

Press Release

Embargoed until 00.01, Thursday 8 July

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Money does grow on them! Planting trees could benefit economy by £366 million and create 36,000 jobs

- Investing in natural environment could create 36,000 green jobs and boost economy by £366m - creating more jobs per investment than carbon-intensive sectors
- Increasing woodland would support 24,600 jobs across the West Midlands, 2,300 jobs in Greater Manchester, 2,250 jobs in Glasgow, 2,250 jobs in Leeds and 1,625 jobs in London.
- Planting one tree could see a return of over £8,000 per tree for the local economy, planting 6,000 trees in a town will benefit that community by £1m every year
- Trees can boost retail spending by up to 12% and reduce violent crime by 15%
- Tree planting can help 'level up' with poorer areas having lower canopy cover
- Call for target in Environment Bill to reverse decline in species and habitats by 2030

Planting trees and other efforts to recover natural destruction have a huge part to play in getting the country to Net Zero and bring a range of other benefits including creating good green jobs, boosting the economy and even cutting crime, says new research published by UK100.

The analysis, conducted by academic researchers with the Place-based Climate Action Network at Queen's University Belfast, looks at the economic benefits of climate action by local authorities.

At an international summit to be co-hosted by UK100 and the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, next week (13 July) mayors and local leaders will call on the government to devolve further powers on energy, transport and housing to meet their Net Zero ambitions. The event will include Alok Sharma, COP President, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng and the Mayors of London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, the West Midlands and Los Angeles.¹ The group will argue that **a clear target must be added to the Environment Bill to reverse the decline in species and habitats by 2030** supported by the appropriate resourcing of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Economic Benefit

The report, an extract of which has been released ahead of the summit, says that a conservative estimate of the economic benefit of a tree ranges from £1,200 to £8,000. Using this model, planting 6,000 trees strategically located across a large English town would provide benefits of £48m over 50 years, or nearly £1m per year.²

¹ <https://www.uk100.org/events/international-net-zero-local-leadership-conference>

² UK100 / PCAN - 'Economic Benefits of Local Climate Action' [summary below]

The cost of an urban street tree starts at around £6 (excluding maintenance)³. The long-term economic benefits accrued over 50 years can be over £8,000 per tree.⁴

Green Jobs

Planting trees, a useful way to remove carbon emissions out of the atmosphere and prevent flooding, could create 36,000 green jobs⁵ during the woodland restoration phase, generating £366 million in added value to the economy.⁶ Investments in restoring and sustainably managing woodland habitats **create more jobs per unit of investment than more carbon-intensive sectors** such as agriculture, gas, mass transit, aviation and freight rail construction⁷: for every £710,000 (\$1m) invested in woodland restoration a total of 40 direct and indirect jobs are created.⁸

Researchers have shown that 25 jobs are created for every 100 hectares of woodland that are restored during the restoration phase. Increasing woodland would support 24,600 jobs across the **West Midlands**, 2,300 jobs in **Greater Manchester**, 2,250 jobs in **Glasgow**, 2,250 jobs in **Leeds** and 1,625 jobs in **London**.⁹

³ "£6 will plant 1 tree in an urban woodland" <https://www.treesforcities.org/get-involved/donate>

⁴ UK100 / PCAN - 'Economic Benefits of Local Climate Action' [summary below] Total Accumulated Benefits after 50yr period = £8,123.00 p27 of

https://www.treeeconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/GBU_Street-Tree-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-2018.pdf

⁵ Job creation comes primarily from tree planting and habitat restoration with further employment opportunities in habitat maintenance and because of increased spending power. Analysis by UK100 / PCAN of study by RSPB

https://www.camecon.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-economic-costs-benefits-of-nature-based-solutions_final-report_FINAL_V3.pdf

⁶ UK100 / PCAN - 'Economic Benefits of Local Climate Action' [summary below] The investment required to restore a hectare of woodland generates £12,219 in gross value added (GVA) (during the restoration phase). At the scale of afforestation recommended by the Climate Change Committee, 30,000 hectares of woodland afforested through capital investment would generate £366m in value added, totalling just under £1m in GVA per UK local authority.

