

2021-22 Tree Planting Season Progress Report



WEST MIDLANDS
Greener Together



Background

The West Midlands Virtual Forest was established as part of the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA's) work to deliver its climate change and environment programme. Tree and hedgerow planting is an important part of improving biodiversity, absorbing carbon and creating beautiful green spaces for all people across the region.

We wanted a way to bring together the efforts of the tree planting groups across the region, recognise and celebrate the hard work that is taking place by volunteers and communities who get the trees in the ground and encouraging others to get involved. The Virtual Forest is an online platform to give visibility to these projects and programmes.

There is a lot of work still to do, but this report celebrates how far we have come since January 2020. **At the time of writing 213,985 trees have been planted and registered on the Virtual Forest.** These are mixed native species being planted in all parts of the Combined Authority area.

Whilst we know this is not all the trees planted in the West Midlands, we are working to encourage as many people as possible to register their trees so we can continue to see progress and provide support for the organisations and groups that are working hard to create a greener West Midlands.

www.wmvirtualforest.co.uk





Andy Street, Mayor of West Midlands and Chair of West Midlands Combined Authority

“It is wonderful news that, as a region, we have now planted over 200,000 trees since January 2020.

This is not only essential work in support of our net zero by 2041 target but is also hugely welcome given the great benefits we all derive from trees – cleaning our air, making our neighbourhoods more beautiful, and helping us to tackle the climate emergency.

I've had the chance to attend numerous tree planting events across the West Midlands this season and I very much look forward to continuing these as we begin planning for the next tree planting season in October. I commend everyone involved for their brilliant collective efforts to improve our natural environment and help protect, restore and enhance our communities.

For more information and to get involved, I encourage local residents to visit the Virtual Forest website and join in with all of our tree planting activities.”

L/R Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, Cllr Heather Timms, Warwickshire's portfolio lead on climate; Kristie Naimo, director at ARC (Achieving Results in Communities) who manage the Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm, Radford.

Partners

The following partners were involved in the establishment and support delivery of the West Midlands Virtual Forest initiative.



If you are interested in becoming a partner contact WMVirtualForest@wmca.org.uk

Virtual Forest by numbers

Since January 2020, WM Virtual Forest progress in numbers...

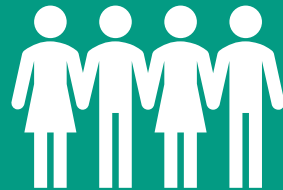
213,985
trees planted



1.4km
of hedgerows
planted



47 organisations
registering
trees



**Absorbing CO₂ &
protecting wildlife are
the main reasons for
planting**



The benefits of trees

Our local Environment

Trees can reduce airborne particulate matter by between 9% and 24%, and can cool an urban area by 2°C.

On average, one broad leaf tree will absorb in the region of 1 tonne of carbon dioxide during its full life-time (approximately 100 years).

Leaves of road-side trees are so good at absorbing pollution that they've even been shown to halve pollution levels inside the home.

Trees intercept rainwater, reduce flood risk and improve water quality by filtering out pollution. Interception by leaves and stems can reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground by as much 45%.

Biodiversity

Just 13% of the UK's land area is covered by trees. In the UK 1 in 3 woodland species are in decline and 1 in 10 are at risk of extinction.

In England, native woods and trees support a fifth of the UK's Priority Species for conservation.

Oak trees support 2,300 species, 326 of these species depend entirely on oak for their survival and 229 are rarely found on other trees other than oak.

Wellbeing

Hospital patients with a view of trees have been shown to recover more quickly & need fewer painkillers than similar patients who can't see trees from their beds.

People who live in tree-lined streets are less likely to be prescribed anti-depressants, and there's lots of research to show that trees improve our physical health too.

Economy

Houses are worth more and sell more quickly on streets with trees. A view of a natural landscape added up to 18% to a property's value, and homebuyers would be willing to pay £7,680 per household for views of broadleaved woods.

40% increase in commercial trading rates after investment in well planned greenspace

10-50% increased willingness to spend on products whilst in the presence of street trees in central business districts

Case Study

Heart of England Forest

The Heart of England Forest is proud to be a Midlands based charity, working with our local communities to create and conserve a magnificent 30,000 acre broadleaf forest that will benefit the environment, wildlife, and people for generations to come.

The Forest stretches up the Warwickshire/Worcestershire border and currently covers a mosaic of habitats across 7,000 acres of land, including 4,450 acres of new woodland and 600 acres of beautiful, mature and ancient woodland. Tree planting on this scale makes a significant positive environmental impact, creating a huge carbon sink and helping to mitigate climate change.

Over the duration of the Heart of England Forest project, they have planted two million native broadleaf trees, however, to achieve their 30,000 acre goal, they will plant 13 million trees in total. Tree planting on this scale makes a significant positive environmental impact, creating a huge carbon sink and helping to mitigate climate change.

A new commercial tree nursery being established in Luddington will grow 2.5 million trees a year and will run as a social enterprise staffed by adults and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

To find the Heart of England Forest visit www.heartofenglandforest.org



Case Study

New Trees and Hedgerow in Luddington Parish

In November 2021, Luddington Parish Council Climate Emergency Working Group commissioned the planting of approximately 140 metres of mixed native hedge and three Sorbus Lutescens (Whitebeam) trees along the boundary of a wide pathway that runs between Manor Field and All Saints Church.

