

North East Community Forest

Annual Report 2021/22

62.16 hectares

Made up of:

79,503

new trees



3,215 linear metres of new hedgerow

with hedgerow trees



16 hectares

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



113 sites

where trees, woodlands or
hedgerow have been planted



About the project:

19,282 tonnes

of carbon dioxide captured from the atmosphere by year 30



£926,367

funding secured



22 events

engaging with the community to
volunteer planting trees



Introduction

Almost 80,000 trees have been planted across the North East in five months to help tackle the climate crisis, wildlife loss and bring people closer to nature.

A total of 62.16 hectares of land were covered by the North East Community Forest during the 2021/22 planting season – well exceeding the initial target of 25ha.

The 79,503 new trees, 16 hectares of open space and 3,215 linear metres of hedgerows will capture 19,282 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

It is part of the North East Community Forest's long-term goal to increase canopy cover across Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, Sunderland and parts of County Durham by 2050.

When fully planted, the trees, woodlands and hedgerows are expected to capture 155,100 tonnes of carbon dioxide, equivalent to the emissions from the energy needs of 30,000 homes in a year.

Since its inception, which was supported by £480,000 from Defra's Nature for Climate Fund, the initiative has secured additional funding of £300,734 from the Local Authority Treescape Fund, £75,000 from the LA6 councils, £70,633 from Trees for Cities and backing from the Queen's Green Canopy initiative, for which Newcastle is a champion city.

Volunteer Planting events



22 volunteer planting events



with 593 local volunteers



10,190 trees planted by volunteers



1,740 of hours of volunteer time



“Trees for Cities, the only UK charity working at a national and international scale to improve lives by planting trees in cities, was delighted to partner with the NECF team, LA6 councils, Northumberland and Durham Wildlife Trusts, Forestry Commission and Living Woods North East in supporting a large number of volunteer tree planting events. Collectively, we got stuck in with local communities to cultivate lasting change in their neighbourhoods – whether it was revitalising forgotten spaces, creating healthier environments or getting people excited about growing, foraging and eating healthy food. All the planting will contribute to a cleaner and greener North East.”

Roddy Shaw, Senior Partnerships and Development Coordinator for Trees for Cities

North East Community Forest Launch Event, 2 February 2022

The North East Community Forest was officially launched with the planting of a ceremonial tree at Newcastle City Council's Civic Centre.



The oak tree was planted in the grounds of the Civic Centre by delegates from local councils and combined authorities and pupils from Westgate Hill Primary Academy.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, Susan Winfield, also presented a plaque to celebrate Newcastle being crowned a Queen's Green Canopy Champion City.

The delegates were joined by the wider North East Community Forest Partnership organisations, including the Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Forestry Commission England, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the

National Trust, Trees for Cities, Tilhill, The North East England Climate Coalition, North East England Nature Partnership, Defra (Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs), and Groundwork.

As proud delivery partners of the North East Community Forest initiative, a delegate from the Freeman of Newcastle upon Tyne, Urban Green Newcastle and Newcastle International Airport were also present on the day.

Regional Launch events

To celebrate the launch of the North East Community Forest and the Queen's Green Canopy, which is a tree planting initiative created to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, each of the six local authorities planted a ceremonial tree to mark the occasion. Representatives included the Lord and Deputy Lieutenant of Tyne & Wear, councillors, school children and council officers.

Newcastle City Council



North Tyneside Council



Gateshead Council



South Tyneside Council



Sunderland City Council



Durham County Council



Trees for Climate Case Study, Newcastle

Newcastle International Airport



“These new native woodlands will increase connectivity and enhance the landscape around the airport while significantly contributing to the aims of the new North East Community Forest.”

Graeme Mason, Chief Sustainability and Communications Officer at Newcastle International Airport

Newcastle International Airport is unique among UK airports in that it has an extensive landholding well beyond the terminal, airstrip and associated infrastructure. As part of this Trees for Climate funded project, more than 8,000 native trees and shrubs were planted, covering just under six hectares, in partnership between the North East Community Forest and the airport.

The woodland will deliver a number of benefits, including landscape and water quality enhancement, flood risk reduction and carbon sequestration as the site becomes successfully established.

