**The Tree Council Network Rail Community Tree Planting grant**

***‘Supporting community led tree planting across England’***

**Guidance Notes for completing the Application Form**

**Section 1 – Applicant details**

Eligible groups include schools, community groups, member Tree Warden Networks, local authorities, parish and town councils, businesses and sports clubs. Community groups should be constituted groups, with their own bank account.

Please provide all relevant contact details for the applicant and notify us of any changes over the duration of the project.

We will also need a mobile phone number for applicants from schools so that we may be able to ‘phone you when the school is closed if necessary.

**Section 2 - Description of project**

Write as much as you want in this section. This is where you impress us with your plans!

Note that section 9 below asks a range of specific questions about your proposed project – section 2 here is for a general description.

Please include information about the location and land ownership. We also require information regarding the present use of the land and the suitability of the land. The proposed planting site must not be in close proximity to buildings, soil quality must be suitable and the site must be properly protected from grazing wild animals and farmyard livestock.

A site plan would be helpful, either a formal architects drawing, or a screen-grab from google maps with hand drawings – anything to visually depict what it is you would like to achieve on the ground.

Please clearly state what your community would gain from this project, and **how children and young people, and as wide a cross section of the community as possible, will be engaged in the planning and planting.** Describe what sort of activities, events, or initiatives you might hope to organise or facilitate and anything else that would be of interest to us in making our decision.It may help your application to include estimated numbers and age groups of the people involved, how they have been involved to date, and how they will be engaged going forward over the longer term (trees require care over years!).

Include general information about the type and species of trees you are considering, for example are they for landscape value, biodiversity and habitat creation/improvement, sound/visual screening, flood/drought mitigation, educational and wellbeing purposes etc.

Also give some indication of when you intend planting trees, either in a single planting season (e.g. winter 2020, 20201 etc) or if you are considering phased planting over several years.

Do not include any financial information in this section – fill in the separate Excel spreadsheet entitled ‘*Network Rail Community Planting Grant cost breakdown’*, provided with the application form and guidance documents.

It would also be useful to know of any risks associated with the project e.g. is it dependent on resources, funding or other interdependencies that could jeopardise project delivery?

Over and above all of this, try to explain what the STORY is around your proposal. The Tree Council champion planting the right trees in the right places for the right reasons – this can lead to compelling stories that capture a community and a message, fit for our times. What will people and communities of the future see and feel and think when they visit the site, 10, 25, 50 or 100 years from now?

***Note regards safeguarding:*** It is essential that you get permission from parents to take photographs including children, and that you let them know that The Tree Council might use these photographs when submitting evidence to our funder. We may also highlight good projects on our website, and on social media, e.g. Twitter and Facebook.

**Section 3 - Consent to plant on site**

Your application form must be accompanied by an email with a scanned signed letter attached from the person with the authority to grant permission to plant on the site. If scanning is not possible, a hard copy letter in the post is fine.

**Section 4 - Suppliers or Contractors**

It would assist your application if you have given through to procurement of trees and other materials such as tree guards and stakes, even better if you have costings around the number of trees and materials you require for your project.

Tree nurseries offer better value for money on tree purchase than garden centres and we take this into account. Cost of delivery to the site should be included in any quotation, if separate from the tree prices. Sometimes delivery is included in the price of the trees - please make sure you indicate if this is the case.

Included with this guidance document and the main application form is a short costs Excel spreadsheet, called the ‘*Network Rail Community Planting Grant cost breakdown’*, which we ask to be completed alongside your formal application submission.

Please ensure your supplier is compliant with current biosecurity regulations. We insist that trees to be planted are grown entirely in the UK and, where possible, have local provenance to the project location – local trees that have already succeeded in the local environment stand a better chance of succeeding in the future.

**Section 5 – Advice about your tree planting project**

Sound advice is fundamental to a well-planned tree planting project. Applicants are asked to seek independent local advice from someone with experience in tree planting projects. Bear in mind that advice from commercial organisations may well, in some cases, reflect commercial interests: for example, if you are considering buying from a garden centre rather than a specialist fruit tree nursery. Recommended sources of advice include local Tree Wardens, local authority arboricultural officers and specialist charities such as [Learning through Landscapes](http://www.ltl.org.uk/). Larger proposals may benefit from the advice of an agent or expert advisor, for example across large estates, conservation charities or large farms. However, please note that any associated costs for this advice will need to be competitive and strictly in order to develop and deliver the project.

