



Trees for all

Let's put more trees where people need them most.

Scotland's Tree Equity Action Plan 2025-30

A Summary



WOODLAND
TRUST SCOTLAND

Tree equity means everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, has full and fair access to the benefits of trees and woods close to where they live and work.

Introduction

Urban trees are vital for our health and wellbeing. They improve air quality, provide shade and shelter, boost biodiversity, reduce stress, increase climate resilience and help create attractive and vibrant places to live and work. Areas with fewer trees often face higher rates of respiratory illness, heat related health issues and mental health challenges.

While Scotland's average urban canopy cover is 18.8%¹, many neighbourhoods have even less, with nearly one third falling short of 10% tree canopy cover. Often it is our more deprived communities that are impacted most by poor access to the benefits of trees. The wealthiest urban areas in Scotland boast almost twice as much tree cover per person compared to our least affluent neighbourhoods². Similarly, healthier neighbourhoods on average enjoy 40% more tree canopy cover than the least healthy ones³.

With over 80% of Scots living in towns and cities, full and fair access to urban trees and the services they provide has never been more important. We call this principle 'tree equity'.

Tree Equity Score UK is a powerful map-based tool that identifies those communities most in need of more trees. It uses data on tree canopy cover, health, deprivation, urban heat and air quality to calculate a Tree Equity Score for every urban neighbourhood. The lower the score, the greater the need for more trees. A score of 100 indicates tree equity has been achieved.

In Scotland over 1.4 million people live in neighbourhoods identified by Tree Equity Score UK as a high priority for action to increase tree cover. Planting more trees in these areas can deliver significant social and environmental benefits, helping drive up tree equity to address social injustice and improve health and wellbeing.

1. Downey, H., Aizlewood, S., Ash, A., Bavin, S., Burton, V., Chemais, M., Crawford, J., Gosling, R., Hewitt, D., Hugli, M., McHenry, E., Jackson, H., Nichols, C., Pyne, E., Reed-Beale, N., Underwood, F., Walsh, T. (2025) State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2025, Woodland Trust.

2. Tree Equity Score UK data: Comparison of average canopy cover per person between the 20% wealthiest and 20% least wealthy SIMD data zones. [Body](#).

3. Tree Equity Score UK data: Comparison of average data zone canopy cover between the 20% healthiest and 20% least healthy SIMD data zones. [Body](#).



Our vision

We want to see a Scotland where every urban neighbourhood has ample trees; so that, regardless of background, circumstances, ability or identity, we can all enjoy full and fair access to the benefits that trees offer, close to where we live and work.

Achieving this vision will require that:

- Urban trees are recognised as essential to healthy, attractive and sustainable places. Decisions about how we design, enhance and look after our towns and cities must take full account of the social, environmental and economic value of trees.
- Existing urban woods and trees are protected and well-managed, especially where they are vital for tree equity.
- Many more trees are established in urban areas, prioritising those communities where increased tree cover is needed most.
- Everyone has easy, nearby access to woodland or greenspace with trees; so that opportunities to enjoy the health benefits of trees and woods and to connect with nature are available to all.

Targeted action

Just 12% of Scots living in urban areas have enough trees. Increasing canopy cover to achieve tree equity across Scotland would require over 140km² more tree cover. That's over 2.5 million more trees. Achieving this ambitious vision will demand sustained, collaborative action by many organisations and communities.

In the shorter term we need to target action where it will deliver the greatest benefit, helping to improve tree equity across Scotland. Tree Equity Score UK allows us to do just that. Woodland Trust Scotland will focus action to boost canopy cover and improve tree equity in neighbourhoods with a Tree Equity Score below 80.

1.46 million people live in these 'priority neighbourhoods', covering 41,200 hectares. Some of these areas have almost no tree canopy cover and most have well below the Scottish urban average of 18.8%.



Our action plan 2025-30

Over the next five years, Woodland Trust Scotland aims to have a positive impact on tree equity in at least 50% of Scotland's priority neighbourhoods. We will work directly to increase urban canopy cover as well as inspiring and enabling action by others. This will benefit at least 965 priority neighbourhoods, home to approximately 729,000 people. We will....

Inspire

Raise awareness of the importance of urban trees and the disparities in access to the benefits of trees and woods.

Inspire behaviour change, encouraging and supporting individuals and communities to take positive action to improve tree equity, especially in priority neighbourhoods.

Educate

Support Local Authorities and other delivery partners to apply tree equity principles and use the Tree Equity Score UK, offering training and guidance.

Work with partners to deliver exemplar tree equity projects; showcasing good practice and stimulating action by others.

Facilitate the sharing of expertise, data and innovative practice to inform urban canopy protection and expansion.

