

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2023-24



30  **TREES
FOR
CITIES**
30 YEARS AND GROWING STRONG

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Trees for Cities is the only UK charity working at a national and international scale to improve lives by planting trees and woodland in urban areas.

We get stuck in with local communities to cultivate lasting change in their neighbourhoods – whether it's revitalising forgotten spaces, creating healthier environments or getting people excited about growing and eating healthy food.



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



In 2023, Trees for Cities began a year of celebrations to mark our 30th anniversary, so I'm pleased to report the impact of our activities over the 2023-24 financial year and some milestones since our inception in 1993.

We were honoured to work with the Royal Warrant Holders Association to plant trees across the capital cities of all four nations to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty the King.

The project was a flagship demonstration of galvanising communities through local environmental action to improve places where people live, work and play.

As always, the response of the children and young people involved was particularly heart-warming, and a reminder of our responsibility to plant and protect our tree heritage for today and future generations,

which is becoming increasingly urgent in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss.

This was my first full year as Chief Executive and saw some significant operational investments to build our capacity and leadership, and strengthen our resilience for the future.

Much of this was supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, to whom we are extremely grateful. We look forward to an exciting future continuing to work alongside them.

Despite a challenging year financially, we planted more standard trees this year than ever before, in places that are socioeconomically deprived with low tree canopy cover.

Trees for Cities believes passionately that everyone deserves equitable access to trees; we are proud to be delivering urban tree equity in streets, estates, parks and schools.

To our staff, trustees, volunteers, partners and supporters – thank you. Everyone who works with us to plant and care for urban trees is helping to make greener, healthier and happier towns and cities for today's and future generations. Our work has never been more important and your support is invaluable.

**KATE SHELDON,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

“ TO OUR STAFF, TRUSTEES, VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS – THANK YOU. EVERYONE WHO WORKS WITH US TO PLANT AND CARE FOR URBAN TREES IS HELPING TO MAKE GREENER, HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER TOWNS AND CITIES FOR TODAY'S AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. OUR WORK HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT AND YOUR SUPPORT IS INVALUABLE. ”

OUR IMPACT

Trees for Cities enables and inspires a new generation to plant and protect urban trees.

In 2023-24, we engaged 39,333 people across the UK. 26,736 school children were provided with greener playgrounds, 3,075 school staff were supported in greening their curriculum and 9,522 people who planted, protected and promoted urban trees.

Our monitoring shows that most attendees at our Urban Forest events had not planted or looked after urban trees before, and that as a result of taking part, adults and children were **more highly connected to nature** and planned to take further action for urban trees.



AFTER ATTENDING AN URBAN TREE EVENT, VOLUNTEERS WERE MORE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO NATURE

Mean Nature Connection Index scores increased from 69 out of 100 before events to 74 out of 100 after events (sample of 1143-1678 people). Adapted Illustrated Inclusion of Nature in Self Scale - % of participants reporting high connection to nature increased from 37.1% to 48.4% from the start to end of a Trees for Cities event (sample of 182-298 people)

AFTER ATTENDING AN URBAN TREE EVENT, VOLUNTEERS FELT MORE CONFIDENT IN PLANTING AND LOOKING AFTER TREES

A sample of 1346-2099 volunteers: Average confidence in tree planting: 3.1 out of 5 before and 4.0 out of 5 after the event. Average confidence in looking after trees: 3.0 out of 5 before and 3.7 out of 5 after the event. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 = not confident at all and 5 = completely confident

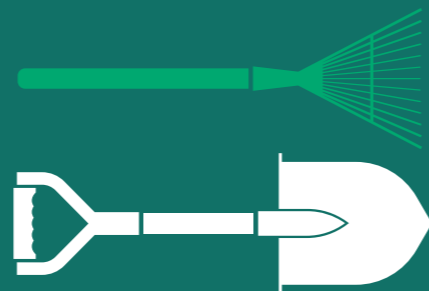


AFTER ATTENDING AN URBAN TREE EVENT,

66%

OF PEOPLE REPORTED HAVING NEW PLANS TO TAKE ACTION FOR URBAN TREES

A sample of 1,200 community and corporate volunteers



WHY OUR WORK IS NEEDED

In the projects delivered during 2023-24, we found that **30% of pupils in the schools we work in do not have access to a garden they can play outside in at home, and prior to Trees for Cities' engagement, only 7% of teachers strongly agreed that they felt confident using the outdoor space to teach the curriculum and that they had the knowledge and skills to do so. Additionally, whilst 91% of pupils valued urban trees, less than half felt highly connected to nature before having a Trees for Cities project in their school.**

Results are based on 528-535 pupil baseline surveys and 149-150 teacher baseline surveys from a sample of 13 schools

Our school projects span two years, starting with design, landscaping and planting in the first year followed by further engagement with pupils and teachers to promote use of the outdoor space in line with the school curriculum. This approach helps to promote the longevity and sustainability of our projects.

During 2023-24, we worked in 65 schools throughout England, Scotland and Wales. We continued engagement in those built during the 2022-23 season whilst building 35 new transformational greening projects.

Looking back at the projects we delivered during the 2022-23 season, the children we worked with already highly valued urban trees and stayed that way throughout our engagement. After the Trees for Cities engagement year, school pupils were more connected to nature, the proportion of pupils who enjoyed spending time outside increased, and the percentage of pupils who said that they would help trees over the next year increased.

AFTER A TREES FOR CITIES SCHOOL PROJECT, MORE SCHOOL PUPILS ENJOY SPENDING TIME OUTSIDE

Number of children reporting that they enjoy spending time outside increased from 62% to 75% (sample of 181-298 school pupils)



115,166
TREES PLANTED



9,522
PEOPLE PLANTED, PROTECTED AND PROMOTED URBAN TREES



26,736
SCHOOL CHILDREN GIVEN GREENER PLAYGROUNDS



3,075
SCHOOL STAFF WERE SUPPORTED IN GREENING THEIR CURRICULUM



1,871,905
TREES PLANTED TO DATE BY TREES FOR CITIES



AFTER A TREES FOR CITIES SCHOOL PROJECT, 60% OF PUPILS SAID THAT THEY WILL HELP TREES IN THEIR CITY OVER THE NEXT YEAR

A sample of 177 school pupils



AFTER A TREES FOR CITIES SCHOOL PROJECT, PUPILS ARE MORE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO NATURE

Pupils reporting a high connection to nature increased from 36% to 44% (sample of 179-298)



PLANTING THE UK'S URBAN FOREST



With the invaluable help of community volunteers and partners across the UK, we continued to plant urban trees and support the creation and enhancement of high quality green spaces across many locations. In total, we planted in 42 towns and cities across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland during 2023-24.