This permissive path is used regularly by walkers accessing the riverside marina and lock and so the planting can be enjoyed by all those passing on their way to the river. It is also an attractive and ecological way of creating a barrier to prevent sheep in the adjoining field from escaping.

It is hoped that the trees and hedge will encourage biodiversity. The hedgerow of hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, hornbeam and crab apple will increase diversity of plant species and create vital new habitat for wildlife birds, insects and small mammals. Its blossom and flowers will attract pollinators such as honeybees.



Right Tree, Right Place

In February 2022, the West Midlands Combined Authority launched its 'Right Tree, Right Place' initiative, encouraging people to think about the types of trees they were planting and where they were planting them.

This campaign was developed on the advice of regional tree planting groups. A guidance document was developed for homeowners to provide information on trees suitable for gardens, including the space they would need and how tall they would grow. This is available on the WM Virtual Forest site.



Launch events

To publicise the Right Tree, Right Place guidance, the WMCA ran three tree giveaways, working with the Woodland Trust. The events were run to test how successful an initiative like this might be with a view to running a much bigger event in the 2022/23 tree planting season. The events were held:

At The Exchange in Birmingham. This was in conjunction with half-term activities being led by Birmingham Tree People.

In Springvale Park, Wolverhampton alongside a community tree planting project where 1000 trees were also planted at the location.

In Allesley Park, Coventry where we joined the Park Ranger's half-term activities

Following guidance from The Woodland Trust, 3 types of tree were handed out at these giveaways: rowan, hazel and crab apple because of their suitability for most gardens. Over 400 trees were handed out to members of the public with a QR code linking them to information about how to plant and look after their trees.



Case Study

Birmingham 2022 Tiny Forests

As part of the sustainability legacy for the Commonwealth Games, Severn Trent, as an official partner of the Commonwealth games, have planted 72 'Tiny Forests' along with Earthwatch – one to represent each nation or territory taking part in Birmingham 2022. Each forest is named after a bird or flower of the country it represents and is home to 600 trees planted on an area the size of a tennis court.

Over 2,000 people from schools and local communities took part in a Tiny Forest planting day and 44,400 trees have been planted in total. The trees will be maintained by a 'keeper team', supported by Earthwatch, and will provide an opportunity for the local communities to stay involved in citizen science projects to monitor their growth, the forest biodiversity and the carbon capture.

Severn Trent Legacy Forest

As well as the Tiny Forests, Severn Trent have also committed to planting 2022 acres of new forest in the Midlands. The aim of this is to sequester the majority of the carbon from hosting the Games, as well as to increase the tree coverage across the region.

The majority of this tree planting will take place in the 2022/2023 tree planting season, with the final trees going in the ground in 2023/2024. Sites planted this season:

- Woodgate Valley 10 acres – Birmingham CC,
- Hope Coppice, Solihull 15 acres – Solihull CC,
- Aldridge Airport, Wallsall 30 acres– Walsall CC
- Bratch, Walkerith Road and Crankley 32 acres – STW land

Future planting will provide an opportunity for volunteers to continue to support the sustainability legacy from the Games – we know there is enthusiasm for this and a volunteering platform has been established to enable people to find opportunities post-Games.



Plan ahead – get involved

1. [Register to receive the West Midlands Greener Together newsletter](#) so you can stay up to date with Virtual Forest news and find about our next giveaways
2. Thinking about planting a tree? Use the [Right Tree, Right Place guidance](#)
3. If you're a community group or school, apply for a free tree pack from the [Woodland Trust](#)
4. Register any trees planted since January 2020 on the [West Midlands Virtual Forest](#)
5. Get in touch through wmvirtualforest@wmca.org.uk if you have any questions



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organisations that have registered trees on the West Midlands Virtual Forest since January 2020:

Achieving Results in Communities	Giffard Garden Project	Severn Trent
Balaji Temple	Goldthorn Primary School	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Baskerville School	Graiseley Primary School	Springfield Project
Binley Woods Parish Council	Guru Nanak Gurdwara Wolverhampton	St Luke's Primary School
Bilston CofE Primary School	Heart of England Forest	St Modwen
Bilston & District Soroptimists	Henley in Arden Court Leet	Tamworth in Arden Parish Council
Bournville Village Trust	Howell Road Allotments	Trees for Cities
Bubbenhall Parish Council	Little Environment Group	Tree Sisters
City of Wolverhampton Council	Moseley Park School	Walking Forest Women – Coventry City of Culture
Coton Neighbourhood Watch	Outside Centre, Wolverhampton	Walsall Council
Colton Hills Community School	Penn Climate Action	Walsall Tree Wardens
Coventry City Council	Penn Hall School	Warwick District Council
Digital Disability & ASAN Gardeners	Royal Leamington Spa Rotary Club	Western Under Wetherley Parish Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	SS Mary & John's Catholic Primary Academy	Windsor Nursery
Friends of Bantock	Sense	WM Police Cadets
Friends of Priory Park, Warwick		
Friends of West Park		

We also recognise that there are a significant number of individuals that have taken the time to source and plant a tree and we would also like to extend our thanks to them.

We hope that you get many years of enjoyment from your trees.