<https://www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Nature-based-solutions-to-the-climate-emergency.pdf>

<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/24d87ad2-0fa9-4b35-816a-89f9d92b0042/local-authority-districts-april-2020-names-and-codes-in-the-united-kingdom>

⁷ Using US data, Garrett-Peltier and Pollin (2019) found that restoration and sustainable forest management created more jobs per million dollars of investment than other industries covered in the study (agriculture, gas, mass transit and freight rail construction, aviation, etc.) Garrett-Peltier and Pollin, 2009. How Infrastructure Investments Support the U.S. Economy: Employment, Productivity and Growth, Political Economy Research Institute, January 2009 - quoted in https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_757823.pdf

⁸ Garrett-Peltier and Pollin found that investments in restoring and sustainably managing woodland habitats created more jobs per unit of investment than more carbon-intensive sectors such as agriculture, gas, mass transit and freight rail construction, for example- for every \$1m invested in woodland restoration a total of 39.7 direct and indirect jobs are created, or almost 40 jobs directly and indirectly created per every £710,000 invested. The government have announced a £640m Nature for Climate fund to plant 40m trees – by employing Garrett Peltier's above calculation, we can estimate this could create over 35,700 jobs in NbS²¹ nationally, or equal to over 90 jobs per local authority

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_757823.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-2020-what-you-need-to-know>

£640m/£710k = 901. 901x39.7 = 35,785 jobs (rounded to 36,000 jobs)

⁹ UK100 / PCAN Analysis based on Garret / Pelier. 25 jobs would be created for every 100 hectares of woodland that are restored during the restoration phase (further jobs are sustained during maintenance). **London's** forested area was estimated by the Woodland Trust to be 13,000 Ha in 2017 - a 50% increase (additional 6,500 Ha) out to 2050 would provide **1,625 new jobs**. **Glasgow Forestry and Woodland Strategy**[1] seeks an additional **9,000 HA** to add to the 21% city region area already forested = additional 9,000 creates a further **2,250 jobs**. **Leeds want to double coverage with an additional 9000 Ha**[2] in coming decades additional 9,000 creates a further **2,250 jobs**. **Greater Manchester** has 7,000 HA of woodland, about 5.6% of the city regional land areas. If this area was increased to 13% for example[3], the national average for forested land, would create over **2,300 jobs** in the Manchester city region alone[4][BA1]. **The West Midlands** has 98,474 hectares of forest (7.6% of the total land area), if this were to double (which would bring the region just above the national average of 13%), this would lead to **24,600 extra jobs**.

<https://glasgow.gov.uk/article/26755/Woodland-strategy-aims-to-boost-tree-cover-over-Glasgow-City-Region>

<https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/politics/climate-scientist-welcomes-plans-extra-two-square-miles-trees-leeds-1361858>

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/woodland-statistics/#:~:text=The%20area%20of%20woodland%20in, and%209%25%20in%20Northern%20ireland.>

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/3049/nwestmidlands.pdf>

7,000/5.6(%) = 1% - 1,250Ha. 1,250x13(%) = 16,250. 16,250-7000 = 9,250 additional Ha. 9,250/100Ha = 92.5 x 25 jobs per 100 Ha = 2,312 jobs created in Manchester.

In particular, retail and hospitality businesses can benefit from such interventions, sectors that have been hard hit by the pandemic. Shoppers are willing to go shopping more frequently, travel further and visit for longer times in shopping areas with pleasant tree cover. Consumers in an academic study said they were willing to pay up to 12% more for goods and services in shopping areas with large, well cared for trees.¹⁰

Polly Billington, Chief Executive of UK100, said “Money really does grow on trees! Planting trees isn’t just good for our environment, it’s good for the economy - helping businesses to recover from the pandemic. It is also a way to address environmental inequalities and level up the UK.”