HORSENDEN HOME FIELD

On 2 December 2023, 151 volunteers joined us at Horsenden Home Field in London to plant over 2,900 whips and celebrate 30 years of planting and caring for urban trees. The downward slope of the field's northwest end poses a flood risk, making our planting efforts beneficial for both ecological and flood mitigation purposes.

Our 30th anniversary celebration was a vibrant festival, with high spirits despite minus temperatures, with entertainment for all ages. This included DJs from Bollo Brook Youth Centre, a puppetry show, and accessibility initiatives such as a British Sign Language interpreter and Widgit symbols provided by Sensory Trust to guide volunteers.

This event supported our longstanding partnership with Ealing Council, supporting their goal to plant 50,000 trees between 2022 and 2026 and increase canopy cover to 25% by 2030.

FUNDERS

- Ealing Council
- Chapman Charitable Trust
- Salesforce via Arbor Day Foundation
- Ecosia
- Palmer Hargreaves (Bosch)
- GT Gettaxi (UK) Ltd
- Enterprise Mobility via Arbor Day Foundation



TOTAL YOUNG TREES PLANTED AT HORSENDEN HOME FIELD IN 2023-24:
6,133



TOTAL PEOPLE ENGAGED AT HORSENDEN HOME FIELD IN 2023-24:
328



92% OF THOSE SURVEYED AT OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION REPORTED LEARNING NEW SKILLS ABOUT PLANTING OR LOOKING AFTER URBAN TREES THAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE
(SAMPLE SIZE: 53)



THE MAJORITY OF ADULTS AND TEENAGERS AT OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (84%) REPORTED THAT AFTER THE EVENT THEY HAD NEW PLANS TO PLANT, TAKE CARE OF AND/OR PROMOTE URBAN TREES IN THE NEXT YEAR
(SAMPLE SIZE: 53)

TREE ESTABLISHMENT

The number of trees planted each year provides an indication of the scale and scope of our operations. However, ensuring those trees establish and thrive is essential to demonstrate true impact.

Trees for Cities sets a high benchmark of success for our in-house delivery programme in London. Over recent years, we have invested in strengthening our tree establishment data and processes so that we can better monitor establishment rates.

We can now assess methodologies used by our network of delivery partners across the UK, who use a variety of standards and specifications. Moving forward we will be better able to support our partners to address common challenges with tree establishment through better communications, forums and shared resources.



TREES FOR CITIES' BENCHMARK OF SUCCESS

85% OF WOODLAND TREES (WHIPS) THRIVING ONE YEAR AFTER PLANTING AND **95%** OF STANDARD TREES THRIVING AFTER THREE YEARS.

WHIPS PLANTED BY TREES FOR CITIES IN 2022-23 AND MAINTAINED OVER ONE SEASON IN LONDON RECORDED **91%** ESTABLISHMENT RATE BY 2023-24.

STANDARD TREES PLANTED BY TREES FOR CITIES IN 2020-21 AND MAINTAINED OVER THREE SEASONS IN LONDON RECORDED **98%** ESTABLISHMENT RATE BY 2023-24.

OF ALL TREES DELIVERED BY UK PARTNERS IN 2022-23 AND MAINTAINED DURING 2023-24, REGIONAL ESTABLISHMENT RATES ACROSS PARTNER-LED PROJECTS VARIED BETWEEN **35% TO 75%**.



“A TRULY FANTASTIC EVENT - THERE WAS SO MUCH TO DO AND IT REALLY HELPS YOU BECOME PRESENT AND IN THE MOMENT BY CONNECTING WITH NATURE.”

Volunteer
Horsenden Home Field



PLANTING THE UK'S URBAN FOREST



URBAN TREE CHALLENGE FUND

We have a long history of prioritising places where the need for trees is greatest, gearing our projects towards increasing tree equity and reducing inequalities in access to the benefits of urban trees.

Some national government grants are designed with this purpose in mind, and so in addition to accessing these grants ourselves, we also help others to access them so key partners can also fund work against this agenda.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund is a government grant available in England through the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) Nature for Climate Fund. Managed by the Forestry Commission, it is specifically designed to deliver new trees in places where tree cover is lower, and high levels of deprivation exist. As this so closely matches our mission to increase tree equity, we again prioritised accessing this grant together with local authority and other partners, collating projects across multiple areas and presenting them as one central bid to deliver efficiencies and unblock individual resource constraints.

Building on previous years of navigating and accessing this fund, we enabled partners to access this key source of funding so they could plant new trees and continue to establish those from previous years'

planting. In 2023, we were delighted to secure a further £2,525,412 through the grant's fifth round, which will support the planting and establishment for thousands of new trees over the coming years. To date, we've worked with over 30 partners to secure funding for new planting across 29 different towns and cities, enabling the planting and establishment of nearly 11,000 trees (over 2,000 in 2023-24) including in Rotherham, Great Yarmouth, Portsmouth, Croydon and Tower Hamlets.

All of these projects contributed towards increasing tree equity, and ensured planting efforts are successful long term. These kinds of grants will continue to be crucial in the future, and so we look forward to working with the government and partners to keep going, and also to help shape future schemes.

A LIVING LEGACY FOR HIS MAJESTY'S CORONATION

In partnership with the Royal Warrant Holders Association, we were honoured to deliver a national project to plant trees in the UK's capital cities to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. In collaboration with local communities, this initiative aimed to bring significant social benefits and enrich biodiversity for current and future generations.

Beginning in October 2023, the project saw the planting of 50 large trees (standards) and 1,000 saplings across ten projects in Edinburgh, London, Cardiff, and Belfast. In Belfast we planted a medley of trees under the "Trees for Amenity" initiative, enhancing the city's scenic beauty. In London, the project included "Trees for Beauty", with new planting of Scots pine, strawberry trees, and cedars. The "Trees for Shade" initiative at Cayley Primary School redesigned the playground to provide a cool, relaxing space for pupils.

Cardiff's schools have benefited from "Trees for Learning," transforming playgrounds with tree circles and small orchards for forest school and play. The project culminated in Edinburgh, with the "Trees for Food" initiative seeing fruit trees and a wildlife hedgerow planted in the capital.

This celebration of His Majesty's Coronation year symbolises a lasting legacy of community engagement and environmental enrichment across the UK.

