



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2025-2026



Message from the CEO



This year marked the start of an exciting new chapter for Trees for Cities as we launched our new strategy — **“Make Trees Matter!”** — a rallying call for all of us to value trees more highly, care for them more consistently, and provide the resources they need to thrive.

Our goal to 2030 is to **Grow a Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity**, bringing people together so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of trees, regardless of where they live. At the heart of this ambition is our commitment to **tree equity**, focusing our efforts on underserved communities with the fewest trees.

I am proud of the progress we have made in the first year of implementing our strategy. We have strengthened our approach to precision urban forestry, directing planting where it is needed most and building deeper relationships with communities and local partners. Our pioneering **Tree Equity for Hartlepool** project truly demonstrates the impact of combining large-scale planting with meaningful community involvement.

As the climate crisis intensifies, we focus increasing efforts on helping our young trees to establish. With careful species selection, more watering and close monitoring, we are adapting our approach to ensure that the trees we plant today become the healthy urban forests of tomorrow.

This was also a landmark year as we planted our two millionth urban tree — an achievement made possible by thousands of volunteers over 33 years of tree planting.

Finally, I am pleased to report a year of financial recovery and renewed stability. My sincere thanks go to our funders, donors, partners and trustees whose continued support has helped build a stronger future for Trees for Cities.

Kate Sheldon

Kate Sheldon, CEO, Trees for Cities

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Our Impact in 2025/26

In March 2026 we were joined by Chris Packham CBE, Mete Coban MBE, and Qasa Alom to plant our two millionth urban tree.

Reaching this milestone was a moment of celebration and reflection.

It represents not only millions of trees across nearly 100 towns and cities, but also thousands of acts of support, participation and belief in our mission.



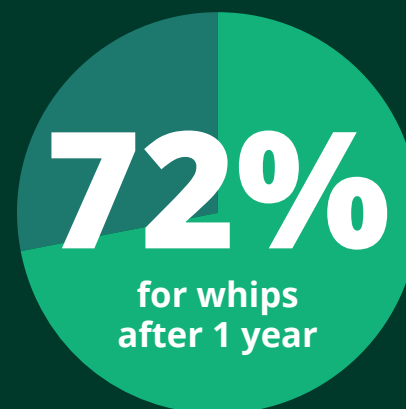
After attending an event with **Trees for Cities**, volunteers reported feeling **more closely connected to nature**.

Sample of 639-907 pre- and post-event survey responses

We planted
3,790
square meters of woodland across London, so that future generations can benefit from diverse and climate resilient urban landscapes.

Key Outcomes

Despite the challenges of summer heatwaves, in 2025/26 **our tree establishment rate was:**



This means that the trees we plant have the best chance to deliver benefits to their surrounding communities.

74%

of our volunteers planted a tree for the very first time.

Sample of 956 pre-event survey respondents

88%

of volunteers reported gaining new knowledge and skills in planting and looking after urban trees.

Sample of 680 post-event survey respondents

11,129

the number of steps our volunteers averaged after taking part in one of our events.

Sample of 53 post-event survey respondents

In 2025/26 we engaged

25,310
people

6,094

people were supported to plant, maintain and learn about trees.

2,514

people were engaged through Trees for Streets, our street tree sponsorship scheme.

15,608 1,094

school pupils & staff members benefitted from our interventions in schools.

Key Outputs

In 2025/26 we planted

58,021 trees

across 19 UK towns and cities,

driving precision urban forestry through targeted mapping of priority places with low tree equity.

This brings
our total trees
planted to date to

2,012,065

We have transformed
neighbourhood spaces across

**19 urban
areas**

including

50

parks

500+

streets

7

school
playgrounds

5

estates



Urban Nature

Warmer temperatures and prolonged dry periods are increasing the challenge of establishing young trees in urban environments. While trees play a vital role in supporting urban nature, improving air quality and cooling neighbourhoods, these benefits can only be realised if trees survive and reach maturity.