Poorer areas often have lower canopy cover, and are also disproportionately affected by other environmental issues such as air pollution. Research conducted in London found that tree canopy cover ranges from 58% to 2% across the city’s 633 local wards¹¹. Targeting new tree planting in areas of greatest need will help to address this imbalance. A US study found that lower income neighbourhoods and minorities were significantly more likely to live in heat-prone neighbourhoods.¹²

The **Great Northern Forest Scheme** plans to plant 50 million trees in a new woodland that will join up **Liverpool, Manchester and Lancaster with Leeds, Sheffield and Hull**. An area home to 13 million people, it only has 7.6% woodland cover – much lower than the England average.¹³

Analysis by UK100 found that increasing the amount of woodland in the **Greater Manchester** area could generate 2,300 new jobs in the city region. The total benefit to Greater Manchester’s economy of air pollution filtration, storm water attenuation, and carbon sequestration from our trees is over £30m each year. It would cost over £4.7 billion to replace all Greater Manchester’s trees like for like¹⁴.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said: “Investing in trees and improving our urban green spaces can help our residents to breathe cleaner air and can help to meet our climate ambitions. But it can also give our high streets and our wider economy a much needed boost, bringing good green jobs to places across our city-region. That’s why we’re planting a tree for every citizen of Greater Manchester through our City of Trees movement.”

The **Glasgow City Region** is planning to create an urban forest to connect woodlands across the area. The Clyde Climate Forest aims to plant 18 million trees – 10 trees for every person in the region over the next decade. This will increase the woodland cover in the region from 17% to 20% and support Glasgow, which is hosting the UN COP26 summit in November, to meet its target of becoming a Net Zero Carbon city by 2030. UK100 estimates that increasing woodland would create 2,250 new jobs in Glasgow.

Cllr Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council and Chair of the City Region Cabinet said: “The value of high quality green spaces to exercise and clear the mind has

¹⁰ University of Washington, published in Journal of Forestry, ‘Business District Streetscapes, Trees, and Consumer Response’ http://www.naturewithin.info/CityBiz/BizTreesAll_JFor.pdf referenced in <https://greenblue.com/gb/trees-increase-retail-sales/>

¹¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-announces-thousands-of-new-street-trees>

¹² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-05-15/the-inequality-of-urban-tree-cover>

¹³ <https://thenorthernforest.org.uk/>

¹⁴ [All Our Trees – Greater Manchester’s Tree and Woodland Strategy \(cityoftrees.org.uk\)](http://AllOurTrees-GreaterManchester'sTreeandWoodlandStrategy(cityoftrees.org.uk))

been acutely felt during the pandemic and, this year, we have a once in a generation opportunity to deliver on our climate ambitions and secure a Green Recovery.

“We have to ensure the economic, ecological and social benefits are felt by all. More street trees and planting new woodland bring huge benefits to our community - not just in terms of wellbeing, but in jobs and a boost to business.”

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said: “We know just how critical tree planting is to tackling the climate emergency here in the West Midlands, which is why we’ve embarked on our ambitious virtual forest plans to plant a tree for every resident across the West Midlands. Now we know that not only will this help the environment, but also our economy as well.”

The **West Midlands** Combined Authority (WMCA) has ambitious plans for tree planting a ‘virtual forest’ across the region including one tree planted for each resident. This equates to more than 4 million trees being planted by 2035 to help deliver the goal of reaching Net Zero carbon emissions by 2041.¹⁵

More than 95 million people visit National Parks and their hinterlands each year, spending more than £4bn and supporting some 68,000 jobs.¹⁶ **For rural local authorities** with an option to utilise these large natural spaces, and to create and restore new ones through nature-based interventions, the benefits as an eco-service for tourism, hospitality and the local economy are clear.

Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of Wiltshire Council and Chair of the UK100 Countryside Climate Network, said: “This research highlights the need to invest in a post-pandemic recovery that enables Net Zero and protects our natural environment. Investing in nature will deliver clear economic and social benefits and create jobs, and Wiltshire's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy does just that.”

There are now nearly 60 cross-party local leaders, representing 35% of the UK population, who have committed to the UK100 pledge to meet Net Zero at least five years earlier than Whitehall.¹⁷

The upcoming UK100 report ‘The Economic Benefits of Local Climate Action’ will demonstrate the host of benefits that can accrue to support economic and social renewal across the nation.