FUNDERS

- Royal Warrant Holders Association

PARTNERS

- Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust
- The City of Edinburgh Council
- Belfast City Council
- Tower Hamlets Council
- Cardiff Trowbridge Primary School
- Coed Caerdydd

“ WE HAD SUCH A GOOD DAY. SO MANY CHILDREN CAME IN AND STOOD NEAR THE TREES THEY'D PLANTED, TALKING ABOUT THEM. THEY WENT HOME EXCITED, TALKING TO THEIR FAMILIES, WHO THEN CAME IN TO SEE THE TREES. I'M SO GRATEFUL TO BE INCLUDED IN PROJECTS WHICH ARE EXCITING AND LIFE-CHANGING, INSTEAD OF DRIVEN BY DATA SETS AND LEAGUE TABLES. ”

Nic Naish
Head Teacher at Trowbridge Primary School in Cardiff



GREENING SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS



With the support of children and teachers, we reimagined and redesigned playgrounds into new vibrant green oases; introducing trees, forest gardens, food growing and outside classrooms. We worked with dozens of schools across the UK in 2023-24. Here we've highlighted a few of these transformative projects.

TREES IN SCHOOLS

Our Trees in Schools projects involve planting trees, hedges, small woodlands, and forest gardens around school sites, including tall, dense hedges along perimeters. This initiative provides shade, enhances tree species diversity, intercepts rainfall, improves soil quality, provides wildlife habitat, and beautifies the area.

One of our first school projects in Scotland took place at Noble Primary School in Bellshill, North Lanarkshire, supported by our delivery partner, Eadha Enterprises. The whole school had the opportunity to take part, planting 12 large standard trees, 250 whips, and four fruit trees in their school grounds. We will continue working with Noble Primary School as part of our year-long engagement, providing training and workshops to encourage staff and pupils to maintain the trees they have planted.

“ I WAS MUCKY BUT I LOVED IT! ”
Noble Primary School student

At Elthorne Park High School in Hanwell, London, our first secondary school project, the Eco Club played an important part in supporting the creation of a biodiversity map and consulting on tree species. Pupils also helped plant 25 standards in the nearby park, adding towards the biodiversity of the area. Through workshops, the Eco Club have been learning about the urban heat island effect, using infrared thermometers to measure temperature differences under trees, in green spaces and in built-up, concreted areas.

“ OUR SCHOOL IS BLOOMIN' LOVELY. WE HAD GREAT RESPONSES FROM OUR STUDENTS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN PLANTING. MANY ARE ASKING ABOUT WHEN THE NEXT PLANTING SESSION IS. ”
Lead teacher at Elthorne Park High School

FUNDERS

Noble Primary School

- Mohn Westlake Foundation

Elthorne Park High School

- Mohn Westlake Foundation
- IG Index Limited
- John Lyon's Charity

SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS AT SCHOOLS IN LEWISHAM

The sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) primary school programme, in partnership with the London Borough of Lewisham, transforms school grounds in areas of deprivation and high flood risk. This initiative aims to reduce surface water flooding, enhance outdoor learning, and improve health and wellbeing for pupils and staff.

Our design team incorporates the planting of new trees for tree pits to act as soakaways, as well as redirecting roof water into raised beds, which slows down the water going into below ground drainage systems. These have the added benefit of providing shade on hot days, and a gardening space to grow vegetables and fruits.

In Rathfern Primary School, members of their Eco Committee were keen to get involved in the planting, which included a rain garden, three new trees, several downpipe planters, and raised flower beds. Children from Years 2, 3, and 5 planted over 70 perennials in raised beds and downpipe planters. Despite the wettest February on record in the south of England, the teachers reported there had been no flooding in the school grounds.

At John Stainer Primary School we added three trees and a variety of flowering plants and grasses to attract pollinators and create a rain garden. Year 5 pupils planted over 70 perennials in raised beds and downpipe planters.

FUNDERS

- Lewisham Council
- Lloyds of London Foundation
- Deptford Park Primary School
- Lancashire Foundation
- Department for Education
- Thames Water
- Mayor of London

Both pupils and staff participated in workshops on SuDS and climate change, enhancing their outdoor learning experiences.

At Deptford Park Primary School, two main areas were planted. In the junior playground, four new trees and over 200 perennials were added with help from landscape architecture students from the University of Greenwich. In the infant playground, over 100 perennials and two trees were planted by pupils from Years 2, 3, 4, and 5.

All three schools are supported by our Schools team, who provide workshops and resources for teachers to support outdoor lessons, and engage pupils in the importance of greening our towns and cities to combat climate change.

ONLY 35% OF PUPILS AT RATHFERN PRIMARY SCHOOL REPORTED A HIGH CONNECTION TO NATURE BEFORE WE BEGAN THE PROJECT WITH THEM, DEMONSTRATING THE NEED FOR GREENER PLAYGROUNDS IN SCHOOLS SUCH AS RATHFERN.

Sample of 62 pupils

OVER 30% OF PUPILS AT JOHN STAINER PRIMARY SCHOOL DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A GARDEN AT THEIR HOME.

Sample of 47 pupils



GREENING SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS



EDIBLE PLAYGROUNDS

Meon Junior School in Portsmouth is part of the M3 family of schools and the Thinking Schools Academy Trust and is dedicated to fostering nature connection despite its small site.

The school was keen to transform their astroturfed space into a vibrant Edible Playground for its 351 pupils, creating a space in a nature-deprived courtyard for learning about and growing food. Each class was given a garden bed to look after, and planted fruit bushes and sowed a wide variety of vegetable seeds.

The Edible Playground has added much-needed green space, providing students with opportunities to grow food and enhance their school grounds with greenery and habitats.

92% OF PUPILS THINK THAT TREES IN TOWNS AND CITIES ARE IMPORTANT

Sample of 83 pupils from Meon Junior School

16% OF PUPILS DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO A GARDEN AT THEIR HOME

Sample of 83 pupils from Meon Junior School

FUNDERS

- Portsmouth City Council

PLANTING HEALTHY AIR

Our Planting Healthy Air programme targets schools where air pollution is particularly poor, and redesigns their outdoor areas to help create greener, healthier playgrounds for learning and play.

St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School is located directly on the A13 in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, a road heavy with traffic and bus routes, causing the air in the area to be more polluted than the London average. An important aspect of this project has been to provide shrubs and climbing plants along the school ground perimeters that run parallel to roads, helping to reduce the amount of vehicle pollution that comes into the playground.

An outdoor classroom area and further development on a food growing space have made for an engaging outdoor learning environment that both the pupils and the teachers can benefit from, supported by workshops from our Schools team on air quality monitoring and food growing.

