyone to live, work in and visit.

With years of experience and locally based support, the team helps communities, landowners and businesses to plan, fund and deliver tree and hedge planting projects of all sizes – from farms and private estates to parks and community spaces.

This is supported by Trees for Climate, a woodland creation programme managed by the North East Community Forest and funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (through the Nature for Climate Fund).

The North East Community Forest is also part of a wider success story for all tree planting in England over the past year, the last planting season saw tree planting rates increase by 52% from the previous year with 5,529 hectares of new woodland planted. This marks significant progress towards meeting the Environment Act target of achieving 16.5% tree and woodland cover in England by 2050.

Any landowners with land suitable for tree and hedge planting should contact the North East Community Forest by emailing [info@necf.org.uk](mailto:info@necf.org.uk).



# About the NECF

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The North East Community Forest is 1 of 15 Community Forests in England. England's Community Forests are positioned around England's biggest cities. For almost 30 years, they have been creating green infrastructure projects to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for millions of people.

Newcastle City Council (NCC) is the accountable body, fund holding authority, and employment authority of the North East Community Forest. The NECF is supported by a 'Forest Partnership' of local and combined authorities, charities and organisations. A dedicated 'Forest Team', employed by NCC, manage the programme.

## **What is Trees for Climate?**

Trees for Climate is a bespoke woodland creation funding programme only available within the Community Forest areas in England. It is part of Defra's Nature for Climate Fund which is a national Government scheme to support woodland creation and peat restoration in England.

## **What does Trees for Climate offer?**

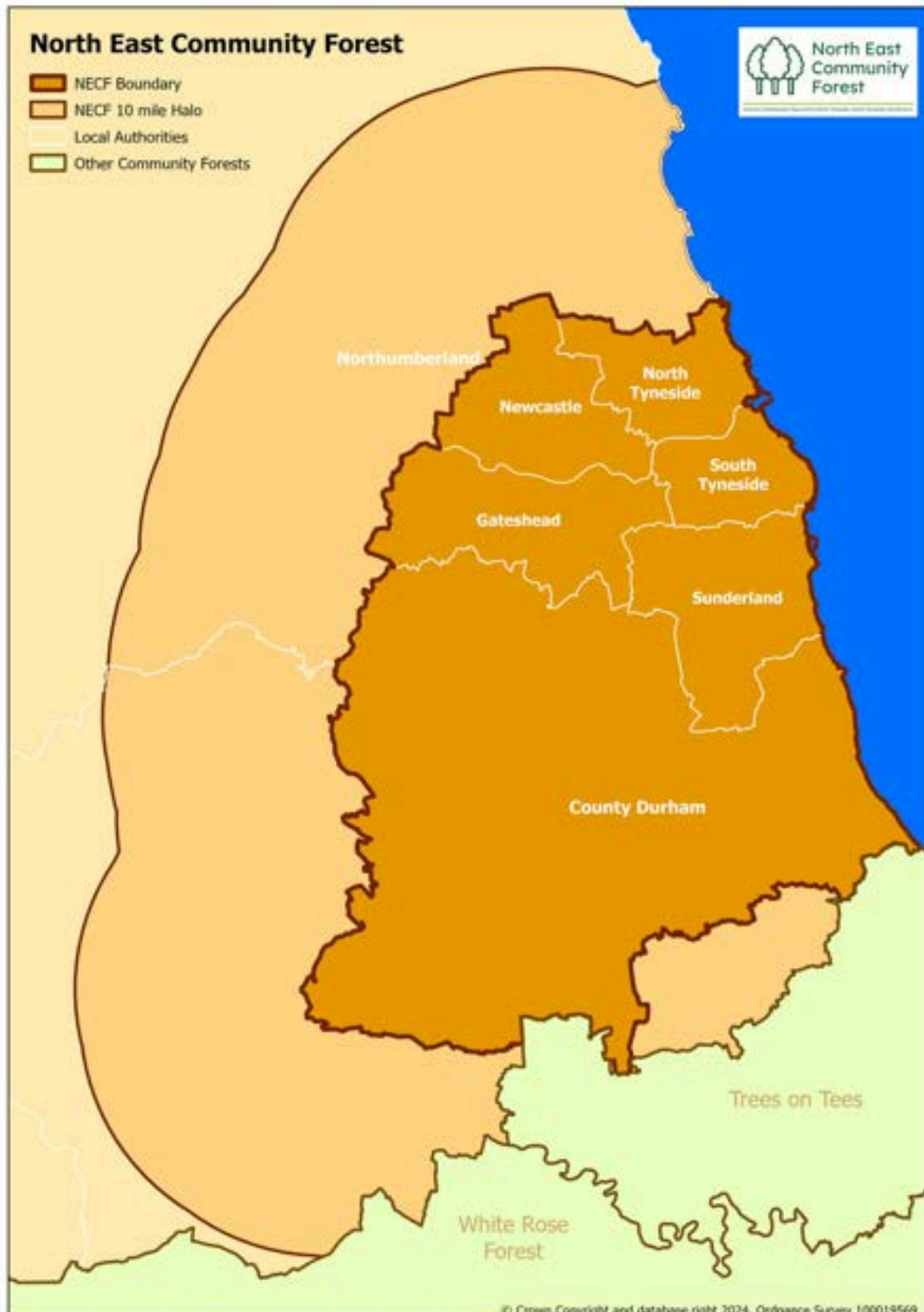
The grants offered through Trees for Climate are tailored to the landowner requirements and available for a large variety of projects. Our expert woodland creation team is here to provide landowners and land managers with free support and impartial advice to help plan, fund and plant tree planting projects of all sizes in the North East Community Forest area. Please get in touch via the contact details below to find out more.

## **How much grant funding is available through Trees for Climate?**

A Trees for Climate grant could cover all costs associated with woodland creation, for eligible projects, as well as providing ongoing funding to support the maintenance of the trees. Trees for Climate is one of the most flexible and competitive tree planting grants in England.



# North East Community Forest area



# Where is the North East Community Forest?

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The North East Community Forest was formally established on July 21 2021, after a successful expression of interest was made to both England Community Forests and the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It is overseen by the North East Community Forest Partnership, and a dedicated Forest Team, with Newcastle City Council acting as the accountable body, employment and fund holding authority.

