

Press release

Government launches Tree Planting Taskforce to oversee planting of millions of trees across our four nations

The Taskforce will strengthen collaborative working across the UK to improve tree planting and ensure the long-term survival of woodland.

From: **[Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)** (</government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>), **[The Scottish Government](#)** (</government/organisations/the-scottish-government>), **[Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(Northern Ireland\)](#)** (</government/organisations/department-of-agriculture-environment-and-rural-affairs-northern-ireland>), **[Welsh Government](#)** (</government/organisations/welsh-government>), **[Forestry Commission](#)** (</government/organisations/forestry-commission>) and **[Mary Creagh CBE MP](#)** (</government/people/mary-creagh>)

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Image credit: Defra

- Forestry Minister Mary Creagh hosts new Tree Planting Taskforce to oversee tree-planting across the UK.
- Taskforce brings together ministers from across the four UK nations, key forestry delivery partners and arm's-length bodies.
- Forestry leaders to provide oversight, share best practice and identify shared blockers and barriers to tree-planting.

A new Tree Planting Taskforce has been launched today to oversee the planting of millions of trees across the UK (Thursday 28 November).

The Taskforce, chaired by the forestry ministers from the four nations, brought together representatives from key arm's-length bodies and delivery partners from across the UK.

Top of the agenda at the meeting was how to drive forward the UK's tree planting in order to meet our collective net zero targets, as part of the Government's critical mission to make the UK a clean and green energy superpower.

The UK has less tree cover than almost anywhere in Europe and more work is needed to close this gap. Our nation's woodlands and trees are the heart of communities around the UK, essential to supporting wellbeing and improving quality of life, alongside providing sustainable timber and being home to some of our most important species.

The Taskforce is designed to strengthen collaborative working across the UK, identifying opportunities to work together, to improve tree planting and ensure the long-term survival of woodland, safeguarding their benefits for future generations.

Forestry Minister Mary Creagh said:

“This Government was elected on a mandate to protect and restore nature.

“That is why today I am proud to fulfil our promise to set up a Tree Planting Taskforce that will oversee the planting of millions of trees across our four nations.

“Trees deliver huge social, environmental and economic benefits – from absorbing carbon dioxide, cooling our cities, improving wellbeing and helping reduce NHS costs, while a thriving forestry sector supports green jobs and drives economic growth.”

Richard Stanford, Chair of the Forestry Commission said:

“There has never been a more crucial time to take action to increase and improve the number of trees, woods and forests growing across the UK

for future years. It is vital that our four nations unite and work in partnership on this mission.

“This new Tree Planting Taskforce, is committed to delivering the shared aims of forestry across the four nations so we can continue to tackle some of society’s biggest challenges with thriving trees, woods and forests.”

Scotland’s Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon said:

“I welcome the formation of this Taskforce as we all have a collective interest in increasing woodland cover and obtaining the multiple benefits this will bring, especially for climate change and addressing biodiversity loss.

“Currently Scotland has delivered around 75% of all new woodlands in the UK. In 23/24 we created 15,000 ha of new woodland and this accounted for over 50% of the UK target. Whilst this is a substantial contribution, we know there is potential for us all to do more.

“The new Taskforce will be a great opportunity for all the countries to share valuable insights and ideas to expand our woodlands and create resilient forests for the future.”

Northern Ireland Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir said:

“I welcome the establishment of a Tree Planting Task Force across the UK and believe that the Taskforce represents a powerful vehicle to facilitate collaborative working to achieve our challenging tree planting targets.

“The work of this taskforce will be pivotal to finding ways to encourage a greater level of tree planting to deliver on climate change goals, enhance our biodiversity and underpin the sustainability of forests and woodlands for successive generations.”

Deputy First Minister for Wales with responsibility for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Wales was one of the first nations in the world to declare a climate emergency and we welcome the opportunity to be members of the UK Tree Planting Task Force.

“Forestry is a devolved matter, but we all face some common challenges and there are clear benefits to sharing good practice between nations. We want to continue to make it easier for landowners in Wales to plant trees in ways which both add value to their businesses and help us tackle the climate and nature emergencies.

“Creating green jobs and growth in our rural communities is a key priority for us, and a prosperous trees and forestry sector alongside a thriving agricultural sector is crucial to this. That’s why I’m delighted that we’ll be publishing a consultation on a Timber Industrial Strategy for Wales in the new year. I’m looking forward to the task force helping us deliver on our commitments for Wales.”

The announcement today comes after a commitment in the Budget to provide up to £400 million in England across the next two years (2024/5 and 2025/6) for tree planting and peatland restoration.

This Government is delivering its promise to protect and restore nature. It has launched a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to ensure we meet our legal targets, including the Environment Act target of 16.5% tree cover by 2050.

It has also pledged to restore our place as an international leader on nature and climate - recently announcing the next steps towards meeting the international target of 30% of our land and seas protected for nature by 2030 and appointing the first ever Special Representative for Nature.

Notes to editors:

List of attendees:

- Defra Minister for Nature, Mary Creagh
- Deputy First Minister (DFM) for Wales and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies
- Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon Northern Ireland Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir
- Representatives from Forestry Commission, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Forestry, Northern Ireland Forest Service
- Representatives from England’s Community Forests, Community Forest Trust, National Forest Company, Woodland Trust, Confor
- Government officials

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