



## **Second round of Urban Tree Challenge Fund opens today**

30 March 2020

The Forestry Commission today (Monday 30 March) opens round two of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, which is for community and volunteer groups, town councils and individuals to apply for a share of the £10million pot to increase tree numbers in urban areas through small scale planting projects.

Launched in May 2019, the Urban Tree Challenge Fund aims to support the planting of more than 130,000 trees across England's towns and cities.

This announcement of round two opening follows the success of round one, which saw thirteen large scale projects from local authorities and large organisations awarded grants to plant more than 50,000 trees in urban areas.

Planting more trees improves health and wellbeing, connects people with the outdoors, absorbs noise, reduces flood risk, cools temperatures through shading, and creates green spaces to help communities come together.

Successful applicants of round two will not start planting trees until the next planting season (winter 2020/21).

Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith, said:

Our immediate priority is rightly our response to the challenges posed by the coronavirus. But, although these are unprecedented times, we want to continue to uphold the nation's commitment to the environment.

We have made sure that the applications for round two of the Urban Challenge Tree Fund can be completed online so individuals are not putting themselves at risk, and I encourage anyone thinking of applying to do so in a safe way, using digital platforms to plan their application with colleagues if necessary.

Our manifesto sets our ambition to have every new street lined with trees – and I am dedicated to working closely with the Forestry Commission to help make this vision a reality.

The scheme is being administered by the Forestry Commission, with applications for single planting projects of between 150 and 5,000 small trees invited. Applications that contain 500 or more trees are especially encouraged. Grants will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

The grant will be delivered as a challenge fund, and therefore requires 50% match funding from those who apply, through either money or labour.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley, said:

The value of trees in urban areas cannot be underestimated. They provide homes for birds and other wildlife, offer shade and natural cooling effects, help to reduce flood risk, and provide huge benefits for our health and wellbeing.

I've already visited several successful projects from round one, from the Mersey Forest to Manchester City of Trees, and have seen first-hand the great work that has been achieved so far through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. The reopening of the fund will build on the success of round one, and will add to the 50,000 urban trees already awarded.

Community tree planting is a great passion of mine, and I greatly encourage local volunteer groups and individuals to apply.

The scheme will support projects which can provide the greatest environmental and social benefits, and applications will be processed by the Forestry Commission. A map will be available to check eligibility before applying.

Councillor Rob Anderson, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport and Environmental Services, Slough Borough Council, is one of the successful bidders from the first round, and said:

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund is a fantastic opportunity for Slough. Having already planted Oak, Rowan, Lime, Pine and Spruce we are eagerly awaiting the time when the plant material reaches a level of maturity so we can all enjoy the new plantations.

The new planting will mean improvements relating to air quality, greater natural flood management, temperature reduction for high density urban areas and increased carbon capture.

Earlier this month, Defra and the Forestry Commission welcomed the new £640million Nature for Climate announcement from HM Treasury which will help to deliver against the manifesto commitments to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025, alongside peatland restoration and nature recovery.

The government is committed to growing woodland cover, and this spring will consult on a new English Tree Strategy looking at policies to expand, support and increase engagement with our woodlands.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/second-round-of-urban-tree-challenge-fund-opens-today>