**Location** The North East Community Forest (NECF) covers 1,503 square kilometres of North East England, including the entire geographical boundaries of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, and Sunderland, plus, the main urban areas of County Durham. The entirety of Durham is not included because England Community Forests cover urban or peri-urban areas (that is, immediately adjacent to a city or urban area), while the county also includes large rural areas. Furthermore, a 10mile halo to the boundary of the NECF includes the southern parts of Northumberland being located in the NECF wider boundary.

## **NECF events**

This planting season the Forest Team have attended a number of events to promote the work of their work and engage with the public. The team attended 5 agricultural shows over the summer, the annual England Community Forest conference in Bristol, and various training days and site visits with our partners.



# 2023/24 planting season

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163.98 of gross hectares planted



239,916 trees planted



17,447 linear meters of new hedgerow with in-hedge trees



117 sites with trees planted on



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



£3.4m of funding secured



Volunteer Planting events

- 97 volunteer tree planting events
- With 2,124 volunteers
- 20,335 trees planted by volunteers
- 5,147 hours of volunteer time planting trees
- 125 staff involved in facilitating the volunteer tree planting
- 30,825 people engaged in the overall 2023/24 NECF programme



50,872 tonnes of carbon dioxide captured from the atmosphere by year 30



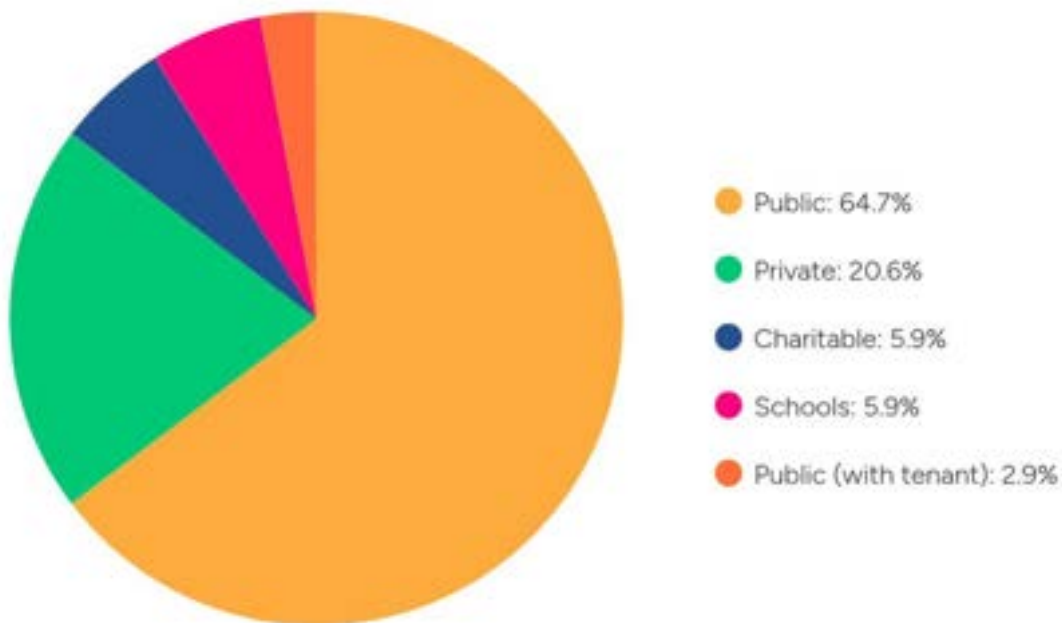
19.7 kilometres of new footpaths created within woodland creation sites