FUNDERS

- Investec Bank plc
- A&O Shearman
- Postcode Green Trust
- St Mary and St Michael Catholic School



“HAVING TREES FOR CITIES VISIT OUR SCHOOL AND REBUILD AREAS THAT HADN'T SEEN LOVE FOR MANY YEARS, ENCOURAGED SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST VEGETABLE GROWING. THE PROJECT HAS ENRICHED OUTDOOR LEARNING AND AFTER SCHOOL GARDENING, AND ARE NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SCHOOL LIFE.”

Ms Fenton
Teacher at St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School

HEALTHY PLAYGROUNDS

Healthy Playgrounds are holistic playground redesigns using green interventions to suit the needs of the site and school community, helping tackle climate concerns like heat stress and declining biodiversity, and supported with education workshops and training.

We've been working with schools in Cardiff through match-funding from Cardiff Council since 2020. At Ysgol Glan Ceubal, school staff were eager for the project to integrate the wider community through food sharing, selling produce at local farmers' markets and healthy-eating workshops.

Through our delivery partners, Grow Cardiff, the students are learning how to grow an array of fruits, vegetables, and herbs, as well as how to start composting and the importance of soil health. Staff have been getting involved by developing their own food growing skills and looking at ways to incorporate their new garden into the yearly curriculum.

FUNDERS

- Ysgol Glan Ceubal
- Mohn Westlake Foundation
- Tokio Marine HCC
- The Newby Trust

CULTIVATING MENTAL WELLBEING

At visits to some of our previous Edible Playground schools in Cardiff this year, the theme of wellbeing has been significant through observations and discussions in teacher interviews and pupil focus groups. This has highlighted ways in which an Edible Playground can help pupils feel good by connecting to nature.

In the interviews, pupils repeatedly shared feeling calm, happy and safe: "I feel safe and happy in the garden" said one pupil, with another similarly stating "I feel happy. I like to look at the plants growing". School staff have echoed these sentiments, with one staff member noting the positive emotions they felt in the Edible Playground, stating that they "absolutely love it" and feel "just as excited as the kids".

As well as fostering positive emotions, the Edible Playgrounds have also provided a calming environment where pupils can regulate negative emotions, with one pupil stating that "every time I'm frustrated, I can go to the Edible Playground".



“THE CHILDREN ARE OVER-EXCITED AT FIRST BUT AFTER TWO MINUTES THEY CALM DOWN. THEY ARE BUSY IN THE SOIL, IT'S GROUNDING FOR THEM.”

Staff Member
Cardiff School

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF IMPACT

November 2023 marked three decades of Trees for Cities, which has seen us plant nearly 1.9 million trees. From our beginnings in London, we've branched out our operations to work in 89 towns and cities across the UK and 10 countries around the world, including over 300 schools over the last 30 years. We've seen increasing urgency for urban trees for both people and the planet in ways we couldn't have imagined.



In November 2023, we kicked off the celebrations for our 30th anniversary with a campaign called Talking Trees. As we work towards planting our two-millionth urban tree milestone, we want to celebrate the voices and stories of the people who have helped to plant and protect all of those trees.

The campaign will run throughout 2024 with a focus on reaching and engaging thousands of people, helping us spread awareness of urban trees, giving the public a chance to plant and protect more trees and support fundraising.

In 2023, we ran a huge planting event at Horsenden Home Field on 2 December to mark the start of our 30th anniversary celebrations, with 151 volunteers joining us to plant a new woodland. We took part in the Big Give match-funding campaign, where donors helped us raise over £55,000 towards planting more trees in towns and cities.

As well as celebrating our impact on the ground, Talking Trees also celebrates the stories of staff, volunteers and communities behind the trees we plant and protect. We were proud to celebrate our 'women behind the urban trees' on International Women's Day, in line with the theme of #InspireInclusion, and caught up with our urban forest team colleagues on location to find out what they love about a career that gets them out and about in nature.

“OUR AIM SHOULD BE FOR SUSTAINABILITY ORGANISATIONS AND BUSINESSES TO HAVE AN EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE THAT IS EQUALLY ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE. IT'S OUR HOPE THAT WE CAN INSPIRE OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO HIRE ON AN EQUITABLE BASIS, OFFERING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE, ON A BEST-FIT-FOR-ROLE BASIS.”

Kate Sheldon
Chief Executive



During Children's Mental Health Week in February 2024, we shone a light on the growing mental health crisis, especially in urban and built-up areas, where young people are becoming increasingly disconnected from nature. Through Talking Trees, we highlighted our vital work in schools across the UK to put children's needs and wellbeing at the forefront of our planning.

Thousands of people across the UK - volunteers, partners, children and businesses - have worked tirelessly with us over the years digging, watering, and caring for trees, as well as donating and cheering us on in parks, estates, streets and schools. We couldn't have done it without them.



THANKS

THROUGH 2023/24, OUR COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS REACHED OVER **4.1 MILLION PEOPLE**, ENGAGED OVER **260K SUPPORTERS**, AND RECEIVED OVER **1,280 DONATIONS.**

THANK YOU!

CONNECTING THE NEXT GENERATION TO NATURE

Our youth engagement projects invite young volunteers across the UK to learn about and connect with urban forests. With in-person tree planting, research on youth and nature connection and other activities, we inspire and upskill the next generation of tree advocates.

Our 2023-24 Youth Programme brought together 34 volunteers from across London to take action for the climate and help create dynamic and biodiverse green spaces for everyone to enjoy.

We strive to improve our programmes and actively used recommendations from 2022-23's successful programme to shape our 2023-24 programme:



YOUTH PANEL

We are collaborating with nine young people from Glasgow, Bradford, and London to explore young people's connection to—and accessibility of—local urban forests, parks and green spaces. The group has developed a nationwide survey to collect data on how and why young people use these spaces, and the way they make them feel which will directly influence our forest and garden design projects in schools and communities.

By involving young people, we ensure our initiatives are both relevant and impactful, ultimately inspiring more youth to enjoy and benefit from local green spaces.



GENERATION TREE

Our Youth Programme is primarily funded by the Trees Call to Action Fund through a London Urban Forest Partnership project led by the Greater London Authority.