To improve establishment rates in a changing climate, **we are continuously adapting our approach. We have increased watering volumes from 50 litres to 60-70 litres per visit** wherever possible and trialled new watering techniques. We are also exploring new ways of building community involvement in tree care by piloting volunteer engagement opportunities and supporting volunteers to undertake maintenance activities. We are also strengthening establishment care through practices such as **pre-watering mulch before application to improve moisture retention around young trees.**

Alongside these operational improvements, we are reviewing how future planting schemes are designed. This includes **selecting tree species better suited to future climate conditions**, assessing ground preparation before planting, refining the number and arrangement of whips to improve maintenance access and completing whip planting by the end of February wherever possible.

We are also working with citizen scientists to better understand the impact of street trees on urban heat, helping us target future planting in areas most affected by high temperatures and maximise the cooling and shade benefits that trees provide.



A young Trees for Streets sponsor waters a newly planted street tree.



Climate Resilience

Trees are vital to improving the UK's climate resilience, particularly to adapt to urban heat and flooding.

In Cardiff and London, we've installed Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to prevent flooding in schools so that pupils have year-round access to outdoor spaces.

St John's Church of England Primary School in Barnet sits in a basin with clay foundations meaning that rain would pool on the grey tarmac, often denying the children a proper break for play outside. To combat this, we installed SuDS featuring ornamental grasses, shrubs and perennials as well as stepping stones and flood tolerant tree species such as the bird cherry tree.

These interventions now mean that the children at St John's not only have more time to play outside, but a greener, more engaging and resilient playground to explore.

“ *It's put the joy levels up of the school. It's prettier and calmer; the nature environment, that's what you feel around it.* **”**

Ronnie, Pupil at St John's Primary School, Barnet



When pupils of St John's school in Barnet could no longer play outside, Trees for Cities stepped in to create a climate-resilient playground using SuDS.





Health and Wellbeing

Trees have numerous well-documented physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits, from cleaning and cooling the air we breathe to significantly reducing people's levels of cortisol - a physiological marker of stress.

At Trees for Cities, we want to understand these health and wellbeing benefits specifically in the context of our local community planting events.

After an event, Trees for Cities' volunteers felt more connected to their community*, with 93% of community volunteers meeting new people**. On average, each volunteer met 6 new people***

Research shows that those with a strong sense of community connection are less likely to experience anxiety, depression, and isolation. At the heart of Trees for Cities events is fostering that sense of connection and helping people feel more connected to nature and to each other in an increasingly digital world.

*Sample of 106-140 community pre- and post-event survey responses

** Sample of 105 community post-event survey responses

*** Sample of 75 community post-event survey responses



“ It was great to feel part of a team, in the community and doing something worthwhile. It also helped with my isolation and depression. ”

Community Planting Volunteer



Volunteers at planting day in Manorway Green, Thamesmead.

Our Ambition

By 2030, our strategic goal is to Grow a Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity, mobilising communities to plant, protect, and advocate for trees where they are needed most.

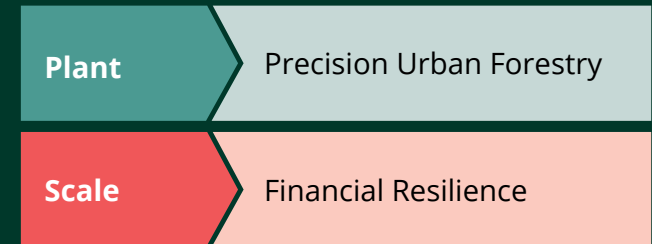
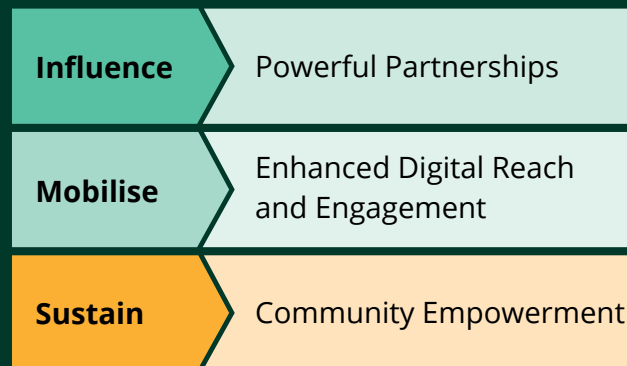
Movement-building is an essential step to harness the people power needed to tackle tree inequity and create leafy, liveable cities for current and future generations.