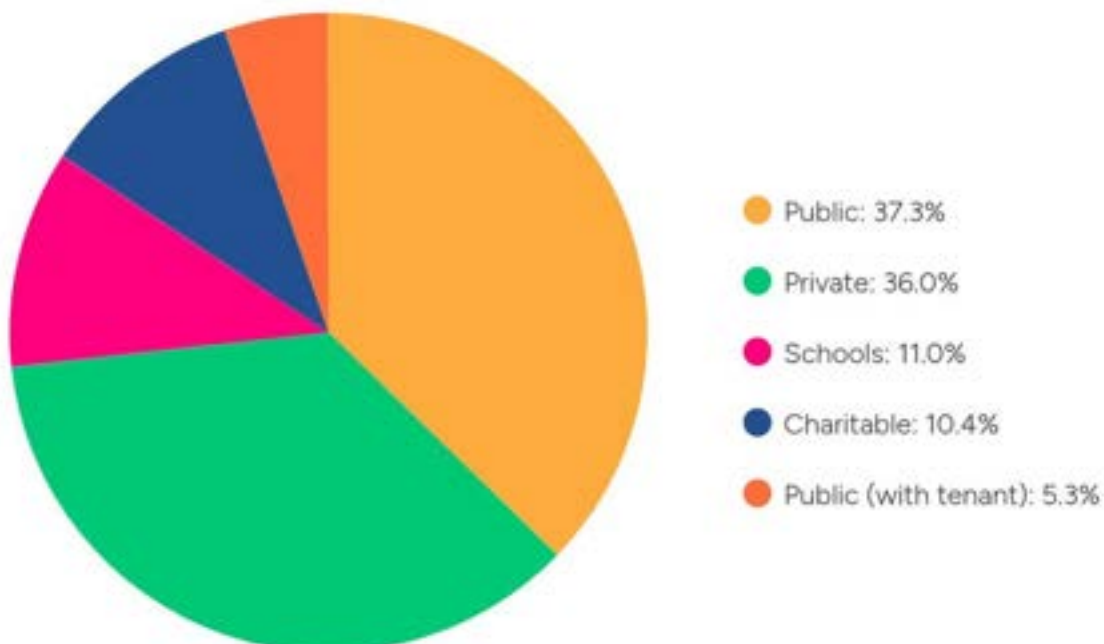
# 2023/24 planting season

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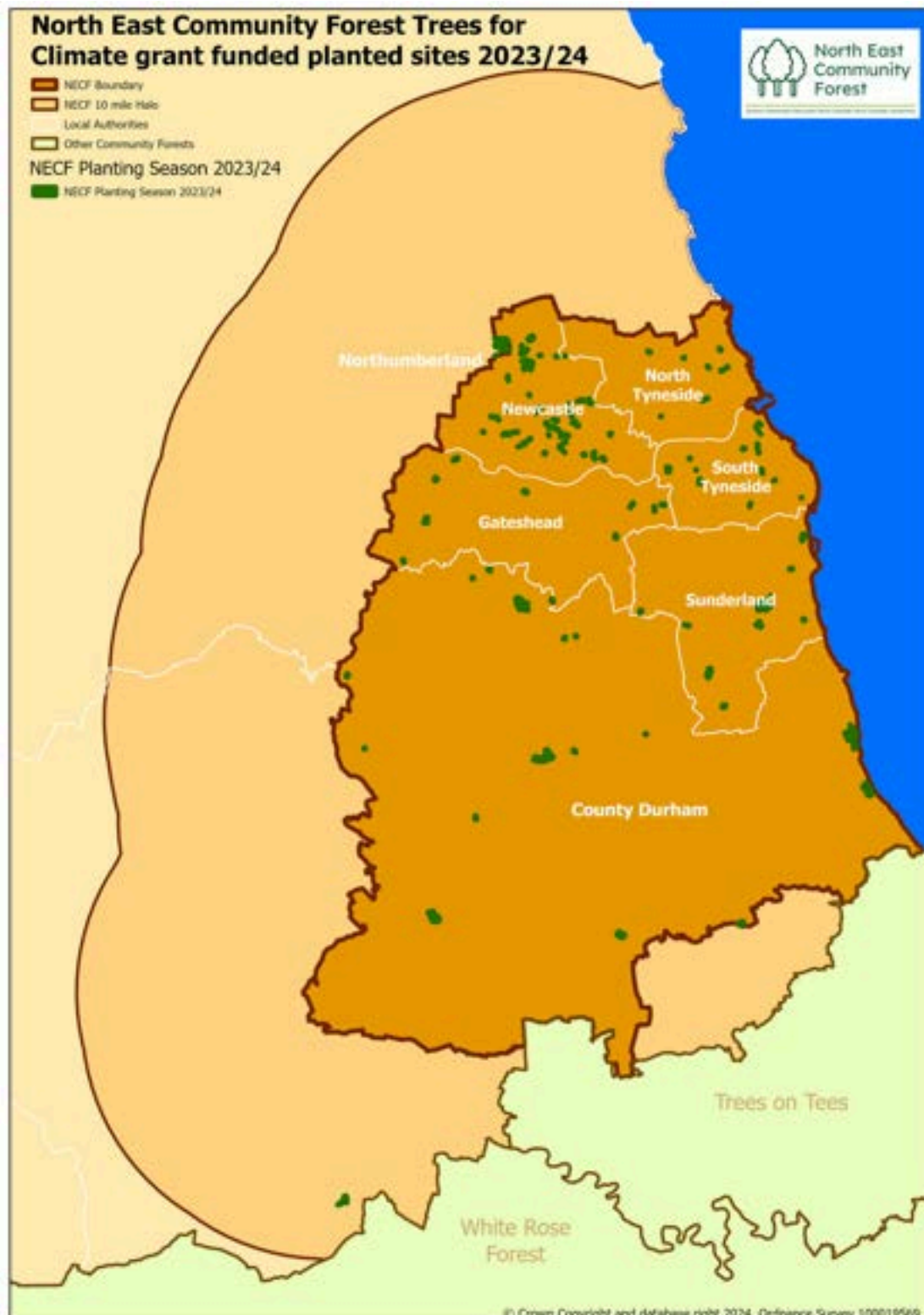
## Trees for Climate grant funded Landowner Type - No. of schemes



## Trees for Climate grant funded Landowner Type - Gross area

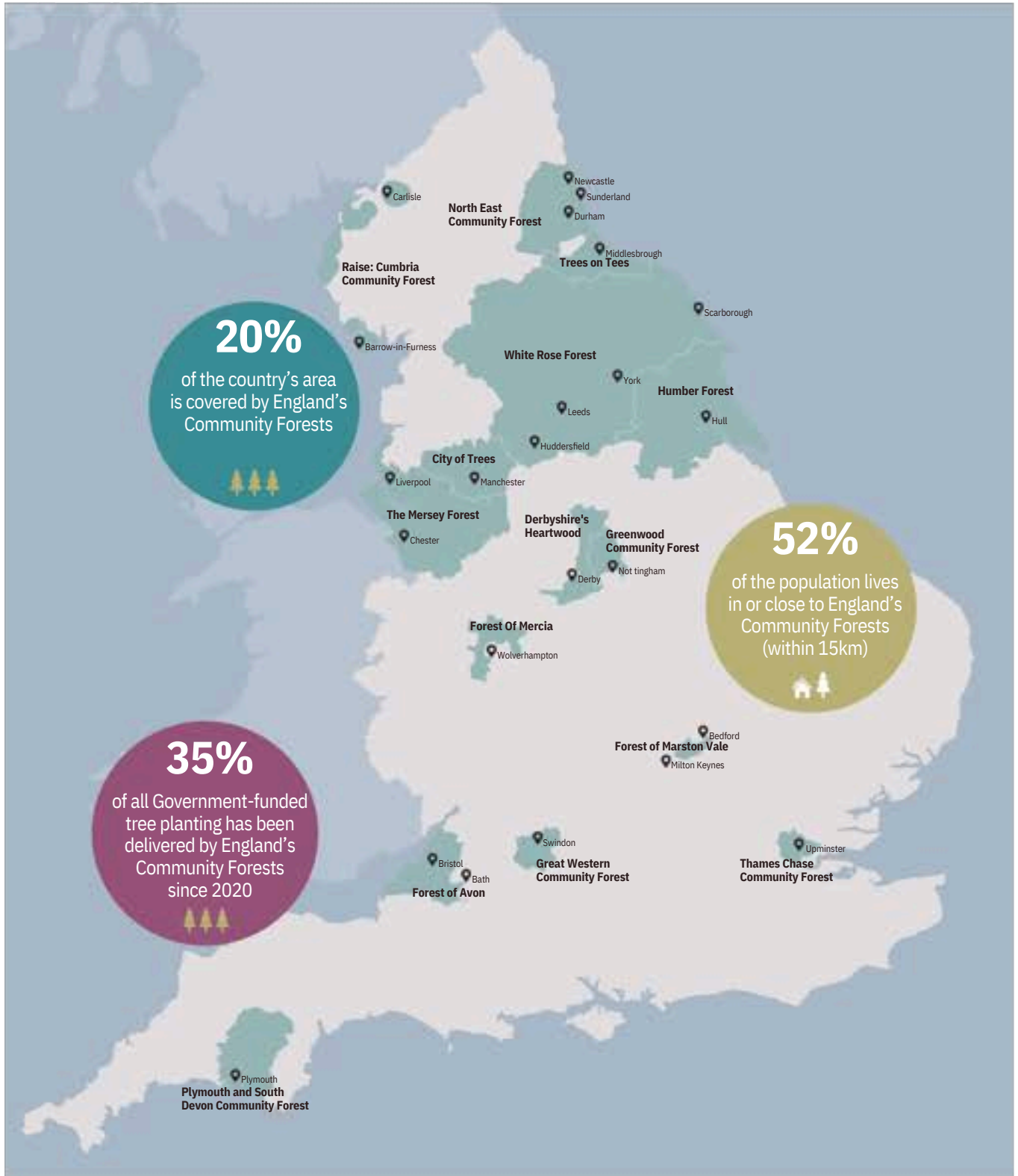


# 2023/24 planting season



# England's Community Forests

A flourishing network of 15 Community Forests, leading the country's largest environmental regeneration initiative