The fund was developed by Defra in partnership with the Forestry Commission and is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

“ I LIKED THAT IT WAS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE YOUTH. I UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGING THE CURRENT GENERATION TO BE INTERESTED, SO I LIKED THAT IT WAS A SPECIFIC PROGRAMME FOR US. I FELT MORE MOTIVATED BECAUSE OF THAT. ”

Youth Programme Participant

“ BEING IN GREENSPACE MAKES YOU FEEL SO GOOD. I LOVE HAVING BREAKS IN BETWEEN UNIVERSITY TO GO SIT IN A PARK AND BE AROUND NATURE. ”

Feedback from survey led by Youth Panel

2022-23 RECOMMENDATIONS

More focused sessions on tree establishment and maintenance

More focused sessions on how to plan for a tree planting session/event

More focused sessions on how to effectively promote urban trees, and the importance of doing this

Sign-post Youth Programme members to further opportunities at the end of the programme, to help enable further action for urban trees

2023-24 RESULTS

All eight of the endline survey respondents reported that they learned or developed skills regarding planting/looking after urban trees since taking part in the programme

Participants understand what it takes to establish trees in the right places in the right way, from pre-planning the environmental logistics to the community involvement required for maintenance¹

Participants gained confidence in how to plant, protect and promote urban trees²

Participants have gone on to take part in further opportunities with Trees for Cities such as working on marketing campaigns or becoming a volunteer planting supervisor

Looking ahead we will continue to shape this programme with the feedback from the young people we work with, to ensure valuable engagement and long-term impact for the 2024-25 programme.

¹ Increased knowledge and skills was evidenced through qualitative interviews

² Based on baseline and endline surveys from participants, the average scores of confidence in planting, promoting and looking after trees increased across the board

CONNECTING THE NEXT GENERATION TO NATURE

YOUTH VOICES

Catherine took part in both our Youth Programme and our Youth Panel, and has secured an internship at Kew Gardens after completing both programmes.

“As someone who has always been passionate about protecting the environment, I signed up to the Youth Programme in order to learn more about trees and woodlands, have a positive impact in London’s green spaces, and gain an insight into how an environmental charity works.

During the programme, I particularly enjoyed meeting like-minded people and interacting with others at community planting days, which made the events both educational and fun! I had never planted a tree before, and being able to apply what I had learnt in following sessions was incredibly satisfying. I also signed up for the Youth Panel, which has been a really interesting experience learning about and understanding young people’s relationships with their local green spaces.

Taking part in both the programme and the panel has reinforced my interest in pursuing a career in nature conservation, and granted me with valuable practical, communication and research skills in order to do so.”



Catherine (left) with other Youth Programme participants

“IT’S BEEN GREAT TO BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO TREES FOR CITIES’ MISSION, AND I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE RESULTS!”



Saul completed the Youth Programme in 2022-23 and supported the lead of the 2023-24 programme as a Youth Volunteer Planting Supervisor.

In autumn and winter 2023, Saul completed a work experience placement with the Urban Forest team to support the delivery of our tree maintenance days. Saul really enjoyed his time with the Urban Forest team, getting the chance to visit lots of historic and new projects across the London Borough of Ealing and more tree-planting experience.

“The climate crisis can feel quite overwhelming... where do I start? What can I do? You might do litter picking, which is great, but sometimes the options are underwhelming.

You don’t have to go really really big. You can make a difference doing stuff like this, going to a planting day, and there’s loads of great opportunities and organisations that young people can get involved with.”



Saul

“YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE DOING STUFF LIKE THIS, GOING TO A PLANTING DAY, AND THERE’S LOADS OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN GET INVOLVED WITH.”



Shannon (left) with Catherine

Shannon completed the Youth Programme in 2023-24 and found it complemented her studies and work in sustainability.

“The Youth Programme has allowed me to learn about the greenery around me in the city I call home. We’ve done some pretty cool events on tree identification and learned how London’s green spaces have changed for good and bad over the years.

I think it is really important to educate communities about their local green spaces and the benefits of urban tree planting, and I love getting to learn alongside them!

Although the Youth Programme has ended, I still plan to volunteer as much as possible as I really enjoyed my experience.”

“THE YOUTH PROGRAMME HAS ALLOWED ME TO LEARN ABOUT THE GREENERY AROUND ME IN THE CITY I CALL HOME.”

SPECIAL THANKS TO PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

Trees for Cities raises funds from a variety of sources including trusts and foundations, lotteries, corporates and members of the public as well as government initiatives, local authorities, landowners and schools. We are incredibly grateful for our partners and funders who enable Trees for Cities to deliver greener, healthier cities across the UK.

PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY: POSTCODE GREEN TRUST



In 2023 we were delighted to receive funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery, growing our long-standing relationship and improving lives by planting trees in cities. Funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery and awarded by Postcode Green Trust have allowed us to deliver our most successful UK Urban Forest programme to date with creativity, innovation, agility and lasting impact.

ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION



We work closely with the US-based Arbor Day Foundation, with a holistic relationship that has spanned many years. In 2023-24 the Arbor Day Foundation facilitated five corporate partnerships that collectively contributed over £140,000 to six projects within our Urban Forest programme across London and Glasgow. With special thanks to DraftKings, Enterprise Mobility, FedEx, Salesforce and UPS for their support and employees who volunteered during project planting.

Trees for Cities is also the national lead organisation in the UK for the Tree Cities of the World programme, a scheme led by Arbor Day in partnership with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. Since the scheme launched in 2019, the list of recognised cities has grown in the UK and we were delighted to see 26 local authorities across the country achieve the status this year.

FORESTRY COMMISSION



First launched in 2019, the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge Fund provides support not just for planting large trees, but also for associated protective equipment and additional watering costs, ensuring trees don't just establish but thrive. We are pleased to have secured a further £2.5 million in 2023-24, allowing us to deliver 3,711 new trees - bringing our total secured to date up to £5.22 million, seeing over 18,500 new trees nationally.

Through delivering this grant, our network of partners has continued to grow and we are delighted to have made new trees possible in over 25 towns and cities across England. We thank the Forestry Commission for their continued support through this grant.

NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND: BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER



Thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, we have been able to bring together people from different walks of life to connect with one another through a shared appreciation for trees and nature. Trees for Climate Action is connecting kids, young people and tree professionals in Bradford and Glasgow, to learn from one another about trees, how they improve our lives, and why and how to take care of them.

BRITISH STANDARDS INSTITUTION



Trees for Cities began an exciting partnership with the British Standards Institution (BSI) this year. BSI is funding over 30,000 trees with their employees volunteering to support project delivery.

BSI produces technical standards, including on planting and establishing trees and wider nature investment. We are proud to work alongside them to work towards a more sustainable world.

BUPA FOUNDATION



Our partnership with BUPA Foundation has continued to grow over the past year, funding schools and communities across the UK for greener, healthier cities.

Building on their support of our schools programme, BUPA Foundation funded a Healthy Playground for St Luke's Primary School and an Edible Playground for Gainsborough Primary School. Our partnership expanded to urban forests with saplings and mature trees planted with communities in London, Burnley and Birmingham.