The extract released today focusses on nature-based solutions including:

- **Good green jobs:** UK100 analysis of the Government's Nature for Climate fund, which will plant 40 million trees, shows it could create nearly 36,000 jobs in nature-based solutions nationally.¹⁸

¹⁵ <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Virtual%20Forest%20Guide.pdf>

¹⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.uk100.org/blog/2021/05/nearly-60-council-leaders-representing-over-third-uk-pledge-reach-net-zero-five-years>

¹⁸ UK100 / PCAN - ‘Economic Benefits of Local Climate Action’ [summary below]

- **The economy:** planting trees at the rate recommended by the Climate Change Committee - 30,000 hectares of woodland afforested through capital investment - would generate £366m in added value. An estimate of the economic benefit per tree over 50 years ranges from £1,200 to £8,000. Based on this figure, the Government's £40m investment has the potential to reap a return of £320 billion over the next half century.¹⁹
- **Boost to high streets:** consumers are willing to pay between 9% and 12% more for goods and services in shopping areas with large, well cared for trees.²⁰
- **Falling crime:** for every 10% increase in tree canopy cover there is a 15% decrease in violent crime and a 14% decrease in property crime, even when controlling for other socio-economic factors²¹

The International Net Zero Local Leadership Summit and Conference will be co-hosted by West Midland Mayor Andy Street and UK100's Polly Billington.²²

The summit will be attended by more than 30 local leaders, including Sadiq Khan, Andy Burnham and a host of other leading figures from across the country, to discuss an enhanced partnership with the government in Westminster to move towards Net Zero.

Amongst those joining them at the summit are Kwasi Kwarteng, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Lord Deben, Chairman of the Climate Change Committee.

The conference will feature an address by Eric Garcetti, the Mayor of Los Angeles, and also involve an international networking session for local authorities with participants from cities all over the world, including Tokyo, Melbourne and Buenos Aires.

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About UK100

UK100 is the only network for UK locally elected leaders who have pledged to play their part in the global effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change by switching to 100% clean energy by 2050. The most ambitious - our Net Zero Local Leadership Club - are doing everything within their power to get their communities to Net Zero as soon as possible, and by 2045 at the latest. To accelerate the transition to this Net Zero society, UK100 brings together local authorities, from cities to the countryside, to share knowledge, collaborate, and petition the UK government with their collective power. www.uk100.org

About PCAN

The Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) is about translating climate policy into action 'on the ground' in our communities. PCAN is an ESRC-supported Network that brings together the research community and decision-makers in the public, private and third sectors. It consists of five innovative platforms to facilitate two-way, multi-level engagement between researchers and stakeholders: three city-based climate commissions and two theme-based platforms on adaptation and finance, with a business theme integrated into each climate commission. The five-year project is led by an experienced team of researchers with strong track records of engaging with public, private and third-sector decision-makers. PCAN builds on the policy connections, networking capacity and research strengths of its host institutions: the Centre for Sustainability and

¹⁹ UK100 / PCAN - 'Economic Benefits of Local Climate Action' [summary below]

²⁰ University of Washington, published in Journal of Forestry, 'Business District Streetscapes, Trees, and Consumer Response' http://www.naturewithin.info/CityBiz/BizTreesAll_JFor.pdf referenced in <https://greenblue.com/gb/trees-increase-retail-sales/>

²¹ A study from New Haven, CT, reproduced by the LSE: 'Trees, a new partner in the fight against urban crime' <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/75856/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Trees%20a%20new%20partner%20in%20the%20fight%20against%20urban%20crime.pdf> Other sources on association between trees and reduced crime rates: <https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/public-safety/>

²² <https://www.uk100.org/events/international-net-zero-local-leadership-conference>

Environmental Governance at Queen's University Belfast; the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation; the University of Leeds, and the London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://pcancities.org.uk/about>

Editor's Notes

A copy of the embargoed report extract is available here <https://bit.ly/uk100trees>