# Benefiting people and planet

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Through the planting of millions of trees, Trees for Climate is delivering on action to reduce the impacts of climate change, capture carbon and protect 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 is committed to:

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- 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)



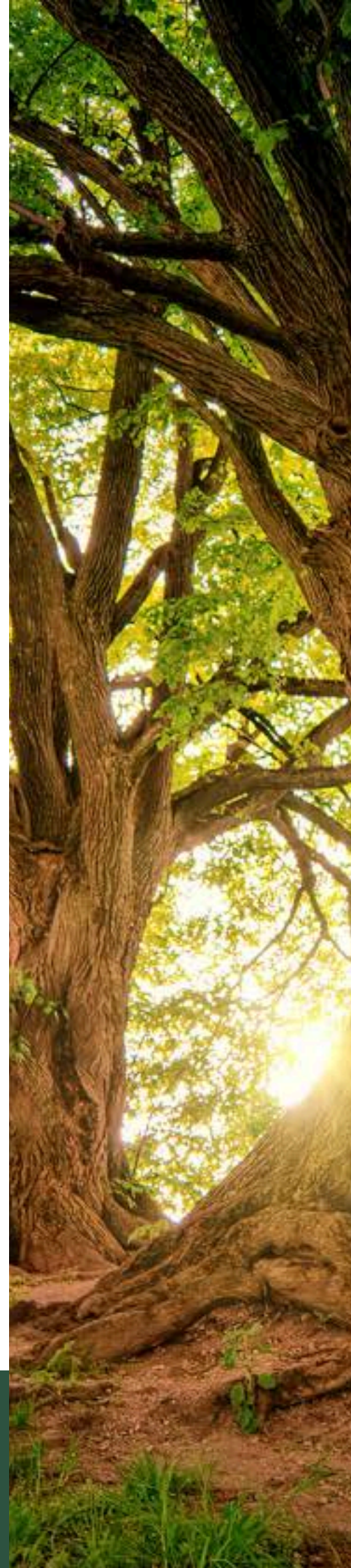
# Development of the North East Community Forest Plan

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The North East Community Forest Plan is a strategy document, which when developed, will be a material consideration on planning applications. The NECF Team have employed a dedicated Senior Woodland Officer, Kelly Graham, who is currently working with the NECF Team, stakeholders, the NECF Partnership, and most importantly local communities, to develop the Forest Plan. In summary, the Forest Plan will lay out our approach to:

- Nature recovery by protecting, improving, and connecting our woodlands, promoting habitat connectivity and species migration across North East England.
- How we best support landowners and farmers to improve their businesses and promote environmental benefits.
- Involving communities and businesses in creating healthy, accessible, green spaces to improve health outcomes.
- Identifying key landowners with whom we want to work with and important geographical target areas within North East England.
- Supporting natural flood management and processes to green our urban areas to create a more climate resilient and human-friendly living environment for all.
- Supporting local authorities and other landowners to manage and expand their tree stock.
- Attracting and shaping future funding options for woodland creation from Government and the private sector.

The Forest Plan will go out to public consultation to ensure everyone can have their say in retaining, maintaining, and enhancing our woodlands, trees outside woodlands, and hedgerows in North East England.



# Funding the NECF

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The six core local authorities (Newcastle, North and South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland, and Durham) have committed £75,000 a year towards the ongoing costs of the Forest Team, with additional staff funding provided from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). These monies then allow the Forest Team to secure and manage additional funding from a range of other sources, including grants, consultancy work, corporate social responsibility, carbon finance, unrestricted donations, and other innovative mechanisms such as through the planning system.

Most of the woodland creation, tree and hedgerow planting is possible thanks to the Trees for Climate grant, provided from Defra. However, in 2023/24 the Forest Team have been successful with attracting additional grant funding from Trees for Cities, the Tree Council, National Highways, and the Forestry Commission (Local Authority Treescape Fund Rnd 3). Furthermore, we have increased our work to attract finances through corporate social responsibility and unrestricted donations from residents and local businesses.



# Case Studies

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## Town Moor, Newcastle City Centre

Around 12,000 new trees have been planted on Newcastle's Town Moor as part of plans to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and make the city a greener, healthier and more attractive place to live and visit. The majority of these trees were planted by volunteers under the mentorship of Northumberland Wildlife Trust.



The North East Community Forest, along with the Freeman of Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Newcastle City Council, and other partners, were joined by hundreds of volunteers to plant 5.6 hectares of new woodland, 1.5km of hedgerow with in-hedge trees, wood pasture tree planting, a Miyawaki Tiny Forest, and biodiversity habitats, the equivalent to seven football pitches, on eight Town Moor sites across the city. The Town Moor is the largest green space in Newcastle city centre and is much loved by residents and visitors. Planting more trees on these sites brings people closer to nature and has a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing. Furthermore, the trees will provide shade for both people and grazing cattle and assist in mitigating flooding.

## Overview

- Total of 11,912 trees planted
- 1.7km of hedgerows with in-hedge trees
- 1.25ha of wildflower meadows
- Miyawaki Tiny Forest made up of 600 trees and shrubs



Watch the project video

# Case Studies

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## High Spen Park, Gateshead

Funded by Trees for Climate, this project consisted of planting an area of grazed grassland on the edge of High Spen village. 3,900 whips were planted across two fields and a hedgerow using tubes and guards, the fencing between the site and the adjacent farm was upgraded to be stockproof, and a ditch was created alongside the fence where a spring had previously flowed into the planting area, make the northern area inaccessible.

Three community days delivered in partnership with Durham Wildlife Trust engaged, High Spen Primary School, the wider community and families, and the Gateshead conservation volunteers.