Our Approach

Underpinned by our Theory of Change, we will achieve our goal to Grow a Movement through five interlinked strategic pillars, through which we will **Influence** and **Mobilise** people to **Plant** and care for trees, **Sustain** the impact and **Scale** the opportunities across the UK.

By inspiring action, showcasing delivery, strengthening communities, and building financial resilience, we will move from isolated interventions to systemic change.

To achieve this, we are evolving from a project-led charity into a movement builder, focusing on five key strategic shifts under each pillar:



Inclusion is a core principle which underpins all planning, action and engagement. By embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at every level - people, processes, partnerships and strategy - we aim to advance both social and environmental justice, ensuring equitable access to trees and their multiple benefits in urban spaces.



Volunteers at Millwall Park in Tower Hamlets working together to plant 'Instant Impact' trees to improve the park's green space and screen against air pollution.



Influence Pillar

Powerful Partnerships

Partnerships are integral to our work, ensuring that we turn local delivery into wider influence. In the first year of our new strategy, we:

- Became a founding member of the Urban Forest Alliance, alongside the Woodland Trust, the National Trust and the Community Forest Trust
- Developed a Tree Equity for London plan and began in-depth conversations with the Greater London Authority about strategic collaboration
- Strengthened relationships with local authorities and built new connections in priority places with low tree equity such as Hartlepool
- Joined the Nature Towns and Cities partnership and contributed to Wildlife and Countryside Link's work on urban trees
- Secured vital core funding from trusted donors such as Postcode Lottery, Garfield Weston Foundation, Lund Trust, and Royal Bank of Canada.

Together, this work is helping to raise the profile of urban forestry and tree equity, while giving us a stronger platform to focus support where urban trees can make the greatest difference.

Our "Make Trees Matter!" strategy reinforces the need to invest in strategic, longer-term partnerships with shared ambition, values alignment and potential for deeper impact.

Case Study

Strengthening London's Urban Forest Through Partnership

Trees for Cities plays a pivotal role in the London Urban Forest Partnership, helping to turn 33 years of practical delivery experience into city-wide influence. In 2025, the Greater London Authority and Forestry Commission published an update to the London Urban Forest Plan, with Trees for Cities as a named lead on seven actions over the next five years.

These actions build directly on work already underway, including street tree opportunity mapping, tree-rich school greening, public participation in planting and stewardship, and career pathways into urban and community forestry. **In 2025/26, we continued to engage Londoners in community planting, delivered tree-rich greening schemes in 13 London schools,** and began translating mapping and ground-truthing into new programmes.

This work has strengthened our relationship with the Greater London Authority, positioning Trees for Cities as a key delivery partner for its emerging Tree Equity and Urban Resilience programme as well as informing London's new Heat Plan. Together, we are moving from strategic evidence to targeted delivery, helping to improve the city's resilience to the impacts of climate change and planting trees in the neighbourhoods where they are most needed.



Volunteers planting trees at Manorway Green in Thamesmead to diversify the tree stock so that future generations can benefit from trees outside their homes for years to come.



Sir Michael Palin delivers Trees for Cities BBC Radio 4 Appeal in November 2025.



Mobilise Pillar

Enhanced Digital Reach and Engagement

In 2025/26, we continued to grow our Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity, mobilising members of the public, partners and supporters to take meaningful actions through giving their time, voice and money.

- Delivered over **60,000 digital and direct actions** for urban trees and tree equity across social media, email, our donation platform and website
- Launched our national **'Trees for Hope' campaign** in October 2025, to build awareness of our work and support individual giving which included the broadcast of a **BBC Radio 4 Appeal** with long-term supporter and friend of the charity, Sir Michael Palin
- Raised over **£285,000 through individual donations**, gained over **9,000 new social media followers** and **1,500 new email subscribers**.

We also used this first year of our new strategic period to strengthen the foundations for future mobilisation and defined meaningful actions for urban trees and tree equity.

We will continue to develop urban tree resources and community-focused content, supported by engaging social media stories to inspire more people to get involved.

Case Study

Trees for Streets Putting The Green In West Green Road

Chloe, a resident in West Green, Haringey for over 14 years, spotted our labels on some newly planted sponsored street trees. She felt inspired to submit a crowdfunding interest form to plant trees on her local main roads. Large sections of the high street were devoid of trees, with some parts of the street with tree canopy cover as low as 10%.

