



Community Tree Planting Grant Fund 2026-2027



**Community Tree Planting Grant
Information Pack 2026**

Foreword

Trees play a vital role in creating healthier, greener and more resilient communities. As we respond to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pressures on our natural environment, the importance of expanding and protecting our tree canopy has never been greater. Braintree District Council is committed to supporting practical action that delivers long-term benefits for both people and wildlife across our district.

While the Council manages a range of parks, open spaces and other landholdings, the opportunities for tree planting on Council-owned land alone are limited. We know that many of the best opportunities for new trees exist within our towns and villages, on community land, school grounds, parish-managed spaces, and privately owned land where local people can help shape and support projects. For this reason, we have chosen to make grant funding available directly to communities, enabling local groups to identify suitable locations, develop planting proposals and play an active role in creating a greener future for the district.

I am therefore pleased to launch the Community Tree Planting Grant Fund, providing £75,000 to support community organisations, schools, parish and town councils, charities and local groups in delivering tree planting projects across Braintree District. Through this fund, we aim to support projects that increase tree canopy cover, enhance biodiversity, improve habitat availability and wildlife connectivity, strengthen climate resilience, improve the quality of local places and bring communities together through positive environmental action.

We recognise that successful tree planting is about much more than simply counting how many trees are planted. The true measure of success is how many trees survive, establish and thrive for generations to come. That is why this fund places a strong emphasis not only on planting, but also on selecting the right tree for the right place, providing appropriate aftercare, and ensuring long-term stewardship of every tree funded through the scheme.

By working together with local communities, we can create lasting environmental benefits, improve habitats for wildlife, strengthen our natural environment and make our towns and villages greener, healthier and more attractive places to live. I look forward to seeing the innovative projects that come forward and to working with residents and community organisations to deliver a greener, more sustainable and more resilient Braintree District for future generations.

Councillor Peter Schwier

Cabinet Member for Environment and Place

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1. Introduction

Braintree District Council is committed to increasing tree canopy cover across the district and supporting local action to address climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

This year the Council has set aside £75,000 from its Climate Change Strategy Reserve Account to fund community projects that result in tree planting around the district.

The Community Tree Planting Grant Fund aims to support projects that deliver:

- New tree planting
- Community engagement
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Climate resilience
- Urban greening
- Flood resilience
- Educational opportunities

Applicants may request funding for under-tree bulb planting where this forms part of a wider tree planting project. To be eligible, the project must include at least one new tree. Funding requested for bulb planting must not exceed 10% of the total grant request. For example, where an applicant requests £250 in total, no more than £25 may be requested for bulb planting.

All applications must be submitted to the Council by 12:00pm on Sunday 11th October 2026

2. Scheme Objectives

The primary purpose of the fund is to increase tree canopy cover across Braintree District. Applicants should explain how their proposal will contribute to the wider aims of the Community Tree Planting Grant Fund. Proposals may address one or more of the objectives below and should demonstrate how the project will deliver lasting environmental, social and community benefits for Braintree District.

The fund is intended to support tree planting projects that provide clear community benefit. This includes planting in places that can be enjoyed, used, accessed or valued by local residents, schools, volunteers or community groups. With the necessary permission, projects may take place on public, community, school, parish, charitable or privately owned land, provided there is clear evidence of community involvement, community access or wider public benefit.

The fund is not intended to support planting that mainly benefits a private individual, household, business or landowner, or planting on private land where there is no meaningful community involvement, access or wider public benefit.

Climate Change

Projects should support local action on climate change by increasing the number of trees planted across the district and helping communities adapt to a changing climate. This may include planting that contributes to carbon sequestration, provides shade and cooling in built-up areas, improves drought resilience and helps create places that are better able to withstand hotter, drier summers and more extreme weather events.

Biodiversity

Projects should enhance biodiversity by creating or improving habitats and supporting a wider range of species. Applications are encouraged to consider how tree planting can provide food, shelter and movement corridors for wildlife, support pollinators and contribute to a stronger, more connected natural environment across the district.

