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Guidance

Urban Tree Challenge Fund

Find out what's involved and how to apply for funding to support the planting and establishment of standard trees in urban and peri-urban areas in England.

From:

[Forestry Commission \(/government/organisations/forestry-commission\)](/government/organisations/forestry-commission)

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Applies to England

[Guidance for Wales \(https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/forestry?lang=en\)](https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/forestry?lang=en)

[Guidance for Scotland \(https://forestry.gov.scot/\)](https://forestry.gov.scot/)

[Guidance for Northern Ireland \(https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/forestry/forestry-and-environment\)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/forestry/forestry-and-environment)

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The Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf) is open for new applications, there is no application deadline, but it takes three to five months from submitting a valid and

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June 2023. To apply for UTCF applicants will need to register with [Rural Payments](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-service-registering-and-updating-your-details) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-service-registering-and-updating-your-details>) to obtain a Single Business Identifier (SBI).

The fund provides 80% of published standard costs for the planting and establishment of trees in urban and peri-urban areas. In 2023 payments for trial pits have been introduced to check for the presence of services. The remaining costs of planting and establishing trees supported under the UTCF must be met through match funding, either in the form of money or labour. Agreement holders can complete tree planting over two planting seasons: winter 2023/2024 and winter 2024/25. However, applications received before 30 June 2023 must have at least 50% of tree planting scheduled in 2023/24. There is a minimum application value of £10,000.

The UTCF is a competitive fund, and your application will be scored. The scoring threshold is 100 points, your application must be equal to or above this score in order to be accepted.

Find out if you're eligible

Who can apply?

Anyone can apply for the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF), if you either have full management control over the land or signed consent from those with management control over the land for the duration of the Agreement. Agents are also able to apply on behalf of an organisation or landowner. Any individual or organisation can submit one application to UTCF in a single financial year. Multiple applications from the same applicant will be ranked and scored independently from one another.

Where the applicant does not have full management control over the land in the application (for example, the applicant is a tenant, trustee, joint owner or representative of a group of adjoining owners), we will require written permission from all parties with management control over the land before an agreement can be issued. This should come in the form of countersignatures on the application form.

Land submitted in an UTCF application does not need to be registered on the Rural Land Register, but applicants will need to register with [Rural Payments](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-service-registering-and-updating-your-details) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-service-registering-and-updating-your-details>) to obtain a Single Business Identifier (SBI) and a Customer Reference Number (CRN). This must be provided on the application form.

Eligible land

Land included in a UTCF application must fall within an urban area. An urban area, as defined for the purposes of the UTCF, is a built-up area (based on Office of

1km to account for peri-urban planting. This can be identified on the [Forestry Commission map browser \(https://www.forestergis.com/Apps/MapBrowser/\)](https://www.forestergis.com/Apps/MapBrowser/) using the 'UTCf Trees Close to People' layer located in the Targeting and Scoring list of map layers. You must confirm in your application that your land falls entirely within this map layer.

How to apply

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund is open for applications. If you want to plant trees in 2023/24 your application needs to be submitted no later than 23:59 on 30 June 2023.

Submit an application

To apply for UTCF you will need to follow these steps:

1. Read the UTCF [Grant Manual \(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134619/UTCf_Grant_Manual_v2.0.pdf\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134619/UTCf_Grant_Manual_v2.0.pdf) (PDF, 455 KB, 28 pages) and [Round 5 Terms and Conditions \(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134620/UTCf_Terms_and_Conditions_Round_5_MGFA_.pdf\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134620/UTCf_Terms_and_Conditions_Round_5_MGFA_.pdf) (PDF, 479 KB, 44 pages) to find out if you're eligible and to decide whether you wish to apply.
2. You must [register with Rural Payments \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-service-registering-and-updating-your-details\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-payments-service-registering-and-updating-your-details) to get a Single Business Identifier (SBI) and Customer Reference Number (CRN) before you can apply.
3. Complete the [application form and application annex \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/urban-tree-challenge-fund-application-form-round-5\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/urban-tree-challenge-fund-application-form-round-5) and map(s) (PDF acceptable but shapefiles preferred), send these to utcf@forestrycommission.gov.uk

You must not undertake any planting or ground preparation detailed in your application form until you have a signed agreement with the Forestry Commission in place.