These formerly grazed fields were planted up to become a new woodland, with improved public access, visual amenity, air quality, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration benefits.

A community consultation event took place in the early stages of design, allowing local people to have meaningful input and influence on the scheme. The design developed to maintain the existing Public Right of Way (PROW), while enhancing access and creating a walking route around both fields.

The planting mix was based on an oak woodland, with a wide diversity of species as a precaution against the potentially inhospitable ground conditions, and the changing climate. This consisted of a native broadleaf mix and a small number of yew and scots pine throughout the woodland compartments. In the wetter area of the northern field, an area was planted with water tolerant willow and alder. To prevent herbivore damage, 1.2m tubes and stakes were applied to each whip. The defunct fencing between the site and the adjacent farm has been replaced to ensure it is stock-proof, and a ditch created alongside this where the field was waterlogged from a spring in the hillside above.

A hedge was requested at the public consultation, to run along the boundary of the planting area and Park Cottage, to provide a degree of privacy from the path, this was planted by the local residents supported by the contractor.

# Case Studies

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## High Spen Park, Gateshead

Gateshead conservation volunteers began the planting, with Durham Wildlife Trust supporting GMBC to run two further engagement days: one with High Spen Primary School children and their families, and another with the wider community. Both days received positive feedback and interest in further opportunities to participate in the woodland establishment.

Going forward, the site will require regular cutting to keep vegetation down. After 5 years the tubes and stakes will be removed.

### Project impact

**Contribution to Net Zero:** 3,900 new trees will sequester increasing amounts of carbon as they establish.

**Nature and Biodiversity:** The new woodland will extend and connect existing fragments of broadleaf woodland, dramatically increasing the area of habitat with an additional 2.3 ha of woodland, and 0.91 areas of open space.

**Public access and community engagement:** Over 315 volunteers planted 800 trees: The children and families of High Spen Primary School, the wider community, and the Gateshead conservation volunteers were all engaged in the planting to develop a sense of ownership over the new woodland over 3 engagement days, supported by Durham Wildlife Trust.

**Employment and Skills:** The volunteering opportunities provided by the project offered participants the chance to develop green skills and awareness of career options in woodland creation.

**Health and Wellbeing:** This design creates a new walking route around the fields to extend the options for residents beyond the Public Right of Way (PROW).

## Overview

- 3,900 whips were planted across two fields
- Over 315 volunteers planted 800 trees
- Project will increase the area of habitat with an additional 2.3 ha of woodland

# Case Studies

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## Ouseburn, Newcastle

The project is in partnership with Newcastle City Council, Ouseburn Farm, Ouseburn Trust, and Northumberland Wildlife Trust and will see over 350 metres of hedgerows, in-hedge trees and a wood pasture planted.



The project has been made possible by funding from North East Community Forest, the Branching Out Fund from the Tree Council, and Trees for Cities - the UK's only charity working at a national and international scale to improve lives by planting trees in cities.

This first phase of plans for the valley's green spaces will enable Ouseburn farm to enclose grazing fields for livestock and create habitats which will provide shelter and abundant food sources for wildlife. It will also be an opportunity for the farm to test and learn from agroforestry techniques, integrating shrubs and trees into grazing land to improve productivity, boost livestock welfare and increase wildlife.

Northumberland Wildlife Trust are assisting with the planting along with volunteers from the Ouseburn volunteer group who will continue to care for the trees as they grow.

## Overview

- 350 metres of hedgerow
- 1400 new trees planted



Watch the project video

# Case Studies

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## Chollerford Avenue, Chirton, North Tyneside

Next to the busy Coast Road lies a strip of amenity grass, which was planted up with 650 young trees of species native to the North East. As the trees grow, they will help screen the busy road and reduce the noise of the nearby traffic.



The project was originally put forward by a resident. Woodland officers visited the site and saw the potential for tree planting to reduce the impact of the nearby Coast Road.

650 whips were planted parallel to the road and bookended by more mature, standard trees. Species included Oak, Silver Birch, Hawthorn, Sweet Cherry, and Field Maple. In collaboration with Northumberland Wildlife Trust, a community planting event was organised. Schoolchildren, teenagers from the Youth Council and the Young Mayor joined Elected Members, residents, and staff from North Tyneside Council and Northumberland Wildlife Trust, getting their hands dirty and planting the trees.

The trees will reduce the impact of noise from the Coast Road, remove carbon emissions and air pollution from the atmosphere, and help prevent flooding. Additional woodland will also increase biodiversity and enhance the aesthetic nature of the area.

### Project impact

**Contribution to Net Zero:** The 650 trees planted are expected to absorb over 180 tonnes of carbon over 100 years.

**Nature and Biodiversity:** The trees will help establish more interconnected natural corridors, facilitating wildlife movement and connectivity.

**Flood mitigation:** The trees will improve soil quality and help reduce surface water run-off.

**Health and Wellbeing:** The additional planting will cool the surrounding air temperature, making the area more comfortable for residents during summer. It will also help improve air quality as harmful pollutants from the road are removed from the air.

## Overview

- The 650 trees planted
- New trees are expected to absorb over 180 tonnes of carbon over 100 years.

# Case Studies

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## Newcastle Airport

The most recent phase of this ambitious woodland planting project was completed last month, with 17,000 trees being planted to create an additional 10.42 hectares of woodland – equivalent in size to around 14 football pitches.



The new woodland areas created by the planting project will form part of the North East Community Forest (NECF), with funding being provided by the scheme's 'Trees for Climate Grant' and facilitated by Tilhill Forestry, a member of BSW Group.

Trees for Climate is a Defra backed grant which is delivered through England's Community Forests, tailored to the tree planting needs of communities and landowners across both urban and rural areas.

Airport and community volunteers armed with wellies and spades also recently helped to plant a further 900 native bulbs and six large specimen trees at the Abbotswood area of woodland in Woolsington as part of a community planting day.

A new 142 metre access track will be installed at the site, alongside an interpretation board which will educate and inform visitors about the environment around them.

A total of 4.46 kilometres of hedgerow were also planted on Airport land in both Northumberland and Newcastle as part of the project.

Tilhill Forestry, the UK's largest forest management firm, was appointed as the forest agent for the project and was responsible for tree planting and maintenance.

## Overview

- 17,000 trees planted
- Will create an additional 10.42 hectares of woodland



Watch the project video

# Case Studies

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## Castle Square, Backworth, North Tyneside

Castle Square is a semi-rural area in Backworth which was identified as a prime location for more tree planting. The project delivered a small area of woodland which will help screen the nearby road and provide shelter for local wildlife. Over 40 volunteers helped plant 475 trees.