Summary of the project

The locations of the new woodlands, on agricultural land owned by the airport and managed by a farming tenant, were selected to complement, link and expand existing native woodland habitat. Over time they will increase biodiversity value, enhancing both species and structural diversity and improve the resilience of woodland across the property.

The airport team engaged Tilhill, a leading woodland management company, to apply for Trees for Climate funding, undertake stakeholder consultation and to design, plant and maintain the scheme in-line with their objectives which were to maximise environmental benefits. The planting has been registered under the Woodland Carbon Code and will sequester hundreds of tonnes of carbon as the trees become established. It will also contribute significantly to the creation of the North East Community Forest and help to deliver government policies under the England Trees Action Plan. Among the



species of trees planted were aspen, downy and silver birch, Wych elm, hornbeam, small leaved lime and field maple.

Project impact

Natural flood management and water quality: The planting will make a positive contribution to the river catchment by helping to reduce flood risk, improve water quality, protect riparian zones and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Enhancing wildlife: This planting increases biodiversity, particularly within the edge habitats, providing habitat for insects, invertebrates and mammals.

Contribution to Net Zero, health and wellbeing: The woodlands have been registered under the UK Woodland Carbon Code and will sequester hundreds of CO2 equivalent tonnes for the benefit of UK and global populations as they mature.

Trees for Climate Case Study, North Tyneside

North Tyneside Council, Henley Gardens, Wallsend

Henley Gardens in Wallsend overlooks a large area of amenity open space, which is separated from the A19 by a linear group of mixed species trees. Not only does the new tree planting meet the aims of the North East Community Forest but the new North Tyneside Tree Planting Strategy too.

The aim of the new tree planting is:

- To promote conservation and biodiversity
- Help reduce the risk of flooding
- Improve the visual amenity of the local area and provide opportunities for recreation



Summary of the project

The Council identified the site for potential planting to increase the existing buffer between the residential area of Henley Gardens and the A19. After liaising with local residents about the plans, the Council planted 1200 trees, with the planting works being completed in March 2022. The new planting has helped improve the visual aesthetics of the local area as well as helping to filter pollutants from the busy A19 and attenuate noise. The planting will also provide additional habitat for biodiversity within a wildlife corridor.

Project impact

Public access and management: The site is not enclosed so the public have full access. The woodland planting has been set slightly away from the existing tree belt maintaining a grass strip so that residents can continue to walk in a dramatically improved landscape improving health and wellbeing. This informal footpath will eventually become part of a woodland walk.

Enhancing wildlife: The area of amenity open space is located within a wildlife corridor as defined by the Council's Local Plan. The planting will contribute to targets within the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to increase habitats of value for wildlife and biodiversity. It will also help enhance the quality and connectivity of the wildlife corridor for a range of species including bats, birds and small mammals.

Contribution to Net Zero: The creation of a North East Community Forest is an important strategic objective in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and this project supports that aim. This project will be measured for carbon offsetting as part of the Council's emerging offsetting strategy.

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 where they can benefit from interacting with each other and with animals, such as birdwatching and walking dogs, which contribute to a sense of wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Trees for Climate Case Study, Gateshead

Gateshead Council, Whitehills Community Woodland

A new community woodland has been created on the site of a former colliery in an area of low canopy cover. Located in urban Gateshead, around six hectares of new native broadleaved woodland has been created and complements areas of existing tree planting and wildflower grassland. Over 11,500 trees were planted as part of a wider programme to deliver environmental improvements, including resurfacing over 2km of footpaths, boundary improvements and the installation of access furniture and signage.



Summary of the project

The planting of six hectares of broadleaved woodland comprising of a varied and attractive mix of native tree and shrub species, incorporating wide woodland rides and areas of wildflower grassland. Created on the site of a reclaimed colliery in the urban east of the borough, the project delivers a wide range of environmental and social benefits. The design, development and delivery of the project has been undertaken with substantial input from the local community.

Public access and management: The site provides open public access and is served by an extensive network of footpaths. The site is owned and managed by Gateshead Council.

Enhancing wildlife: The new woodland lies within a strategic wildlife corridor and provides enhanced opportunities for biodiversity and ecological connectivity.

Contribution to Net Zero: As part of its response to the climate emergency; the new woodland makes a significant contribution towards the Council's aims of planting 100,000 trees by 2030 and increasing woodland cover in the borough from 15% to 17% by 2050 (an increase of approx. 250ha).