Green Infrastructure

Projects should help strengthen local green infrastructure by increasing canopy cover, improving public spaces and enhancing green corridors. Planting should be planned in a way that contributes to nature recovery, improves the quality and attractiveness of local places, and supports connectivity with the wider network of green infrastructure network across Braintree District.

Community Wellbeing

Projects should deliver clear benefits for local communities by encouraging participation, learning and access to nature. Applicants should consider how their project can support health and wellbeing, provide opportunities for residents, schools or volunteers to get involved, and help create greener, more welcoming places that communities can enjoy and take pride in.

3. Funding Available

A total funding pot of £75,000 is available through the Community Tree Planting Grant Fund. The fund is intended to support community-led tree planting projects that can be delivered within Braintree District and that provide clear environmental and community benefits. Funding should be used for costs that are directly connected to new tree planting, successful establishment and early aftercare. Ideally projects should be completed by the end of March 2027.

Applicants should request only the level of funding needed to deliver their project and should provide a clear breakdown of costs. The Council may award the full amount requested, offer a reduced grant, or ask for further information where costs require clarification. All awards will be subject to available budget, eligibility checks and the quality of the application.

Eligible Items

The fund may support reasonable costs needed to buy, plant, protect and establish trees, including:

- Trees, including suitable whips, feathered trees, standards, fruit trees or other appropriate stock selected for the site conditions and long-term management requirements.
- Stakes and supports needed to secure trees during establishment, particularly where larger stock or exposed planting locations are proposed.
- Tree guards or protective barriers to reduce damage from wildlife, strimming, vandalism or accidental impact.
- Tree ties, fixings and related materials required to support trees safely without restricting future growth.
- Mulch, mulch mats or other weed-suppression materials that help retain moisture, reduce competition and support early tree establishment.
- Soil improvement where needed, including compost, soil conditioner or other materials that address poor soil quality and improve planting conditions.
- Watering equipment, such as watering bags, bowsers, hoses, irrigation systems or other practical items needed to support establishment during dry periods.
- Tree shelters where appropriate to protect young trees and improve survival rates, provided they are suitable for the species and location.
- Planting costs where specialist support is required, including site preparation, planting works and installation of tree protection.
- Volunteer expenses directly related to planting activity, such as basic safety equipment.
- Initial establishment costs, including early aftercare activities such as watering, weeding, formative pruning, checking guards and replacing failed trees where this is built into the project plan.
- Under-tree bulb planting or complementary ground planting where it directly supports biodiversity and improves the setting of the trees. These projects must include at least one new tree.

Applicants should explain why each item is needed and how it will contribute to the successful delivery and long-term survival of tree planting. Costs should be proportionate to the scale of the project and supported by quotations or estimates where appropriate.

Grant Levels

Grant awards will normally fall within the following indicative levels. Applicants should select the level that best reflects the scale and complexity of their proposal.

Funding Stream	Value
Small Grant	Up to £1,000
Medium Grant	£1,001 – £5,000

Large Grant	£5,001 – £15,000
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Small grants are likely to support straightforward community planting projects, such as small numbers of trees in community gardens, school grounds, parish land, or other local green spaces. Medium grants may support larger planting schemes, projects involving multiple sites, or schemes requiring a greater level of preparation, protection and aftercare. Large grants are expected to demonstrate clear community benefit, robust delivery arrangements and a well-evidenced maintenance plan.

Long term survivability of trees will be a high priority.

Projects demonstrating the principles of 'Right Tree, Right Place' are highly regarded.

Match funding is not essential, but applications that include volunteer time, donated materials, partner contributions or other in-kind support should describe these contributions clearly. This will help demonstrate local commitment, value for money and the ability of the project to be maintained beyond the initial grant period.

4. Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for funding, applications must meet the core eligibility requirements below. These criteria are intended to ensure that funded projects are deliverable, provide clear public or community benefit, and support the long-term establishment of trees within Braintree District.

The Council is inviting applications from Community Groups, Charities, Parish Councils, Town Councils, Education establishments and other organisations that:

✓ **Are located within Braintree District.** The proposed planting site must fall within the administrative boundary of Braintree District Council. Applicants should provide a clear site address, postcode where available, and a site plan and a proposed planting plan.

✓ **Deliver measurable environmental benefits.** Projects should show how the planting will contribute to outcomes such as increased canopy cover, improved biodiversity, climate resilience, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, air quality improvements or habitat creation. Applicants should describe the expected benefits and, where possible, explain how these will be measured.

✓ **Have landowner permission.** Applicants must either own the land, hold an appropriate lease or have written permission from the landowner to plant and maintain trees on the site. Where land is leased or managed by another organisation, the application should include evidence that the planting can remain in place for the long term.

✓ **Include a maintenance plan.** Applications must explain how trees will be cared for after planting, including watering, mulching, weed control, guard checks, replacement planting and ongoing inspections. The plan should identify who will be responsible for maintenance and how this will be sustained for at least the first three years.

✓ **Include a realistic budget.** Applicants should provide a clear breakdown of all costs, including trees, planting materials, protection, establishment and any eligible delivery costs. Costs should be proportionate to the scale of the project and supported by quotations, estimates or other evidence where appropriate.

✓ **Demonstrate community benefit.** Projects should provide benefits for residents, community groups, schools, volunteers or other local users. This may include improving access to green space, supporting health and wellbeing, creating opportunities for learning or volunteering, strengthening community pride, or improving the appearance and use of local places.

✓ **Commit to monitoring requirements.** Successful applicants must be able to provide basic monitoring information after planting and during the establishment period. This may include the number and species of trees planted, photographs, evidence of expenditure, survival/failure rates and details of watering and any maintenance or replacement planting undertaken.

✓ **Plant suitable species for site conditions.** Proposed species should be appropriate for the location, soil, available space, exposure, future canopy size and long-term management requirements. Applicants should consider native and climate-resilient non-native species where suitable and avoid planting that could create future safety, maintenance or ecological issues.

✓ **Demonstrate long-term tree management.** Applications should show that the trees can be retained, protected and managed beyond the initial grant period. This includes identifying ownership or management responsibilities, confirming access for maintenance, and explaining how the trees will be protected from avoidable damage.

Applicants should include sufficient supporting information to demonstrate that these requirements have been met. Applications that do not provide enough information may be delayed while clarification is sought or may be considered ineligible.

5. Ineligible Projects

The fund is intended to support new community tree planting projects that deliver clear environmental and community benefits within Braintree District. The following types of projects and costs will not normally be eligible for funding:

✗ **Projects outside Braintree District.** Funding is only available for planting sites located within the administrative boundary of Braintree District Council. Projects located outside the district, even where they may benefit nearby residents, will not be eligible.

✗ Hedge planting projects. The fund is intended primarily to increase tree canopy cover through the planting and establishment of trees. Applications consisting solely of hedge planting, hedgerow creation or hedgerow restoration will not normally be eligible for funding. Hedgerow planting may be considered where it forms a clearly secondary element of a wider tree planting project and contributes to the overall objectives of the scheme.

✗ Planting already completed. The grant cannot be used to fund trees that have already been planted before a grant offer has been made. Applicants should not place orders, begin planting or commit expenditure until they have received written confirmation of any award.

✗ Retrospective costs. The Council will not normally reimburse costs that have already been incurred, including previous purchases, invoices, deposits or contractor commitments made before the grant agreement is in place.

✗ Routine grounds maintenance. General maintenance such as grass cutting, hedge trimming, litter picking, routine landscaping or existing grounds management will not be funded unless it is directly connected to the establishment of newly planted trees approved through the scheme.

