

Application Guidance

National Highways 3 Million Trees Project

Free Trees

England only

the
tree
council

 **national
highways**

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Programme overview

National Highways has pledged to donate up to 600,000 trees annually and plant 3 million trees by 2030 in communities across England.

We are helping National Highways to gift the trees to places where they can have the most impact. The initiative demonstrates how low carbon initiatives can benefit both nature and communities.

The trees are being grown at Greenwood Plants, West Sussex, and are from British-sourced seed, are 100% peat free and Plant Healthy certified.

What you can apply for:

A selection of tree species, with orders of between 500 - 50,000 whips per application

Planting locations:

Projects must be in England only

Round 1 closing date:

31 July 2025



Eligibility

To be considered as a recipient of free trees, an application must first meet all of the following core eligibility criteria.

Each project must:

- be in **England**
- be '**not for profit**'
- demonstrate an **aftercare plan** for the trees
- plant in **publicly accessible, publicly visible, or community-used spaces** to ensure broad benefit

Each applicant must:

- hold **public liability insurance** for planting
- have **written permission to plant** on the site(s)

We welcome applications from:

- Local authorities
- Charities & other NGOs
- Community groups
- Education institutions
- Individual landowners
- Farmers
- Private sector organisations incl. care homes



[View example case studies](#)

What we are looking for in a project

We are looking to support well-planned, tree planting projects that will directly benefit people, communities and wildlife.

We would love to support all applicants, however tree stock is limited and so projects will be assessed and scored more highly if they align with the key criteria below:

- Clear community benefit and involvement, such as volunteering, education, or wellbeing initiatives
- Improvements in biodiversity at the planting site
- Clear understanding of site suitability for tree planting, based on site-specific considerations
- Thoughtful tree selection following “right tree, right place” principles, supported by a detailed planting plan
- Contribution to climate resilience (e.g. riparian planting, sustainable drainage in urban areas)
- Close proximity to the National Highways network
- Comprehensive establishment and aftercare plan, including a commitment to maintain the trees and site for a minimum of three years
- Willingness to provide content for external communications purposes
- Commitment to participate in monitoring and evaluation activities post planting

Tree order and delivery

This programme focuses on establishing trees using a range of tree species and planting types including (but not limited to) Miyawaki forests, agroforestry, orchards, hedgerows, riparian and parklands.

Orders must be between 500-50,000 whips, with requests for specific species in multiples of 25.

Availability is dependent on stock, which is subject to change, however we will communicate any updates from the nursery as soon as we can.

Whip sizes will vary, however minimum heights will be 40cm. Tree species likely to be available (subject to change):

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| • Alder buckthorn | • English oak | • Norway maple | • Sweet chestnut |
| • Aspen | • Field maple | • Privet | • Sycamore |
| • Beech | • Hawthorn | • Rowan | • Wayfaring tree |
| • Blackthorn | • Hazel | • Sessile oak | • Wild cherry |
| • Crab apple | • Holly | • Silver birch | • Yew |
| • Downy birch | • Hornbeam | • Small leaved lime | |
| • Elder | • Midland hawthorn | • Spindle | |

We can only provide trees available from our Greenwood Plants stock list. In the event that the supply of a species is exhausted, we can only offer substitution from the available stock list.

Your application

How to submit an application

All applications must be submitted via our online form, which you can access below.

Before you begin, please take a moment to read the **General Tree Planting Guidance**. It offers a helpful overview of key considerations when planning your Tree Council-funded tree planting project.

To support your preparation, we've provided an **overview of the questions** included in the application form. You can view this on our website. Please note: not all questions will apply to every applicant, as they depend on the funding route you're applying under.

 [Click here for application form](#)

 [Click here for guidance & templates](#)



Your application - cont.

Preparing to apply

Before you begin your application, we recommend having the following information and documents ready:

- Maps and planting plans (more info below)
- Completed Tree Order Sheet with tree species listed (more info below)
- An overview of your planting project and what you hope to achieve
- Photos of your site(s), showing the current condition (max 5 per site)
- Details from your pre-site assessment and an outline of your planting methods
- Your plans for post-planting care, including who will be undertaking the work
- Evidence of permission to plant (e.g. lease, letter from landowner). If still pending, please note that we will require evidence of permission before releasing any funds
- Any additional information you'd like to share, such as expert involvement or planned partnerships

Helpful tips

- **Save your application regularly.** Each time you click save, you'll receive an email with a link to return to it later
- **Be concise and clear.** Each response box has a word limit of 200, unless otherwise specified. Aim to use plain English and answer as directly as possible
- **Name your files clearly.** When uploading documents (e.g. photos, maps), ensure each file is clearly labelled so we can easily identify what it relates to
- **For planting across multiple sites:** the form can accommodate details for up to five planting sites (e.g. five different farms in your county). If your project includes more than five sites, please contact the grants team, as you may need to complete more than one application form or supply your information in a different format



[Click here for templates & guidance](#)



Mapping & planting plans

Providing a planting plan is important, as it helps us understand what you are intending to do. It also helps you to calculate required tree numbers by visualising your site with the new trees.

It is best to treat the creation of the map as an aid to planning your required tree numbers and relationships. Please provide a 'to-scale' plan showing tree or hedgerow planting. This should include:

Map details

- Indicate scale and North point
- Ensure spacing is clear; exact placement isn't needed for large-scale planting

Tree details

- Individual and orchard trees – please provide individual positions (points)
- Tree groups (where densely planted), tree numbers, species, and numbers (polygon)
- Hedgerows (planting a 2–3 staggered line) will mean you need approx. 5–6 plants per metre (line).

Mapping & planting plans - cont.

We have three ways you can share your planting plans with us

1. Google MyMap

We prefer applicants to provide a site plan(s) for your planting project(s) using a Google MyMap as it helps to measure out your site and a planting officer can collaborate with you on the design. Please click here for a [Google MyMaps](#) example. A video tutorial to assist you in using Google MyMaps can be found here: [Tutorial](#). If you need further support, please get in touch with the grants team.

2. Hand drawn / scanned map

If you don't have access to a computer or are worried about using online mapping - a hand drawn plan is sufficient as long as it's to scale and we can clearly see your planting plan.

3. QGIS/ArcGIS

For larger organisations and other organisations with advanced mapping facilities, we can receive files from your own system in the following formats: .kml .shp or .csv (UTF-8). This must include tree details (species, numbers listed above).



Key dates & information

- **31 July 2025**, midnight - Deadline for the first round of applications
- If the available trees have not all been allocated, a second application window may open but this is not guaranteed
- **Mid - end September 2025** - Applications will be reviewed after the submission deadline, with application decisions announced approximately 6-8 weeks after the closing date
- This is a competitive process; applications that align closely with the programme criteria will score more highly
- If your application is successful, you will receive an Award Letter. Please note that trees are not confirmed until a signed agreement has been exchanged
- **December 2025 - February 2026** - Trees delivered, we will liaise with successful applicants and Greenwood Plants to ensure delivery at a suitable date
- **1 March 2026** - All tree planting to be completed, wherever possible
- **31 March 2026** - Project completion report and supporting documents to be submitted no later than this date



Contact us

If you have any questions related to your project, the application form, or anything else, please don't hesitate to get in touch with The Tree Council team. We're happy to help!

The best way to reach us is by email:

grants@treecouncil.org.uk

A member of the team will reply to you as soon as possible, and if necessary, we can organise a call to discuss your project in more detail.