Engagement, health and wellbeing: Extensive community consultation and engagement has seen large numbers of people take an active role in the design, development and delivery of the project. The site offers extensive opportunities for local people to enjoy and benefit from regular contact with trees and woodland.

Innovative delivery practices: The Council commissioned Living Woods North East Community Interest Company (CIC) to deliver the project, including undertaking the neighbourhood consultation, woodland design, environmental impact assessment, community planting days, establishment and aftercare.

Employment and skills / a reduction in reoffending: The project is providing local people with the opportunity to learn new skills. Physical measures and increased positive use of the site is helping tackle misuse and anti-social behaviour, including motorbike disorder.

Trees for Climate Case Study, South Tyneside

South Tyneside Council, Jubilee Wood, Jarrow

Jubilee Wood is an area of mixed woodland adjacent to the River Don, Jarrow Slake and in the shadow of St Paul's Church and the cultural and historically important site of St Bede's Monastery.

To mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, dignitaries and members of the public, including children from local schools, planted specimen trees to the south of the site. These trees have since thrived and planting has continued over the years to include memorial trees marking significant events, such as the anniversary of D Day.



It is fitting that in the year of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and the formation of the North East Community Forest, the site has been further enhanced with this programme of tree planting.

Summary of the project

The project included the planting of 15 standard trees within the site, giving extra species diversity and structure to the existing stand. In addition to supplement this planting, over 500 mixed native species whips were also planted.

The trees were planted over the winter in 2021 and spring this year and the planting was supplemented with some volunteer planting, where residents provided and planted 70 trees, including some with local provenance.

Project impact

Public access and management: Jubilee Wood is fully open to the public and can be accessed from several entrance points, with a network of informal paths running throughout the site. The site is popular with a broad mix of users and the newly planted trees will add to the sylvan nature of Jubilee Wood and the benefits it provides to the public.

Resilience: The diversity of species mix will add to the resilience of the woodland, making it less susceptible to the effects of climate change or increased tree disease.

Enhancing wildlife: Adding to the existing tree stock will provide valuable habitat for breeding and roosting and dispersal to connecting habitats.

Contribution to Net Zero: The creation of a North East Community Forest and the planting schemes implemented within South Tyneside help meet important strategic objectives in the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, such as 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 where they can benefit from interacting with each other and with animals, such as birdwatching and walking dogs, which contribute to a sense of wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Trees for Climate Case Study, Sunderland

Sunderland City Council, Elemore Park, Hetton-le-Hole

Elemore Park is the site of a former municipal golf course which closed in 2019. It is being transformed into a country park and wildlife area, together with community-led facilities including a café and garden centre. It is located at Easington Lane, Hetton-le-Hole, Sunderland, and close to the County Durham boundary.

As part of the overall redevelopment, Trees for Climate funding has enabled more than 15,000 tree and shrub plants to be planted, providing wooded areas and greenspace across nearly seven hectares of land. Key features include:

- 4.5 hectares of new woodland (which includes a 1.36km length of new hedgerow)
- Wildflower seeding throughout the woodland and new greenspace.

Summary of the project

More than 15,000 native trees and plants have been planted at the former Elemore golf course in Hetton-le-Hole to support a new community facility. Once complete, the 'Elemore Green Space and Social Enterprise Development' - led by the Elemore Park project - will be home to social enterprises developing training opportunities, including a café and a garden centre, a visitor and exhibition centre highlighting the local area history, together with wildlife and woodland for people to enjoy.

Local community involvement is key to the site's regeneration. Cllr Claire Rowntree, deputy leader of Sunderland City Council and ward councillor for Hetton, said: "We've been working closely with residents over the past 18 months or so to shape our plans to transform the golf course site into Elemore Park, which will not only see the area restored to its natural beauty, but also become a popular destination where residents can meet and socialise."

Project impact

Public access and management: There will be full site access to 60 hectares of greenspace and in time the new woodland will incorporate woodland walks as well as wildflower meadow for people to walk through, help to maintain and enjoy.