You may find that there is a Tree Council [Tree Warden Network](https://treecouncil.org.uk/take-action/tree-wardens/#map) near you, and if so, we suggest you seek advice from one of them. If you are unsure of who to contact in order to make a connection with a local Tree Warden please come back to us at The Tree Council and we will be happy to help.

**Section 6 - Aids to establishment**

Trees require protection aids for them to successfully establish, to protect them from livestock and wild animals, and also to protect from overt weed growth that may supress them. Trees on particularly infertile sites may also require soil enrichment.

If you do not have the knowledge and experience yourself, it is important to seek advice on the choice of aids to establishment, and this will involve surveying the site to determine what measures are required – i.e. stakes, canes, guards, ties, mulches etc. These should be site specific and must be appropriate for the size and location of the tree. It is important that the type of protection used will be sufficiently robust and of the right size, taking into account threats to your plantings. These will differ depending on your location - for example rabbits, muntjac deer or livestock.

Please note that as a conservation charity, we believe strongly in using environmentally friendly tree guards and we are on a mission to reduce plastic pollution associated with tree planting. Most often, plastic tree tubes are left on the trees years after their intended use, slowly breaking up and polluting the soil. Whilst it is not mandatory, we want people to use non-plastic guards wherever possible and appropriate, and by receiving a grant from us, you are agreeing to remove the guards at an appropriate time in the plant’s life cycle. There are several suppliers of cardboard guards on the market. The Tree Council has often worked with [www.ezeetrees.com](http://www.ezeetrees.com).

Compost or mulches used to improve soil must be peat-free. Trees purchased in containers should ideally be in peat free compost.

**Section 7 - Maintenance**

The Tree Council and its donors attach particular importance to proper care, maintenance and husbandry of trees planted - sourcing and planting your trees is only the beginning – trees require some years of care if they are to be successfully established and allow to ‘grow free’ without maintenance intervention. However in the early years, in particular years one and two, effective and timely maintenance is critical, with years 3-5 also being a period of risk.

Therefore, we require to be satisfied that adequate arrangements have been made for looking after the trees once they have been planted, for two years in detail (a programme of monitoring and maintenance), along with a further 3 years monitoring and maintenance outline. Please refer to our supporting documents for guidance.

**Section 8 – Media Promotion and Contact for Press enquiries**

In order to showcase the planting projects taking place this winter, and over consequent years, and inspire others to get involved, we will ask you to put details of your planting occasion on our [Events Map](https://treecouncil.org.uk/events/community/add/) on our website.

You can specify whether or not it is a public or closed/invite only event. Please provide a contact phone number of the person who would be happy to be contacted by the local media.

Successful applicants will be provided with a draft press release to adapt and send to the local press to promote your tree planting or event. This can be used to let your local press and community know about your project.

We would like to tweet and blog about interesting projects. You must ensure you have parental permission for us to use any images of children and consent from anyone else in the photograph. The photographs will be anonymised.

It may be that we will work with you on media promotion of your event, so indicate any media or promotional thoughts you already have. As previously mentioned, the STORY around the project is key to this programme, and the potential for it to resonate with people and places.

The Tree Council may seek to optimise media profile around your project for example via BBC local radio or social media, linking it to national initiatives, in which case your programme coordinator will be in touch about this.

**Section 9 – Specific Project Related Criteria**

In Section 2 you provided an overall description of the proposed project. What we require in section 9 is more detailed information about various criteria that is essential to project funding. Please contact The Tree Council programme coordinator ([lewis.morrison@treecouncil.org.uk](mailto:lewis.morrison@treecouncil.org.uk)) if you require a steer on any of these criteria, but it is a benefit for you to give good thought to all of this in the first instance.

**Section 10 – Declaration**

A grant offer is made on the understanding that your scheme is carried out exactly as described in your application. **Any modifications may invalidate our offer.** Should you need to change anything about your application, for example, substituting ANY of the tree species or location for planting, please notify us as quickly as possible so that we can review and, where appropriate, reconfirm the grant. Do not leave this until after any expense has been incurred.

Please **carefully** read the declaration and ensure you have included **ALL** the information requested. By submitting the application you are confirming that all the information given is accurate. This declaration is the basis on which your application will be assessed and any incorrect information may result in any offer of funding being withdrawn.

COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS TO BE EMAILED TO:

[lewis.morrison@treecouncil.org.uk](mailto:lewis.morrison@treecouncil.org.uk)

**For guidance and further support please contact:**

Lewis Morrison

Head of Major Tree Planting Programmes

Email: [lewis.morrison@treecouncil.org.uk](mailto:lewis.morrison@treecouncil.org.uk)

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