CITY BRIDGE FOUNDATION: LONDON'S BIGGEST INDEPENDENT FUNDER



City Bridge Foundation has supported Trees for Cities for over 10 years to help London become a greener, healthier and happier place to live. Our special partnership has allowed us to prioritise Londoners facing overlapping social and environmental deprivation and grow into our role as a leading voice for the London urban forest.

CARBON OFFSETTING

In summer 2023, we conducted an independent review of our carbon offset programme, after which we took the strategic decision to terminate the programme. Whilst this decision has had some financial impact on the organisation this year and has contributed to the reduced number of whips we have planted compared to previous years, we feel that it was the right course of action.



Urban trees deliver a vast array of benefits: creating wildlife habitat and supporting biodiversity, stabilising our soils, improving our health and wellbeing, and helping our cities adapt to climate change by intercepting rainfall and cooling the air. Trees in cities also sequester and store carbon, all trees do, but for a myriad of reasons - the fabric of our cities, the lifespan of urban trees and the stresses they live with - the rate of sequestration and scale of storage is often lower and more unpredictable than in rural areas.

Due to this and increasing challenges with delivering and managing large scale whip projects in built-up areas, we felt that the integrity of carbon offset in urban areas was compromised. The termination of our carbon offset programme has allowed us to focus our energies towards building and scaling our model of urban tree planting with communities where we have the greatest authentic impact. Going forward, there are exciting options for the charity to develop distinctive high-integrity, nature-based carbon packages for corporate partners, outside the offset structure, that are arguably better suited to our model of urban tree planting with communities.

PEOPLE PLAN

We have ambitious plans for the future, none of which will be achievable without a diverse and motivated workforce. We strive to be an employer of choice, which cultivates, develops and supports its people and talent.

“ I TREASURE THE TREES FOR CITIES CULTURE IN MANY WAYS AND I AM EXCITED ABOUT THE CURRENT GROWTH IN THE TALENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AREAS. ”

Trees for Cities staff member



Our 2023 employee engagement survey told us that staff would recommend Trees for Cities as a great place to work, and helped us to identify areas for further improvement. Acting on this, we embarked on an ambitious People Plan that set out how we can deliver on our priorities by attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining talent.

Key actions achieved included:

- Investing in a new Senior Leadership Team with three new Director posts to boost our leadership capacity
- Reviewing and improving our recruitment, induction and performance management processes to ensure the best possible employment experience for staff

- Broadening our Corporate Ethics Policy into a comprehensive Funding Ethics Policy
- Developing a new Urban Forestry Handbook for non-delivery staff to hone their sector knowledge
- Creating a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee to implement our EDI policy
- Investing in office and IT improvements to increase efficiency and comfort
- Appointing a new HR Trustee to the Board



Our 2024 survey reflects significant improvements in employee satisfaction since 2023:



Communication between senior leaders and employees is good at Trees for Cities
2023: 21% 2024: 71%



I am satisfied with the culture of Trees for Cities
2023: 62% 2024: 90%



Senior management and employees trust each other
2023: 36% 2024: 61%

Based on a 93% survey response rate in 2023 and a 78% response rate in 2024, out of 58 members of staff

“ THE ATMOSPHERE IN OUR TEAM MEANS THAT EVERYBODY WORKS HARD, LOOKS OUT FOR EACH OTHER AND ENJOYS COMING TO WORK EVERY DAY. ”

Trees for Cities staff member

“ WE WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER OUR PEOPLE PLAN IN 2024, FOCUSING ON CREATING A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, AND STAFF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING. OUR PEOPLE ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR SUCCESS AS AN ORGANISATION AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON OUR CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY AND PERSONAL GROWTH. ”

Trees for Cities staff member

MY CO-EMPLOYEES AND I HAVE A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP

93%

I UNDERSTAND HOW MY WORK IMPACTS TREES FOR CITIES' BUSINESS

96%

TREES FOR CITIES WORK POSITIVELY IMPACTS PEOPLE'S LIVES

96%

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

£2,095,201 (40.1%)
CORPORATE PARTNERS

£1,832,299 (34.9%)
GRANTS

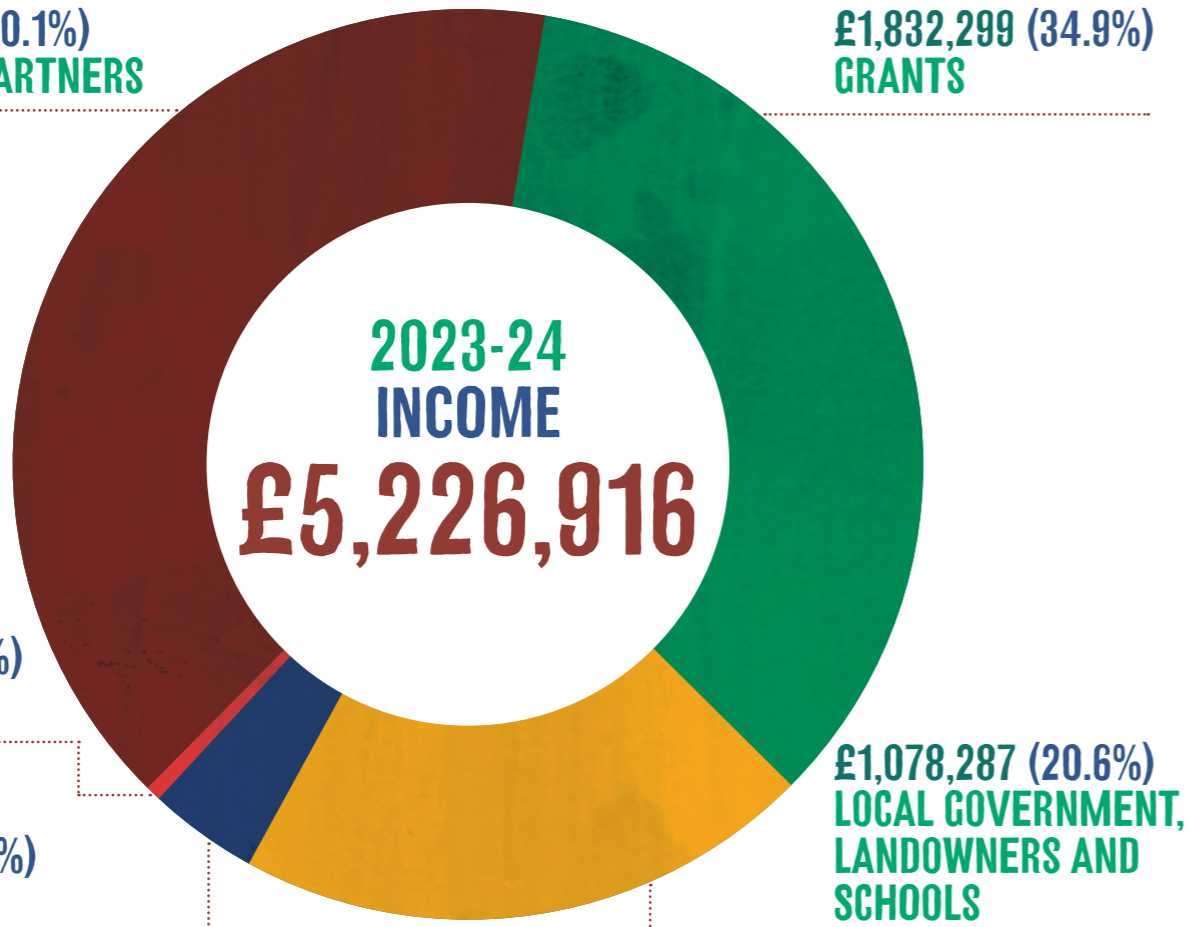
£3,105,787 (53.7%)
URBAN FORESTS

£29,664 (0.5%)
URBAN FORESTS -
INTERNATIONAL

£500,844 (8.7%)
RAISING FUNDS

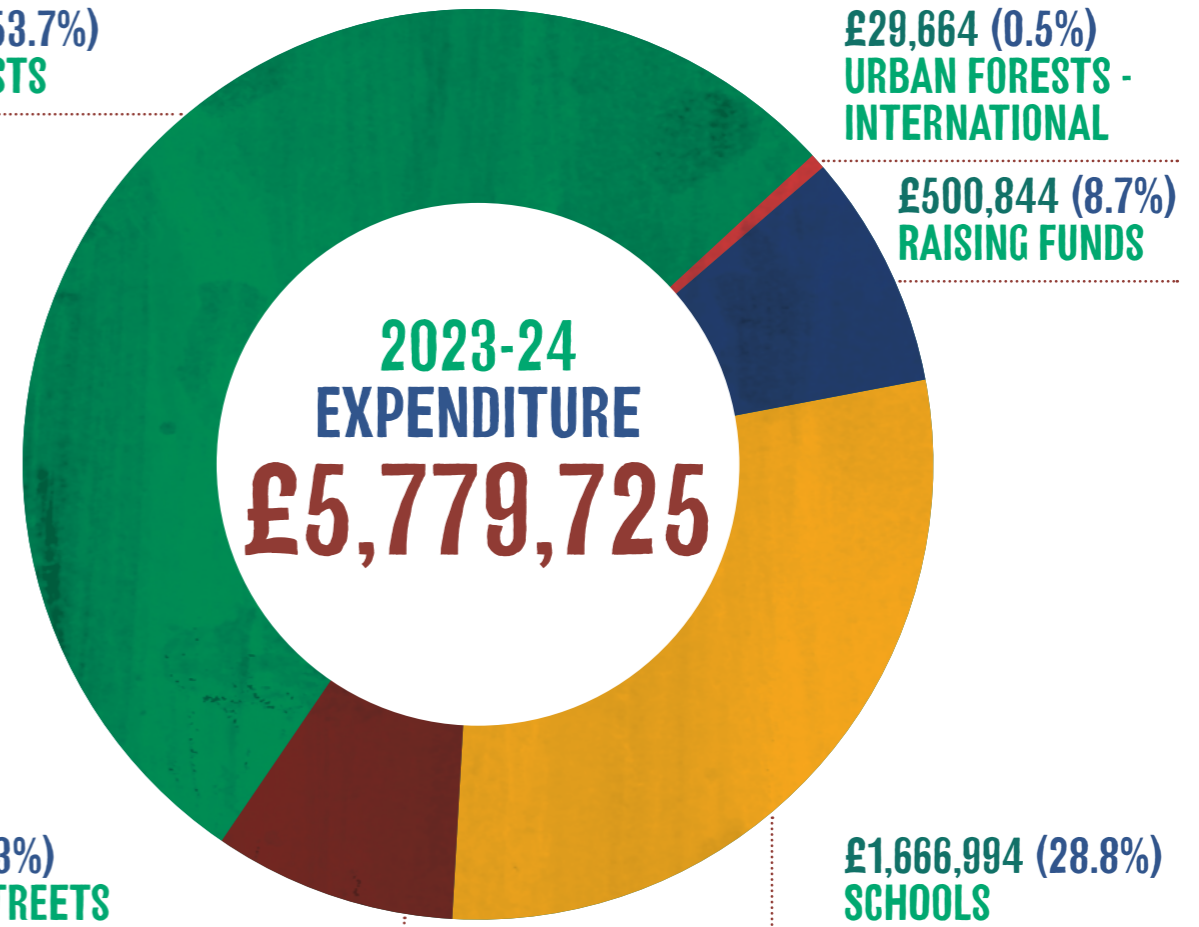
£25,357 (0.5%)
OTHER

£195,772 (3.7%)
INDIVIDUALS



£476,436 (8.3%)
TREES FOR STREETS

£1,666,994 (28.8%)
SCHOOLS

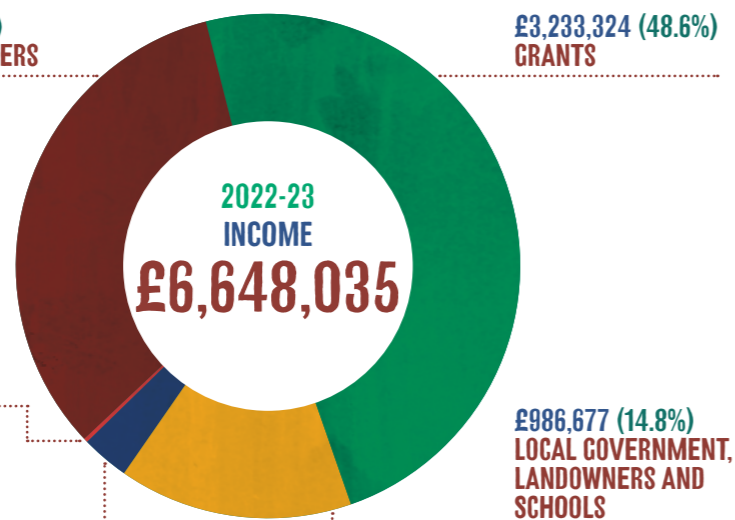


£2,212,193 (33.3%)
CORPORATE PARTNERS

£3,233,324 (48.6%)
GRANTS

£12,437 (0.2%)
OTHER

£203,404 (3.1%)
INDIVIDUALS



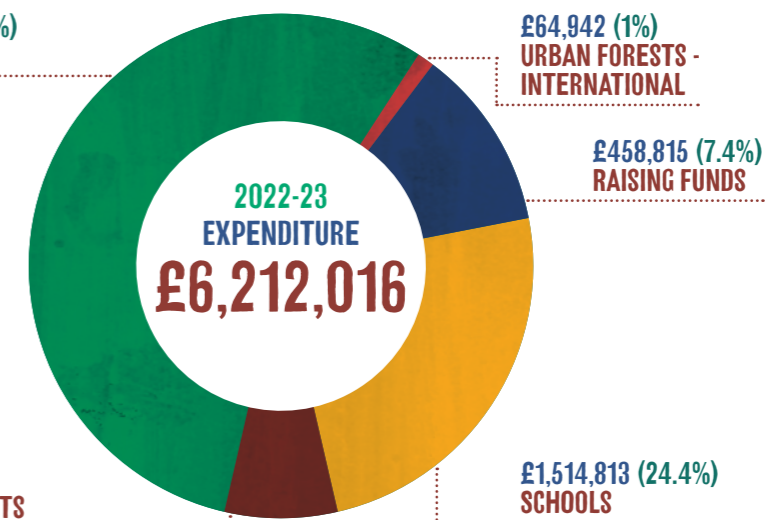
£3,451,415 (55.6%)
URBAN FORESTS

£64,942 (1%)
URBAN FORESTS -
INTERNATIONAL

£458,815 (7.4%)
RAISING FUNDS

£722,031 (11.6%)
TREES FOR STREETS

£1,514,813 (24.4%)
SCHOOLS



SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

We are hugely grateful to the following organisations and individuals, and those that have chosen to remain anonymous, for their generosity. It is their support that enables us to cultivate lasting change in towns and cities.

Registered with



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

£1,000-£9,999

Accenture UK Ltd	Edrington UK Distribution Ltd	Mark Petterson	Springwood Primary School
Adobe Systems Ltd.	Everpress	Marriott Hotels Limited	St Alban's RC Primary School
AHMM	Fairwater Primary School	Mayor of London	St John Lloyd RC Primary School
All Aboard Charity Shops Limited	FTI Consulting	Merck via Langland	St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School
A&O Shearman	Get Living London Limited	National Lottery Heritage Fund	St Paul's Primary School
Ansell and Bailey	Gloucestershire County Council	Ninja Theory	Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust
Arbor Day Foundation	Gort Scot	Nord Anglia Education	Temasek International Europe Limited
Arbuthnot Latham & Co., Limited	Gravis Capital Management	Northwood Hygiene Products LTD	TEMCO
AXA Insurance UK Plc	GreenZone Cleaning and Support Services Ltd	Oakfield Primary School	Thames Water Utilities Ltd
Bank of China (UK) Limited	Hana Group	OneTreePlanted	The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy
Barmston Village Primary School	Hetton Lyons Primary Academy, Balmoral Learning Trust	Peabody Trust	The D'Oyly Carter Charitable Trust
Bedford Borough Council	Hewlett Packard Enterprise	Peak School	Thornhill Primary School
Biddenham Parish Council	Holy Family RC Primary School	Pemberton Asset Management Services UK Limited	TMHCC
Black + Blum	Horizon	Pen Y Bryn Primary School	Todd Doors Ltd
Blackpool Council	HOWARD KENNEDY LLP	Queens Park Primary School	Travel Matters