Chloe's request reached our dedicated engagement team, who were thrilled to support a project to bring trees to the area.

Our team connected Chloe with local parents Nina and Kristina, who had already approached us about improving green infrastructure at nearby West Green Primary School, home to more than 200 pupils.

We also consulted local businesses so that new trees could be planted in suitable places without disrupting deliveries or day-to-day trade. Many businesses backed the campaign directly, including Perkyn's café, which donated and helped share the crowdfunder through its social media channels.

In total, **168 backers raised £6,155, helping to unlock 20 new instant-impact trees for West Green Road**, alongside three years of watering and maintenance. The result is a high street that is visibly greener, shaped by the people who use it every day.

“ We have a brilliant community here in West Green, and projects like this just emphasise that – we're grateful to Trees for Cities for helping to facilitate it. We're excited to see the trees grow and bloom, and in years to come they will stand as a really important legacy of community action in the area. ”

Nick, Trees for Street Advocate and Owner of Perkyn's café, Haringey



A newly planted street tree on West Green Road, Haringey.



Plant
Pillar

Precision Urban Forestry

Our team uses Tree Equity data to map the need for planting. Tree Equity mapping assigns areas with a score based on local tree canopy cover, employment and income rates, health and age data as well as heat and air pollution data. Recognising that this data leads us to where trees *should* go, we then build and work in partnerships to identify where trees *can* go and with the community to uncover where they are *wanted*. These three tests of *should* go, *can* go and *are wanted* are powerful tools in delivering targeted, precision urban forestry.

Throughout all our programmes we are guided by the [Nature Based Solutions Institute's 3-30-300 principle](#), which strives for everybody being able to see at least **three large trees** from their home, live in a neighbourhood with **30% tree canopy cover** and be no more than **300 metres from the nearest public green space**.

This enables us to maximise our impact and make efficient use of our time and resources. We have used this data to identify the ten greatest concentrations of Tree Inequity terming these areas "Priority Places", these include the following towns and cities in need of urban trees;