Further information

Maps

You must submit a map with your application, identifying the areas proposed for planting. Maps should be produced at a scale of 1:1,250. Where application areas are in more than one geographical area, a map for each will be required. For further information about mapping standards please refer to the [Grant Manual \(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134619/UTCf_Grant_Manual_v2.0.pdf\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134619/UTCf_Grant_Manual_v2.0.pdf)

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Terms and conditions

Read the [Round 5 Terms and Conditions](#)

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1134620/UTCF_Terms_and_Conditions_Round_5_MGFA_.pdf) (PDF, 479 KB, 44 pages).

How it works

What is funded

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund provides 80% funding of standard costs (see 'Table 1 - Standard cost' below) for planting large trees and their establishment costs for 3 years following planting. The funding supports the cost of buying a tree, planting in grass or hard surfaces, the cost of basic protection and the labour required to plant it. In 2023 payments for trial pits have been introduced to check for the presence of services. The number of trial pits that will receive funding is capped at 10% of the total number of trees in the application. For example, if you are applying to plant 100 trees you could also apply for 10 trial pits. Where trial pits are required these need to be listed in the application annex found on the [UTCF application form page](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/urban-tree-challenge-fund-application-form-round-5>).

Establishment payments support the cost of weeding, watering and checking trees during multiple visits over a 3-year period.

The grant rate available per tree is 80% of standard costs and we will not fund anything above this value.

Table 1 - Standard Costs

Description	100% Standard Cost (£) (planting and 3 years of establishment)	Funding rate - 80% of Standard Cost (£)
Supply a standard tree, with a clear stem up to 1.8m from ground level with a head of branches. Standards come in a range of sizes and age is dependent on species and growth rate. Funding is based on a 14-16cm standard. Prepare a tree pit in a grass verge (other planting surfaces are acceptable, but the payment rate is fixed), with local authority approved pit edging. Plant tree	£270.45	£216.36

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protection must be suitable for the planting location).

Supply a standard tree, with a clear stem up to 1.8m from ground level with a head of branches. Standards come in a range of sizes and age is dependent on species and growth rate. Funding is based on a 14-16cm standard. Prepare a tree pit in hard surface (pavement, tarmac, concrete), with local authority approved pit edging. Plant tree with twin stakes, watering tube and mulch. Supply a lightweight steel mesh tree guard (the protection must be suitable for the planting location).	£339.48	£271.58
Excavate trial pit for services check in hard surface, backfill with topsoil. Rate includes contribution toward reinstating aborted pit to match existing surface if required.	£348.96	£279.17
Excavate trial pit for services check in grass, backfill with topsoil. Rate includes contribution toward reinstating aborted pit to match existing surface if required.	£195.97	£156.78
Water young tree in pit via tube applying a minimum of 60 litres per visit, 14 visits per year. Weed and check stake and ties, 7 visits per season.	£189 per year for three years	£151.20 per year for three years

Protection measures including the type of guard used must be appropriate for the planting location, but anything above those listed in the standard costs table will have to be funded separately as part of the match funding. You will be required to detail this information in the application form annex.

Payments will be made in a minimum of 4 instalments. The first instalment will cover the supply and planting of the tree, there will be a second instalment if planting takes place over two years. This will be followed by 3 further annual claims for the remaining establishment costs.

Match funding

Fund recipients must provide 20% match funding in the form of money or labour. The funding rate has been calculated based on paying an 80% contribution towards the standard cost of a given item and the cost of establishment, such as weeding and watering. Sources of grant funding that are part of the Nature for

Action Fund cannot be used as match funding. Please refer to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund terms and conditions, for further details on what can be included in match funding.

Advice and best practice

The Forestry Commission will not provide technical advice for your application. It is up to you to source expert advice from a competent person to ensure your planting proposal meets best practice. We suggest you follow the best practice advice found in the [Urban Tree Manual \(https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual/\)](https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual/).

We consider experts to include persons with membership to a professional body. Examples of this can include, but are not limited to:

- Institute of Chartered Foresters
- Arboricultural Association
- London Tree Officer's Association
- Municipal Tree Officers Association
- National Association of Tree Officers

Contact the Forestry Commission

You can get help from the Forestry Commission by emailing UTCf@forestrycommission.gov.uk

Make an appeal

Find out how to [make a complaint or appeal \(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/complaints-procedure\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/complaints-procedure).

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