The area surrounding Castle Square has been impacted by Ash Die Back, a disease which affects ash trees and often requires them to be felled. This project brings more tree planting to an area where the natural landscape has suffered.

475 native whips were planted by volunteers to create a small woodland. Over 40 local people turned up to event, hosted by Northumberland Wildlife Trust. Species included Oak, Hazel, Silver Birch, and Guelder Rose.

### Project impact

**Contribution to Net Zero:** The 475 trees planted are expected to absorb over 150 tonnes of carbon over 100 years.

**Nature and Biodiversity:** The trees will help establish more interconnected natural corridors throughout North Tyneside, facilitating wildlife movement and connectivity. This will support our Biodiversity Action Plan.

**Flood mitigation:** As climate change brings about more intense rainfall, the trees will improve soil quality and help reduce surface water run-off. The site is prone to waterlogging which will be mitigated by the additional planting.

**Health and Wellbeing:** The additional planting will cool the surrounding air temperature, making the area more comfortable for residents during summer. It will also help improve air quality as harmful pollutants from the road are removed from the air.

## Overview

- Over 40 volunteers helped plant 475 trees.
- The trees planted are expected to absorb over 150 tonnes of carbon over 100 years.

# Case Studies

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## Ushaw Historic House, County Durham

An historic North East landmark is going greener by planting thousands of new trees throughout its estate.

The new woodland areas – equivalent in size to around 21 football pitches – will be created at Ushaw Historic House, Chapels & Gardens, which sits in the heart of the County Durham countryside.



The areas will comprise of 24,524 new trees and land which will be retained as open space.

Volunteers from the local community will help plant the new trees alongside forestry management specialists Tilhill Forestry.

The project has been made possible thanks to funding from the North East Community Forest and support from Durham County Council's Durham Woodland Revival (DWR) project, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

The DWR project has been working with Ushaw since 2022 to assess their existing woodlands and to organise the new 15-hectare (37 acre) woodland planting scheme.

The team at Ushaw will also be running community engagement dates throughout March. Through this programme, Ushaw wants to involve people in woodland maintenance with the goal that people can learn about the establishment of woodland and be part of a sustainable future.

## Overview

- 24,524 new trees planted
- New woodland areas will be the equivalent in size to around 21 football pitches

# Case Studies

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## Doxford Park, Sunderland

The grounds of the former Silksworth House now form a public park (called Doxford Park) which also forms part of a wider Conservation Area. The 10-hectare site is lovingly cared-for by the Friends of Doxford who are helping to restore key features and uplift the park in a variety of ways, including the provision of orchard trees and specific areas for flora and fauna.



Trees for Climate funding has been used by the City Council and NECF to work with the Friends' to design additional enhancement measures, providing 60 public realm coniferous and deciduous trees that increase the tree canopy and follow the ornamental design of the historic parkland, plus almost 0.5 hectares of wildflower meadow creation on key grassland areas.

This project supports the excellent ongoing work of the Friends of Doxford Park, who continue to maintain and uplift the park and work closely with the local community to retain a park that the community can be truly proud of. Additional key benefits from this scheme include:

- Additional carbon sequestration from longer living trees species and wildflowers.
- Nature and biodiversity enhancement for birdlife, wildflower grassland, diversity of woodland and woodland fungi.
- Help to store water and reduce flooding as the park stream links to the Hendon Burn, that flows through the centre of the city.
- Enhancement of walking routes providing increased seasonal interest in the spring and autumn.
- Supporting better physical and mental health, particularly to nearby residential areas with higher levels of social deprivation.

## Overview

- 60 public realm coniferous and deciduous trees planted
- Almost 0.5 hectares of wildflower meadow creation on key grassland areas.

# Case Studies

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## Dinnington, Newcastle

The recreation ground in Dinnington has recently undergone improvement works to refurbish the children's play area, install a fitness and activity trail and a new mini soccer area with goals. These improvements to the space were developed in consultation with the Parish Council, Dinnington First School and the local Scouts, Beavers and Cubs groups.



The local community wanted to see more trees planted to provide seasonal interest through blossom and autumn colours. The children of the scout groups were very environmentally aware and were keen that new trees should include native species and varieties that would contribute to improving the bio diversity of the area by providing food and shelter for local wildlife.

The scout, beaver and cub groups involved in the project have helped to choose the trees and took part in a planting event on Saturday 16 March. This was all positive work towards their environmental badge award. The planting sessions were facilitated by Northumberland Wildlife Trust and taught the children new skills in handling the plants, digging and preparing the planting pits, planting and securing the trees with a stake and guard.

The recreation ground will see 139 trees installed. These include 64 larger trees to provide a Cherry Blossom Avenue which will bring a new pop of colour to the space, and 5 donated by a local resident who has grown them in his own garden.

The tree planting has been funded through the North East Community Forest Trees for Climate grant which includes for 3 years maintenance of the trees.

## Overview

- 139 trees installed.
- These include 64 larger trees to provide a Cherry Blossom Avenue

# Case Studies

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## Ryhope Junior School, Sunderland

Ryhope Junior School lies within the village of Ryhope, in the southeast of Sunderland. In 2023, the school were looking at ways to further improve tree cover and wildlife in their school grounds that would help to inspire their pupils and support green infrastructure learning in the school curriculum. Sunderland City Council has worked closely with the school and the North East Community Forest to bring this project to fruition.



### Key features include:

- Standard trees along the entrance into the school, including scented small-leaved lime trees.
- 47 linear metres of mixed hedge along the school boundary to support wildlife and increase school ground privacy.
- 2 small areas of whip planting on a steep bank that leads down to the football pitch.
- 6 orchard trees and 3 standards within a 'garden classroom' area.
- 8,000 bulbs planted within the orchard area.

### Project impact

There was great support from school pupils, who helped to plant the bankside whips. The pupils form a school group known as 'Ryhope Rangers', who recently received a 'Highly Commended' Award for Young Environmental Champions at the Sunderland Young Achievers Awards.

Additional key benefits from this scheme include:

- Additional carbon sequestration from trees and wildflowers.
- Nature and biodiversity enhancement for birdlife and insects.
- Orchard trees that will produce fruit for school/pupil use.
- Supporting better physical and mental health of schoolchildren.
- Supporting environmental knowledge within the school curriculum.