Plant

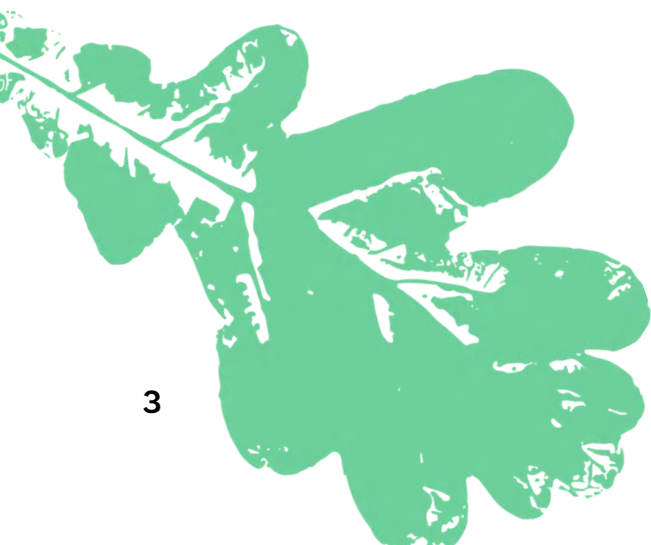
Actively increase tree cover in 30% of Scotland's priority neighbourhoods (home to around 438,000 people), planting at least 100,000 trees.

Work with partners and communities to deliver at least 2 flagship projects and 5 neighbourhood-scale projects to improve tree equity in priority areas.

Motivate and support local authorities, communities and others to deliver their own projects to boost Scotland's tree equity.

Use the Trust's urban woodlands to provide opportunities for all to access and enjoy woods and inspire action to improve tree equity in nearby communities.

Boost the uptake of our free trees for schools and communities in priority neighbourhoods.





Influence

Advocate for national and local government to recognise urban trees as essential to healthy, sustainable communities and give them the protection they need.

Support the development and implementation of national and local policies to expand and protect the urban forest while addressing urban inequalities. Tree equity cuts across multiple policy areas including planning, forestry, biodiversity, climate adaptation, health inequity, community empowerment and social justice.

Influence and support the planning process to protect existing trees and secure increased urban canopy cover associated with development.

Collaborate

Work with local authorities, NGOs, charities and community groups to jointly advocate for and create bigger, better and more equitable urban forests.

Empower and support communities and individuals in priority neighbourhoods to lead tree equity projects.

Actively engage with people from diverse communities, and particularly groups that are disproportionately impacted by poor access to urban trees and woods.

Enable

Ensure Tree Equity Score UK remains up to date and freely available, extending its coverage in Scotland to all settlements with a population over 3,000.

Advocate for more and targeted funding for urban forestry and tree equity from charitable funders, private investors and government.

A call to action

The benefits of improving Scotland's tree equity speak for themselves: healthier, fairer and more resilient communities, nature-rich neighbourhoods and attractive places to live and work. Woodland Trust Scotland is committed to this ambitious vision of trees for all, but getting there will take sustained, collective action by us all. There is fantastic work already being done to manage and expand Scotland's urban forest, but much more is needed.

Actions needed

- Scottish Government**
- Recognise tree equity as a powerful tool for promoting social justice and community focused environmental improvement and support local government to deliver it.
 - Provide a standalone urban woodland option under the Forestry Grant Scheme and expand WIAT funding.
 - Pursue a Tree Protection (Scotland) Bill to ensure important urban trees are given the protection they need.
 - Support Climate Forest Initiatives as an effective delivery mechanism for tree equity.

- Local Authorities**
- Develop and implement policies to protect and expand urban forests, targeting activity where it will deliver most benefit and reduce inequality.
 - Recognise the contribution that improved tree equity can make to health equity, climate resilience and nature recovery, and integrate it into these workstreams .
 - Use the planning and development management process to protect existing trees and secure canopy expansion in association with development.
 - Work with communities and NGOs to protect, manage and establish more urban trees and woods, where they are needed most.

- NGOs and charities**
- Advocate for and deliver increased urban canopy cover in priority neighbourhoods, working with other organisations and communities.
 - Inspire and educate, to encourage and support local action to protect and expand the urban forest.

Last year, the Woodland Trust supplied 15,675 free trees to schools and community groups in priority urban neighbourhoods in Scotland.

Community groups and individuals

- Check your Tree Equity Score.
- Encourage your local Council to protect urban trees and plant more.
- Take part in local tree planting, especially in areas that need more trees. Schools and communities can apply for Woodland Trust free tree packs.
- Develop your own tree equity project – talk to Woodland Trust about the support we can offer.
- Make sure your Local Place Plan asks for more trees in the right place.
- Share your tree planting successes to inspire others.

Funders

- Recognise the multiple social and environmental benefits that can be delivered by the tree equity approach. An approach with community empowerment and impact at its heart.
- Use tree equity principles and Tree Equity Score as a powerful tool to help target funding where it is most needed and will deliver most benefit.

Get in touch to find out more and discuss how you can get involved.

Anna Perks

Tree Equity Lead (Scotland)

✉ TreeEquityScotland@woodlandtrust.org.uk

☎ 07742 077 141



Find out more



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Woodland Trust Scotland, South Inch Business Centre, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8BW
woodlandtrust.org.uk

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