Enhancing wildlife: The new woodland, hedgerow, wood and wildflower meadows will support local wildlife and link into other on-site wetland and acid grassland, which is planned for enhancement. The site will help to improve the wildlife corridor that runs through the site following the local Magnesian Limestone Escarpment.

Contribution to Net Zero: The tree, hedge planting and wildflower grasses enhance carbon storage and sequestration on site.



Engagement, health and wellbeing: The creation of a high-quality country park and wildlife area will support active lifestyles and better wellbeing. The Elemore Park project will also include social prescribing and opportunities to get involved in future site maintenance.

Employment and skills / a reduction in reoffending: A Trust is being created to manage and maintain the site, which will include opportunities for local residents to become involved through job creation as well as decision-making. The community building will be run by a not-for-profit co-operative creating employment opportunities for vulnerable adults with disabilities.

The tree species to be planted at Elemore Park are a representation of British native species that both complement the existing trees and improve the biodiversity of the woodland. They include common oak, Scot's pine and field maple, silver birch, downy birch, common alder, holly, hazel, rowan, small-leaved lime, wych elm, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, guelder rose and crab apple.

Trees for Climate Case Study, County Durham

Durham County Council, Drover's Wood, Consett

Durham County Council has been working with the community and partners to create new woodland on a site near land once occupied by the famous Consett Steel Works in County Durham. The area where planting has been taking place was subject to low intensity farming but in recent years has been largely abandoned. As part of the process of reclaiming the valley from its industrial past, the creation of Drover's Wood will complement large areas of new woodland already established in recent years. The planting of this woodland consists of broadleaved trees with a mix of conifers. A large proportion of the field will be left unplanted in anticipation of natural regrowth, which will retain and increase biodiversity.



Summary of the project

Drover's Wood was selected for Durham County Council's Woodland Creation Programme due to its industrial past. Similar projects have taken place recently in the area in partnership with the Woodland Trust which have been successful in recovering the landscape.

Through maintaining views of key historic landscape features and taking a thoughtful approach towards the accessibility of the woodland, Drover's Wood will serve the community by meeting people's increased desire to spend more time outdoors and include walking as a regular activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

With 3,047 new trees planted across one hectare of this five-hectare site, including a mix of tall and shorter tree species, the new woodland will provide shelter and new food sources for wildlife such as birds, bats and invertebrates. It will feature grass paths and viewpoints for the public to access the woodland, helping to support their wellbeing through spending time in the natural environment.

The involvement of the community has been an integral part of the woodland creation process. Members of Castleside community and the local woodland trust have been key participants, as well as several local schools who have been involved in planting days. The planting sessions have been delivered through partner organisation OASES which specialises in these activities.

Project Impact

Natural flood management and water quality: The creation of Drover's Wood will help retain water within the landscape, slowing down run-off and helping to improve water quality and natural flood management.

Public access and management: The land is owned by Durham County Council and adjoins land leased to the Woodland Trust. The creation of Drover's Wood will help increase the quantity and quality of public walking areas in the valley.

Enhancing wildlife: The site will help to increase biodiversity levels as Dover's Wood by linking two existing woodlands. The new tree planting will create habitat and feeding opportunities for a wide range of wildlife to flourish, which will be supported by the areas left for natural regeneration.

Contribution to Net Zero: With 1.9 hectares of new woodland as well as another three hectares of regeneration, this site is expected to absorb up to 800 tonnes of carbon over the next 40 years.

Engagement, health and wellbeing: With an active Woodland Trust volunteer group in the area, coordinated by a resident of the nearby estate, much of the future maintenance will be carried out by the local community which already cares for the woodlands nearby. The inclusion of local people in much of the tree planting will also help encourage participation and maintenance in years to come.

Innovative delivery practices: Three schools in the area were engaged by OASES to carry out six planting events on the site. This helped plant over 200 trees and gave nearly 200 children the opportunity to learn about the importance of combatting climate change.

Employment and skills / a reduction in reoffending: The contractor that was involved in the project, Microsite Ltd, demonstrated a positive employment strategy to create jobs for this project.

North East Community Forest Partnership

Contact the North East Community Forest Team at Northeastcommunityforest@newcastle.gov.uk
Find out more by visiting www.newcastle.gov.uk/northeastcommunityforest.

Local Authority Partners



Combined Authority Partners



National Partners



Regional Partners