## Overview

- 47 linear metres of mixed hedge planted
- 2 small areas of whip planting
- 6 orchard trees and 3 standards within a 'garden classroom' area.
- 8,000 bulbs planted within the orchard area.

# Case Studies

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## South Causey Inn, County Durham

The new woodland will bring people closer to nature, provide a safe haven for wildlife and help the region tackle climate change.

To launch the project, the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, Michael Poole, joined the North East Community Forest, volunteers and partners to plant a silver birch tree on the land on April 17.

Over the coming weeks, more trees will be planted by volunteers during sessions organised by Durham County Council and the sustainability education specialists Oases North East.



It's been the ambition of the owners for a long time to convert the land which has been farmed and used for grazing for many years back to its original biodiverse and eco-friendly roots.

The 35ha of new native woodland at South Causey in the former Durham Coalfield will bring a host of environmental benefits, not only to the land itself, but also to the adjacent ancient woodlands.

Woodland species, many of which are UK priority species for conservation, will be able to expand their range into the new woodlands, assisting in their protection and survival.

The project is being delivered by the NECF in partnership with the Woodland Trust and RDI Associates.

Scottish Woodlands has been appointed as the forest agent who will be responsible for the tree planting and maintenance of the project.

## Overview

- 35ha of new native woodland



Watch the project video

# Case Studies

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## New Tiny Forest's in NECF area

Project to plant eight Tiny Forests across the region gets underway. The “Miyawaki” Tiny Forest initiative will see almost 5000 trees and shrubs planted.

The initiative is led by Earthwatch Europe and the North East Community Forest in partnership with the local authorities in Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside, and Sunderland, further supported by Living Woods, the Freemen of Newcastle upon Tyne, and Urban Green Newcastle.



The Tiny Forests are based on the ‘Miyawaki Method’, which uses species of trees that would occur naturally in an area and that work together to create a diverse, multi-layered forest community. The trees are densely planted to encourage growth.

The Tiny Forests provide local wildlife and the community with a new area of woodland to enjoy. Each Tiny Forest is approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>, the size of a tennis court.

Local communities will be invited to plant, maintain and monitor each forest over time with the aim of reconnecting people with nature and raise awareness of climate change.

The expansion of the project follows the successful planting of Tyne and Wear’s first Tiny Forest in March 2023.

## Overview

- Each of the Tiny Forests is approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>



Watch the project video

# Case Studies

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## Wrekenton Allotments, Gateshead

NECF Trees for Climate and Trees for Cities funded the creation of an urban woodland in Wrekenton, Gateshead: 2,500 whips were planted across a 1.44 ha area of unmown rank grassland, maintaining access to informal path network around the site.

Planting was undertaken by children and families from Felldyke Primary School, and the Built and Natural Environment team from Gateshead Council, followed up by contractors.



A scheme was designed and planted to transform this area of unmown grassland and ruderal into a woodland. The woodland creation project will not only sequester carbon and improve habitat and biodiversity but will also create an improved green space and visual amenity for local people.

A native broadleaf mix of 2,500 cell grown and bareroot whips were planted, with an emphasis on flowering trees, such as bird cherry and wild cherry. The trees were mulched; however, no tubes were used as the likelihood of heavy browsing in such an urban area is low.

Felldyke Primary School engaged really positively with the project, and 25 children and parents/carers came out for an educational session supported by Durham Wildlife Trust and planted over 150 trees in one afternoon. This was in addition to planting undertaken by a group of volunteers from Gateshead Council who also came out for a morning to help out. The remaining planting was finished off by contractors.

Going forward, the paths will continue to be cut to encourage walking on the site, and hopefully engagement can be increased in the beat-up years to involve an even wider group of the community.

## Overview

- 2,500 new trees which will sequester increasing amounts of carbon as they establish.
- 1.44 hectares of new woodland
- 25 local school children and their families participated in the planting

# Case Studies

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## Oakleigh Garden Playing field, South Shields

The site is in an exposed location overlooking South Tyneside and the Tyne Valley to the West, within the site is the only council owned and maintained cricket pitch and a group of 15 public allotments. The local Friend's group and the Councils Grounds Maintenance supervisor worked closely together to improve the site, and jointly developed the idea of planting a hedgerow to improve the wildlife connectivity with the existing hedgerow east and west of the site.



The Ward Councillor, Friends Group and the Grounds Maintenance Team approached the Councils Tree Team seeking support for the project to plant the hedgerow. The Tree Team, with the assistance of the North East Community Forest (NECF), developed the planting plan to have a mixed species British native hedgerow with individual trees identified within it to be allowed to grow to full size. The area to be planted was covered in Bramble and some old builder's rubble, so this was cleared by the Ground's Maintenance team in preparation for the planting. The Council used their internal tree works contracts to supply the trees and utilised an agreement the NECF set up with Durham Wildlife Trust to deliver the planting days.

### Project impact

Planting the 600 trees that made up the boundary hedge, will help towards the Councils Net Zero targets.

The hedgerow planting involved the Park Friends Groups and Local Ward Councillors, along with some volunteers.

The addition of the hedgerow adds to the canopy cover and improves the wildlife connectivity of the area.

The project also supports one of the major parts of the Councils five core values, based on giving the opportunities for its residents to be Healthy and Well Throughout Their Lives.

## Overview

- 600 trees that made up the boundary hedge
- Planted to improve the wildlife connectivity with the existing hedgerow east and west of the site.

# Case Studies

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## Fishburn Woodland Park, County Durham

The new woodland sees 3500 saplings planted of which 199 were planted by school children from 2 local schools. This included 129 children and 18 adults. A new 1.4 hectare sized, broadleaved woodland is being planted in 2.3 h area of Public open space that lies close to the villages of Fishburn. A new woodland park sits within a closely mown dog walking area that is located in an otherwise wooded landscape.



The woodland park approach will help create a more attractive and varied landscape which will also be good for improved biodiversity. The latest chapter in the recovery of this area from its much earlier use as a site for coal mining and coke production and hence, offering improved access to the countryside and green spaces.

The project is a part of the Durham County Council, Woodland Creation programme aimed at planting 140,000 new trees across 70 hectares of publicly owned land in 5 years. It is a part of the Trees for climate initiative which sees tree planting as one of many activities contributing to reducing the County Council's carbon footprint. The funding comes from a variety of initiatives but is primarily funded by the North East Community Forest programme.

### Project impact

**Nature and Biodiversity:** Biodiversity lift for 1.4 hectares of land from a species poor grassland to a broadleaved woodland with corresponding gains for invertebrates and ground flora.