Bryn Hafod Primary School	HSBC UK BANK PLC	Queensmead Primary Academy	Trowbridge Primary School
Caldecote Primary	Ian Chan International Fan Club	Reading Borough Council	University of Bristol
Cayley Primary School	Ian Mactaggart Trust	Recorra Ltd	West Ham Church Primary School
Chapman Charitable Trust	ICBC Standard Bank	Red Inc Paper	Whetley Academy
Charles Glanville	Jim Attwood	Reedsy	Wild Cosmetics
Chestnut Lodge School	Jones Knowles Ritchie Ltd	Risley Avenue Primary School	William Henderson
Circle Health Group	JP Morgan	Rumney Primary School	Wixams Parish Council
Coventry City Council	Kate's Kitchen	Sapling Spirits	WPJ Heating
Crawford Primary School	KPMG LLP	Selena Gray	Ysgol Glan Ceubal
Cycas Lower Marsh Ltd	Krankbrother	Sensory Trust	
DDGI Limited	Lancashire Foundation	Seven Mills Primary School	
Deptford Park Primary School	Land Life Company	Shanly Foundation	
Ecology Building Society	Llanederyn Primary School	Sheffield City Council	
Ecosia	Lloyd's of London Foundation	Southmead Development Trust	
EcoVadis			
Edes UK Ltd			

£10,000 AND ABOVE

Barnet Borough Council	Haringey Council	Palmer Hargreaves (Bosch)
Benefact Group	Hays Specialist Recruitment (UK&I)	Portsmouth City Council
Bloomberg L.P.	HomeGround Management Ltd	Postcode Green Trust - thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery
Bristol City Council	IG	PwC UK
British Standard Institute Group	Investec Bank plc	Raymond James
BUPA Foundation	Islington Borough Council	Roffey Homes
Cambourne Town Council	Jet2	Royal Warrant Holders Association
Cambridge City Council	John Ellerman Foundation	Salesforce via Arbor Day Foundation
Cardiff Council	John Lyon's Charity	The Dulverton Trust
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	Kusuma Trust UK	The Queen's Green Canopy
City Bridge Foundation	Leeds City Council	Tokio Marine HCC
Clear Channel	Lisa Anderson	Tokio Marine Kiln Group Limited
Croydon Climate Action via Change Drivers	London Borough of Bexley	Tower Hill Trust
Croydon Council	London Borough of Ealing	UPS via Arbor Day Foundation
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs	London Borough of Harrow	Worthing Borough Council
DraftKings via Arbor Day Foundation	London Borough of Hillingdon	
Enterprise Mobility via Arbor Day Foundation	London Borough of Lewisham	
FedEx via Arbor Day Foundation	London Borough of Merton	
Fenstanton Primary School	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	
Festival Republic Ltd	Lund Trust	
Forestry Commission	Metal Developments Ltd (Woodwarm Stoves)	
G . F Smith	Mohn Westlake Foundation	
Gainsborough Primary School Hackney	MOJU Ltd	
Golden Acre Foods	National Lottery Community Fund	
Good-Loop Ltd	Newby Trust	
Greater London Authority	Npower Limited	
GT Gettaxi (UK) Ltd	Olive & Orange Ltd (Brand: Orla Kiely)	
	Oliver Bonas Ltd	

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