

Edinburgh's ambition – to be a Million Tree City

With a small ginkgo tree planted this morning at Lauriston Castle, the city threw down the gauntlet of becoming a Million Tree City.

As part of Edinburgh's aim to become net zero carbon by 2030, the council has undertaken a project to plant one million trees in the next nine years. This is a worldwide project with cities all over the world taking part.

The Edinburgh Million Tree Forum comprises The City of Edinburgh Council, the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, the Woodland Trust, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Trees of Edinburgh, the Scottish Wildlife Trust, The Conservation [Volunteers](#) and the Edinburgh Living Landscape. All partners in the project are looking at ways of planting more trees more quickly.

Before planting the tree, the Rt Hon Lord Provost, Frank Ross, said: "We may have more trees in our city than people but to get to our city's 2030 net zero target, we must plant more.

"Climate change will impact on all of us, and we all need to play our part to mitigate the effects. A key aspect of the proposed Climate Strategy is for us all to build upon our previous efforts, and [Edinburgh Million Tree City Project](#), offers us all the opportunity to do just this.

"This is not a project for the Council, it is a project for our city, our communities, and for us as citizens, with a shared ambition for Edinburgh to have at least one million

trees by 2030.

“While 75% of our trees are privately managed, we have a shared responsibility to manage our trees well, and to act when they get damaged or require treatment or replacement. I’m delighted to plant this gingko today and I am keen that this young tree, symbolises, like a barometer, the growth of the project, each inch demonstrating how our stakeholders and communities are coming together to plant more trees, delivering the millionth tree or more.”



L-R Culture and Communities Convener Cllr Donald Wilson and the Rt Hon Lord Provost Frank Ross

Culture and Communities Convener Cllr Donald Wilson said: “We’re very proud that Edinburgh is already one of the UK’s greenest cities, with more trees than people, more green space and more green flag parks than any other place in Scotland for people to enjoy. But we want to do even better, especially as we strive towards our hugely ambitious target of making the city net zero by 2030.

“It’s impossible to overstate the benefits trees bring to the urban landscape. They help clean our air, reduce the risk of flooding, keep us cool in the summer and warmer in winter and give the wildlife in our city a home, as well as making neighbourhoods look and feel tranquil and appealing. They are essential to the wellbeing of our citizens.

“We estimate that Edinburgh needs around 250,000 more trees to be planted in the next ten years on a both public and private land and I’m excited that our project has now officially launched and look forward to working with partners and citizens as we go forward. As the project continues we’ll be reaching out to residents and advising on ways they can help help and get involved.”

Culture and Communities Vice Convener Amy McNeese-Mechan said: “By joining other global cities such as New York and Shanghai, as a Million Tree City we’ll be able to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to lessen the impact of climate change and help Edinburgh take climate action and make the city an even greener place to leave for future generations.

“Our dedicated Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries service is leading a project to increase tree cover to help Edinburgh fulfil its Climate Emergency commitments and become a Million Tree City by 2030.

“It is an ambitious target but it is an achievable one and we’ll reach it if we continue to work together with our partners and citizens. Whether you live in the city, own land or property, if you are a business, charity or a school, or if just you love Edinburgh and want to see it flourish for future generations, we can all do our bit and I look forward to the project progressing.”

Tim Hall, Head of Estates and Programmes with Woodland Trust Scotland said: “We launched our Emergency Tree Fund to support local authorities planting new urban trees needed to help

tackle the climate and nature crises. I am delighted we are backing this ambitious bid to make Edinburgh a Million Tree City, which will bring huge benefits to people and wildlife.”

Charlie Cumming, the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust Chief Executive said: “ELGT are delighted to be working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council and the Woodland Trust to deliver such an ambitious and worthwhile tree planting project over the next 10 years. The benefits of this increase in tree planting will not only address the effects of climate change but will also encourage community participation with the residents of Edinburgh and will benefit people’s health and wellbeing. With so much focus this month on COP26 we appreciate that we need to start making an impact now; with more tree planting we will be able to improve our neighbourhoods and streetscapes and have a long lasting impact on our local environments

After the [tree planting ceremony](#) the group were taken on a tour of the grounds by volunteers at Lauriston Castle and a further two trees were planted.

Edinburgh has more trees than residents with 730,000 trees and around 519,000 residents. When the trees were surveyed in 2016 there were 50 tree and shrub species of which sycamore, holly and silver birch were the most abundant. The council say that the move to increase the number of trees in the city will help Edinburgh reduce the impacts of climate change by providing cooling in heatwaves, surface water management for heavy rainfall as well as some carbon storage and a home for wildlife.

Woodland Trust has contributed a grant of £298,055 from its Emergency Tree Fund to support project delivery. This money will support project management and kick-start tree planting, fundraising, public engagement and volunteer activity between 2021 and 2023.

Two further community tree planting events will take place this week organised by partners. School pupils will help Edinburgh & Lothian Greenspaces Trust to plant a “Wee Forest” of 600 whip trees in West Pilton Park funded by Nature Scotland. A further 400 whip trees will be planted in Redwood Park, Colinton Mains by The Conservation Volunteers, organised and funded by the Council.