**Flood mitigation:** Reduced run off rates from green field to woodland rates if retention.

**Public access and community engagement:** Liaised with local people and local schools, parish councillors, the Brightwater Partnership .

**Innovation:** the scheme has been designed to allow good access for local people incorporating a good internal network of paths and wildflower planting, designed to make a very attractive and ideal venue for future events.

**Health and Wellbeing:** The site lends itself to increased outdoor activity of a formal and informal nature.

## Overview

- 3500 saplings planted
- 1.4 hectare sized, broadleaved woodland planted
- Approximately 340 tons of Carbon locked up over the next 40 years

# Case Studies

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## West Park South Shields

It was decided to improve the wildlife connectivity of the site and that introducing new hedgerows would be the best way to this. West Park Shields has mixed areas with a formal treeline frontage that includes bandstands and bowling greens, tennis courts, along with play areas and open grass fields further into the park. To the rear of the park there is an area of woodland with some veteran trees within it with a scrub understory.



The Friends of the park had been working with the Grounds Maintenance (GM) teams to establish a meadow grass area towards the north side of the park. The Friend's group and the Council's Grounds Maintenance supervisor worked closely together to develop the idea of planting four different sections of hedgerow to improve the wildlife connectivity with the existing woodland to the west of the site. The Ward Councillor, Friends Group and the Grounds Maintenance Team approached the Council's Tree Team seeking support for the project to plant the hedgerow. The Tree Team with the assistance of the North East Community Forrest (NECF) developed the planting plan to have a mixed species British native hedgerow with individual trees identified within it to be allowed to grow to full size. The Council used their internal tree works contracts to supply the trees and utilised an agreement the NECF set up with Durham Wildlife Trust to deliver the planting days.

### Project impact

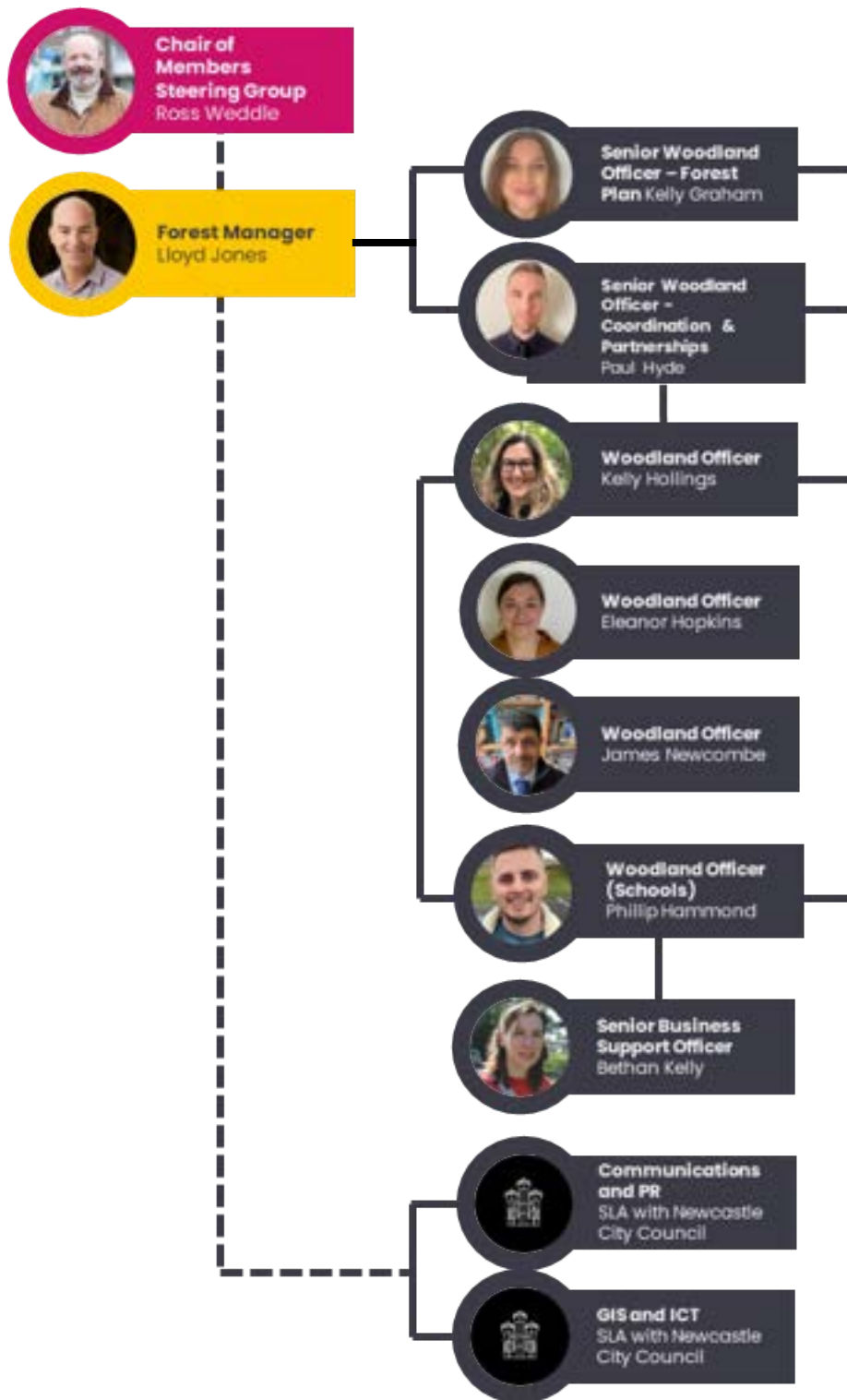
Planting the 1,000 trees that made up the hedge, will create new wildlife habitats. The hedgerow planting involved the Park Friends Groups and Local Ward Councillors along with volunteers.

The hedgerow adds to the canopy cover and improves the wildlife connectivity of the area. The improvement to a greenspace also aligns with one of the Council's five core values, based on giving the opportunities for its residents to be Healthy and Well Throughout Their Lives by providing quality natural greenspaces to improve physical and mental wellbeing.

## Overview

- 1000 trees that made up the hedge
- Creation of new wildlife habitats, canopy cover and an improved green space for residents

# NECF Staff Structure



# North East Community Forest Partnership

## Local Authority Partners



South Tyneside Council



## Local Authority Supporters



## Combined Authority



## National Partners



## Regional Partners