Hartlepool

Great Yarmouth

Grimsby

Tendring

Liverpool and

the Wirral

Greater London

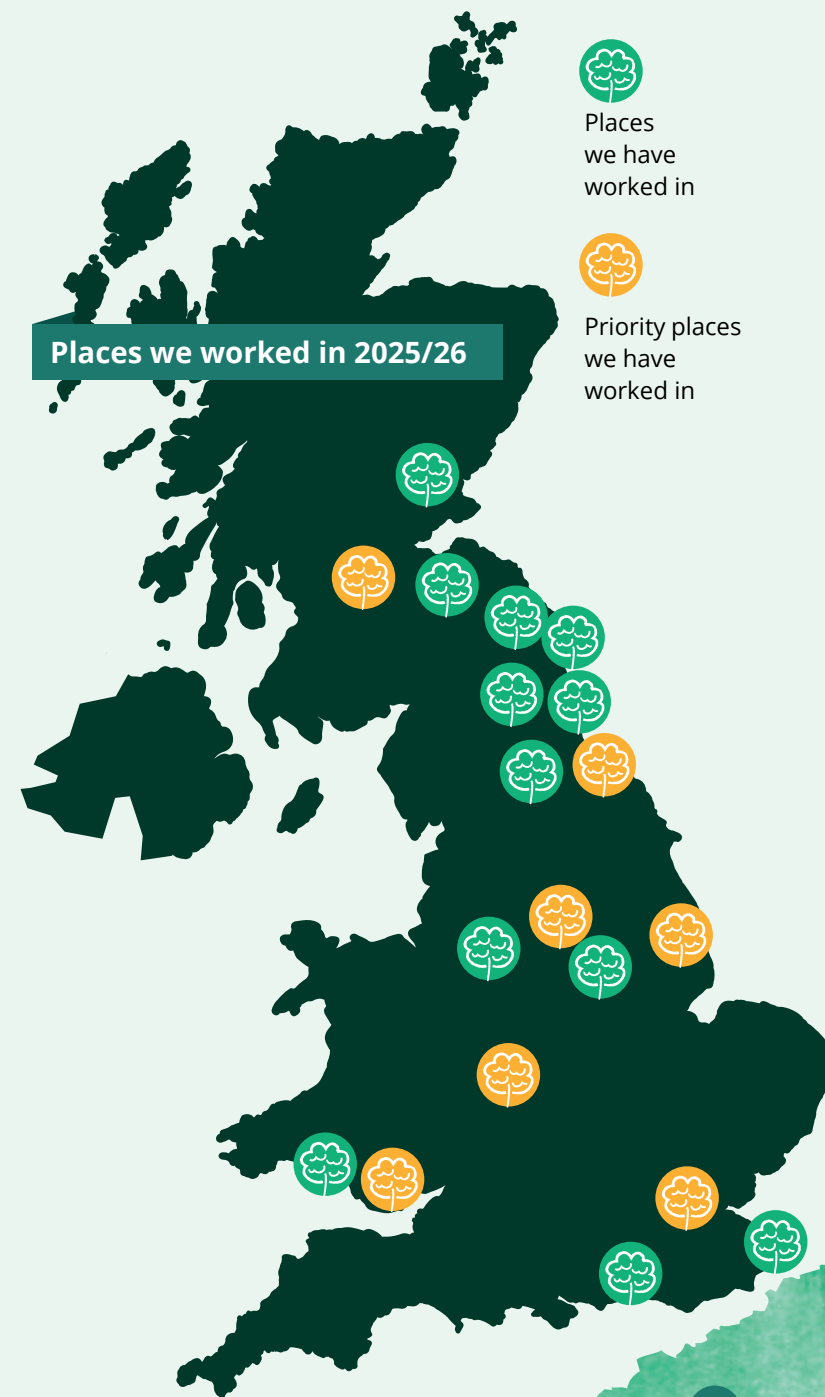
Leeds and Bradford

Birmingham

Glasgow

Cardiff

This year we have delivered strong progress on delivering tree equity work linked to climate, health and nature through our tree planting programmes. A successful first year of our multi-partner Tree Equity for Hartlepool project has shown that investing in a long-term intervention, bringing local and national partners together and boosting capacity on the ground can generate impact in a relatively short amount of time.



Case Study

Precision Planting In Tower Hamlets

This year, we continued to target urban forestry where it is most needed. In Tower Hamlets, our mapping and prioritisation matrix identified low levels of tree equity, very limited green space and high levels of child income deprivation, with **71.3% of children living in income-deprived households**.

Working closely with the council, we delivered a suite of green interventions across the borough in 2025/26, including **108 street trees, 526 trees in housing estates, 3 'instant impact' trees in schools and 46 trees in parks**.

We also focused planting where trees and hedging could help screen communities from air pollution. This included **215m² of hedging around Millwall Park and 88m² at Padstow and Bethlehem House Estate**, alongside a children's playground and well-used footpath.

With the support of the Bupa Foundation, we have installed air quality monitors to collect nitrogen dioxide data at these sites to track change over time, with initial baseline results suggesting levels at both sites currently fall outside World Health Organization (WHO) recommended exposure guidelines.

Together, this targeted work is improving access to greenery, helping cool local spaces and supporting longer-term action on air pollution in one of London's priority boroughs.



Volunteers at Padstow and Bethlehem House planting hedging around the estate perimeter with the aim of screening against air pollution in years to come.



Community Engagement Coordinator Lucie leading a guided sensory tree tour in Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets.



**Sustain
Pillar**

Empowering People To Engage With Urban Trees

At the heart of our Sustain Pillar is empowering people with the skills and resources to plant, establish and maintain urban trees, particularly in deprived, diverse and underserved communities.

We are proud to have engaged over 2,500 volunteers this year to plant, establish and maintain urban trees from London to Glasgow and Bristol to Hartlepool.

We've worked with people who face additional barriers to participation through our Collective Climate Repair project with the Sensory Trust, working closely with people who are D/deaf and hard of hearing, people who are blind or partially sighted and people who are neurodivergent to design accessible workshops on urban trees and nature.

For those we engaged at our planting and maintenance events, confidence in planting and maintaining trees increased from **3 out of 5** before one of our events, **to 4 out of 5** afterwards. (sample of 665-963 survey respondents).

To help boost young people's access to green careers we also hosted **three paid traineeships** across Bradford, Glasgow and Hartlepool, providing trainees with practical skills in urban forestry as well as in community engagement and marketing and communications.

