



Briefing 22/40 October 2022

The Contribution Community Tree Nurseries Could Play in Expanding Tree Cover Through the Supply of High-Quality Tree Stock for Tree Planting

To: All Chief Executives, Senior Policy Officers Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England,

The note is provided for information for members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key issues

- Many UK local authorities are embarking on significant tree planting programmes.
- There have been concerns raised about the ability of the UK to meet tree planting targets due to a lack of home-grown stock.
- The promotion of Community tree nurseries can provide planting stock that is produced locally and does not risk importing exotic pests and diseases.
- Forest Research is carrying out a project to explore the role community tree nurseries (CTNs) can play in meeting the UK's ambition for increased tree cover through the supply of high-quality stock for tree planting.
- Forest Research has launched a **national survey** which will, for the first time ever, collect data about the CTN sector and inform government on the potential CTNs have to uplift tree production, and indicate ways the sector itself might be grown.
- APSE has been approached to assist in gathering responses by promoting the survey amongst its members across the UK to help achieve a national level dataset.
- APSE would therefore ask that members encourage any existing or potential CTNs in their areas to complete the survey and thereby help promote the development of sustainable and bio-secure tree growing community ventures which will be a crucial source of new trees for future tree planting programmes.

1. Background

Across the UK local authorities are planning to increase their tree cover using a wide range of differing projects from mass forest planting to the promotion of individual street trees.

What has become apparent is that the quality and health of trees being planted needs to be guaranteed in light of the catastrophic impacts of imported tree diseases such as Dutch Elm Disease and Ash Dieback.

Recently there have been concerns about the ability of the UK to meet these tree targets due to a lack of home-grown stock.

It has been identified that one of the important risks inherent to rapid increases in tree planting, is the ability of the supply chain to ensure bio-secure, local provenance planting stock. Boosting commercial supply is one way of addressing this but without secure contracts many nurseries are unwilling to invest in growing trees speculatively. Government is therefore providing grants to landowners and local authorities amongst others to help address this issue by providing the required assurances through the availability of such funding.

However, there are significant opportunities to explore alternative, community-based tree production. Such an example is CTNs, which can provide planting stock that is produced locally and does not risk importing exotic pests and diseases. These nurseries can also help to retain regional genetic identity and provide regionally appropriate species, as well as providing potentially wider benefits for health, wellbeing and education through engagement with local communities and volunteers.

2. The Survey

Forest Research (the research agency of the Forestry Commission) are working on a project to explore the role CTNs can play in meeting the UK's ambition for increased tree cover through the supply of high-quality stock for tree planting. Information gathered so far shows that CTNs are very variable in scale, from a few hundred trees being grown in a back garden, to many 10s of thousands being produced by some community enterprises that also employ paid staff. From reports received it does appear that CTNs are becoming more numerous across the UK.

The project is part of the Trees Outside Woodlands Programme (supported by Defra), which aims to develop new ways of expanding tree cover outside of woodlands. Therefore, The Trees Outside Woodland programme, is running a CTN pilot which is testing how to establish community tree nurseries and their role in increasing the supply of healthy, bio-secure and sustainable trees in England.

To help this work Forest Research have just launched a **national survey** which will, for the first time ever, collect data about the CTN sector and inform government on the potential they have to uplift tree production, and indicate ways the sector itself might be grown.

Since many CTN's are supported by local authorities and other public sector bodies, APSE has been approached to assist in gathering responses by promoting the survey amongst its members across the UK to help achieve a national level dataset.

The survey will take approximately **20-25 minutes to complete** and as a thank you for participating in the survey, Forest Research will provide each CTN that responds with their own copy of the 'Tree growers guide' book. This new publication contains illustrations and identification tips for over 50 species alongside information on seed collection, stratification and growing.

For the purpose of this survey, a Community Tree Nursery is defined as;

'An enterprise, social enterprise, community-based group, charitable or public sector endeavour or network where volunteer community members and groups take part in growing trees, including seed/wilding collection, nursery management and sales/distribution, and also in some cases planting out'

The survey closes on November 30th and in order to participate respondents are required to use the following link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HUXJOC/>

If respondents have any questions, or need more information, please contact Bianca Ambrose-Oji at Forest Research, who is overseeing the research project:

Email: bianca.ambrose-oji@forestresearch.gov.uk

3. Current Funding

Small grants to improve biosecurity for CTNs in England have just been launched. These are funded through the Trees Outside Woodlands programme and are being run by [The Fellowship of the Trees](#).

Who can apply?

Grants are available to CTNs (as defined above).

To be eligible for these grants the CTN must also be not-for-profit.

CTNs applying for funding must also be in England as funding is provided through Defra.

How much can you apply for?

The maximum grant amount is £5,000. There is no minimum amount.

What can the grant fund?

Grants can fund capital costs for improving Biosecurity/Plant Health in your tree nursery. The grant can also fund training and advice around biosecurity. Examples of items that could be funded include:

- Signage (e.g. for visitors);

- Testing kits (e.g. for Phytophthora);
- Materials for sanitising (e.g. disinfectant, foot baths, or brushes);
- Equipment to allow better traceability (e.g. labelling machines, laptops, or printers);
- Improvement in infrastructure directly relating to biosecurity (e.g. additional taps, different composting systems which are more biosecure (e.g. hotter temperature);
- Training or advice; and
- Plant Healthy certification costs.

What can't grants fund?

Grants can't fund regular variable costs, for example:

- purchasing compost; or
- paying for waste disposal

The exception to this is Plant Healthy certification costs.

When must grant funding be spent by?

We are keen to fund projects that can be implemented quickly, grant funding must be spent by February 2023.

How do I apply?

To find out more and apply please email: ctnc@fellowshipofthetrees.org

1. *Some additional back ground information*

Trees Outside Woodlands:

The Trees Outside Woodland programme is developing innovative and sustainable new ways to increase tree cover to address both climate and ecological emergencies. The £2.5M, three-year programme is funded by HM Government and delivered in partnership by The Tree Council, Natural England, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs with five local councils.

Guidance for CTNs

A new guide to identifying and growing trees from seed and running a CTN has been produced. The printed guide is available to buy here: [The Tree Grower's Guide \(incl. P&P\) - The Tree Council](#)

It will shortly be available online alongside other resources such as how to videos here: [Tree Grower's Guide Coming Soon! \(treegrowersguide.org.uk\)](#)

4. APSE Comment

APSE has long been a supporter of promoting increased tree cover across the UK, both from a climate change amelioration perspective but also for the wider benefits trees bring: including greater opportunities for biodiversity, improved air quality, more effective ecosystem services as well as the mental health and well-being benefits reconnecting with our natural environment brings.

This survey and the wider project will help not only the development of healthier trees to plant but develop sustainable line of tree growing for local authorities and landowners across the UK.

With the projected loss of up to 90% of the UK's Ash trees as a result of ash dieback, increasing the sources of new tree suppliers will be increasingly important as the demand for new trees grow. The fact these trees will be locally sourced clearly has multiple benefits from less chance of disease to the reduction in fossil fuels used to transport imported trees.

The fact local communities will be involved in the tree growing will also be of significant benefit to local skill development and potential future job creation.

APSE would therefore ask that members encourage any existing or potential CTNs in their areas to complete the survey and thereby help promote the development of sustainable and bio-secure tree growing community ventures which will be a crucial source of new trees for future tree planting programmes.

Wayne Priestley,

APSE Principal Advisor