Case Study

Driving Tree Equity In Hartlepool

Since launching in March 2025, the multi-partner **Tree Equity for Hartlepool** project has made a strong start in targeting tree planting and community engagement in areas experiencing acute tree inequity. In its first planting season, we planted **over 4,000 trees**, laying the foundations for long-term canopy growth.

The project is also building local confidence and care around Hartlepool's new urban forest. To date, **1,683 people have already taken part in planting days, workshops and wider community activities**, exceeding the original target of 1,500 across the whole project.

The project's strong partnership has been one of its greatest strengths and has grown to include practical support for the local team from local non-profit Living Woods and additional pathways for young people into employment from Hartlepool Borough Council. While there have been challenges, including damage to newly planted trees on some sites, the team is responding through repair, replanting and maintenance, helping build lasting stewardship for Hartlepool's new trees.

With ongoing thanks to



“ From volunteer-led planting, to activities for children, to cleaner air...this work will grow, quite literally, the joy of trees into our everyday lives. ”

Stuart Hobley,
Director of the Linbury Trust

Pupils from local schools got stuck in to plant new trees around Hartlepool's Phoenix Centre.

“ Postcode Lottery players have been supporting Trees for Cities since 2017 and have raised more than £1.6 million for the organisation, bringing people together to make a difference to their community and their planet. It's great to know that this funding is helping to plant thousands of trees across the UK to help tackle climate change, improve air quality and create greener spaces in towns and cities for everyone to enjoy. ”

Laura Chow,
Head of Charities at Postcode Lottery



**Scale
Pillar**

Build Foundations For Sustainable Growth

Due to lack of new government investment into urban forestry, significant competition for grants, and rising costs, this is a period of significant financial challenge for charities.

In 2025, Trees for Cities took decisive steps to strengthen its organisational and financial resilience by saving costs through a leaner structure, tighter cost control, improved financial oversight, and stronger fundraising and project management processes. These changes delivered a positive financial result whilst maintaining our impact.

We are extremely grateful to our funders and donors for their continued unwavering support for the charity during this period, particularly those who support through flexible funding including Postcode Lottery, Garfield Weston Foundation and Lund Trust.

Trees are one of our most powerful tools for tackling urban heat, improving air quality, and creating healthier communities. With your support, we can plant and protect more urban trees in the neighbourhoods that need them most.

Donate Today →

Volunteers from PwC supporting our tree planting and maintenance projects at Horsenden Hill, Ealing.

Funding Partnership Spotlight

The Bupa Foundation

Our fourth year of partnership with the Bupa Foundation has consolidated our shared objective that everyone should have access to the benefits of nature, particularly underserved communities that have historically had less access to quality green space. Together, **we've planted and cared for more than 21,000 urban trees across 36 towns and cities** and helped tell the story of how trees reduce urban heat, improve air quality, and bring both physical and mental health benefits to communities, and volunteers! Teams from across the Bupa Foundation have taken part in volunteering days and we have joined together to count our tree planting steps during the month of the Bupa Foundation's Healthy Cities programme.

Through their advocacy, thought leadership and storytelling, the Foundation has helped raise awareness of urban trees to wider audiences. We're immensely proud of what we've achieved together and deeply grateful for their continued partnership.

“Busy lives...and getting out and just pausing or just being able to be mindful about what you're doing and something outside. I know it really benefits me. I know that I will feel it all over aches and pains, but physically...mentally I will feel rejuvenated.”

Bupa Foundation Volunteer



Bupa Foundation employees get stuck into a day of tree maintenance in East London. This vital tree care ensures the trees we plant stand the best chance of survival and growth into the mature trees of tomorrow.

Supporters and Partners

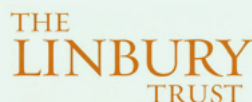


Thanks to our supporters

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Bauer Media Outdoor	Helen Green	Orla Kiely
Bloomberg LP	Jet2	Peabody Trust
British Airways	Lund Trust	Postcode Lottery
British Standard Institute Group	Malmesbury Primary School, Tower Hamlets	PwC UK
Bupa Foundation	Medik8	Reading Festival - Festival Republic
CBRE	MOJU	Royal Bank of Canada
Download Festival - Live Nation Music UK	National Lottery Community Fund	Royal Forestry Society
East End Homes	National Lottery Heritage Fund	Schroders
Enterprise via Arbor Day Foundation	Natural Resources Wales	Sensory Trust
Forestry Commission	Newby Trust	The Linbury Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation	Northwood Hygiene Products Ltd	The Swire Charitable Trusts
Gett by Lyft		Tower Hill Trust
		Woodland Trust

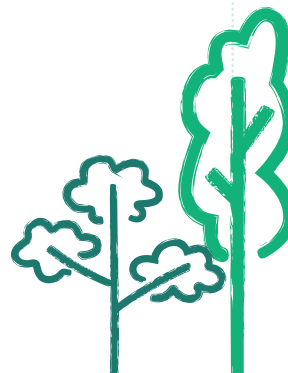
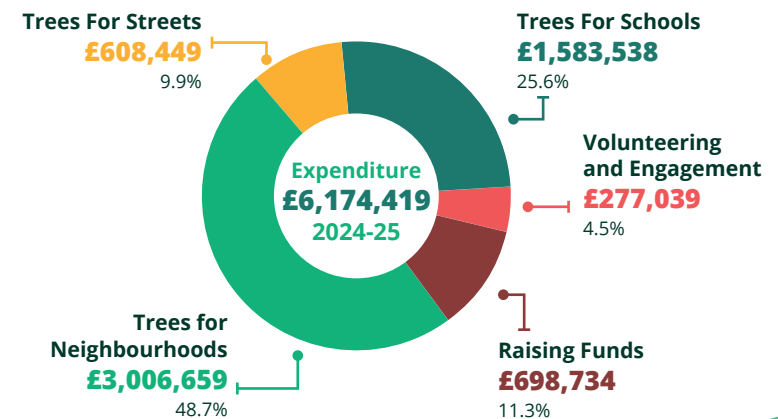
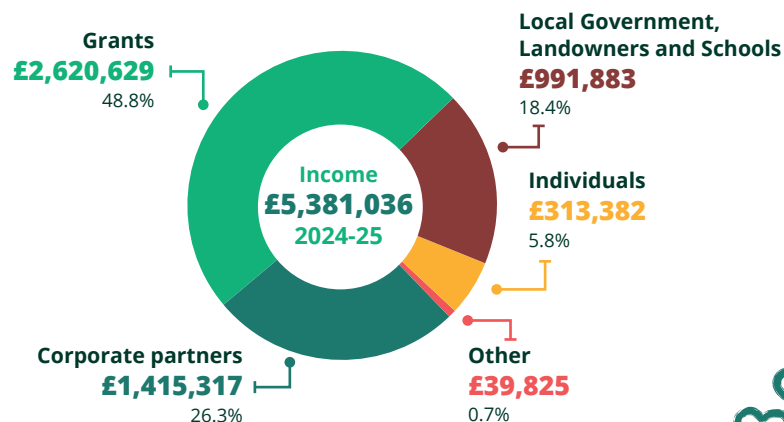
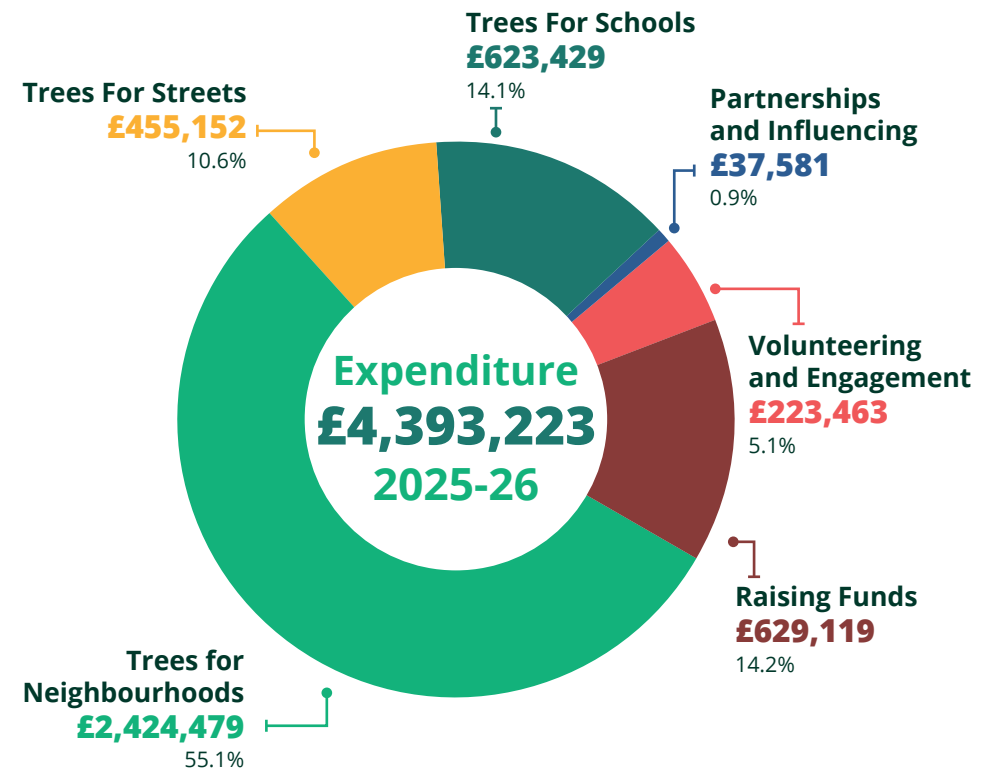
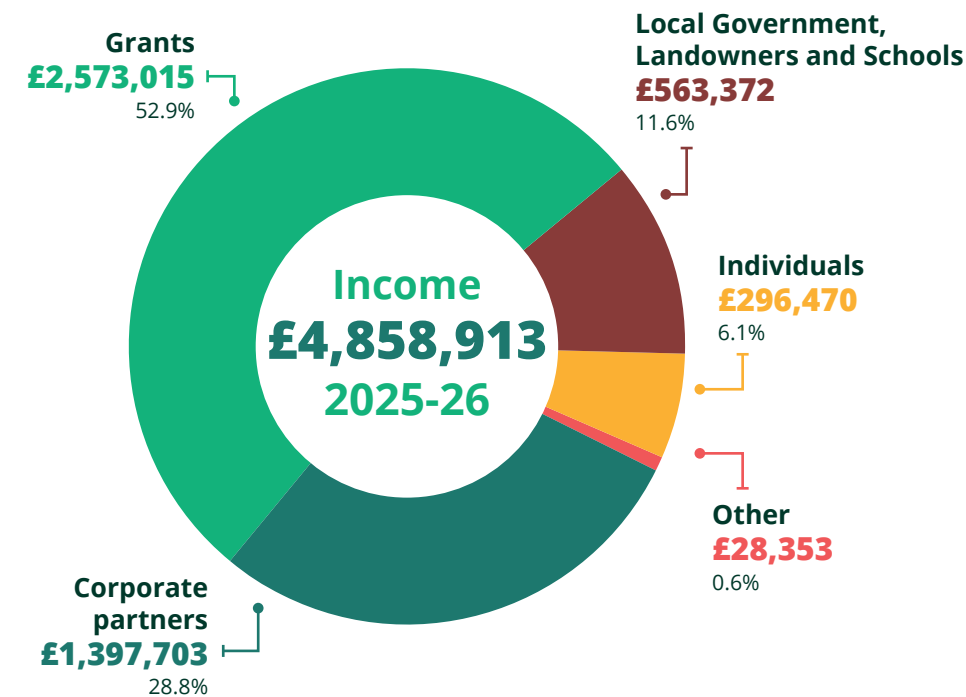
Thanks to our council partners

Bedford Borough Council	London Borough of Harrow
Blackpool Council	London Borough of Hillingdon
Bracknell Forest Council	London Borough of Islington
Bristol City Council	London Borough of Newham
Cambridge City Council	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Cardiff Council	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Coventry City Council	London Borough of Wandsworth
Glasgow City Council	Reading Borough Council
Gloucestershire County Council	Sheffield City Council
Hartlepool Borough Council	South Lanarkshire Council
London Borough of Barnet	Worthing Borough Council
London Borough of Croydon	
London Borough of Ealing	
London Borough of Haringey	



Financial Summary

Figures subject to audit





You can help us plant, protect and care for urban trees where they are needed most, creating greener, healthier and more climate-resilient communities for generations to come.

Donate Today

Help us grow a Movement for
Urban Trees and Tree Equity

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