✗ Projects lacking permissions. Applications must demonstrate that the applicant has the right to plant and maintain trees on the proposed site. Projects without landowner consent, leaseholder agreement, statutory consent or other required permissions will not be approved.

✗ Compensation planting obligations. Funding cannot be used to meet existing legal, planning, development, enforcement or mitigation obligations. This includes replacement planting required as a condition of planning permission, tree works consent, felling licences or other statutory agreements.

✗ Commercial forestry. Projects established primarily for timber production, biomass, commercial crop production or other forestry-related commercial activity will not normally be eligible, as the fund is focused on community and environmental benefit rather than commercial return.

✗ Projects primarily generating private financial gain. Applications where the main benefit is private profit, increased land value, private amenity or commercial advantage will not normally be supported. Projects should demonstrate wider public, community or environmental benefit.

✗ Revenue funding unrelated to establishment. Ongoing staffing, administration, general organisational running costs, unrelated events, publicity or long-term revenue costs will not normally be funded unless they are clearly necessary for delivery of the approved planting project and fall within the eligible cost categories.

✗ General landscaping unrelated to tree planting. Works such as decorative planting, fencing, paving, seating, paths, planters, play equipment or wider site

improvements will not normally be funded unless they are directly required to enable, protect or establish new tree planting.

The Council may also decline applications where the proposed project does not provide sufficient information, where risks to delivery or long-term maintenance are too high, or where the project does not represent good value for money. Where there is uncertainty about eligibility, applicants are encouraged to contact the Council before submitting an application.

6. Funding Priorities

The priorities below will help the Council understand the wider value of each proposal and, where demand for funding is high, may be used to guide decisions. Applicants do not need to meet every priority to be considered for funding. Small, local projects are encouraged to apply and may score strongly where they are well planned, realistic, community-led and likely to result in healthy trees that are cared for over time.

High Biodiversity Value

- Use suitable native species where appropriate for the site, while recognising that non-native or fruiting species may also be suitable where they provide biodiversity, community or climate resilience benefits.
- Include an appropriate mix of species for the scale of the project. For small schemes, this may simply mean avoiding reliance on a single species where space allows.
- Create or improve habitat by providing blossom, berries, shelter, nesting opportunities, pollinator value or links between existing green spaces.

Applicants do not need to provide technical ecological surveys unless they are already available or required for the site. A clear explanation of how the chosen trees will support wildlife and fit the local setting will usually be sufficient.

Climate Resilience

- Tree species chosen should be suitable for expected future conditions, including warmer summers, periods of drought, or flooding and the local soil conditions.
- Consider practical design choices that help trees establish successfully, such as planting in the right place, considering their full mature size potential, the existing soil condition and the trees water demand, planning watering arrangements and avoiding overcrowding.
- Provide flood mitigation, shade, cooling or surface water benefits where relevant to the site, including small-scale benefits such as shading a path, seating area, playground, community garden or local meeting space.

Small projects do not need to demonstrate district-wide climate impacts. Applicants should focus on explaining the practical benefits their planting will provide in its own setting.

Community Involvement

- Involve residents, volunteers, community groups, schools or site users in planning, planting or caring for the trees where this is practical and appropriate.
- Support school, youth group or community participation, including simple activities such as planting days, watering rotas, monitoring, tree naming, seasonal observations or outdoor learning.
- Provide educational or awareness-raising opportunities, such as learning about trees, wildlife, food growing, climate change, biodiversity or caring for local green spaces.

Community involvement should be proportionate to the project. A small planting scheme may still demonstrate strong community value if it responds to a local need, improves a well-used space, or has a clear plan for local people to help look after the trees.

Strategic Locations

- Plant in areas with limited tree cover or where additional trees would make a noticeable local difference.
- Support locations affected by localised flooding, surface water issues or poor drainage, where tree planting can contribute to longer-term resilience.
- Provide shade or cooling in places where people spend time, such as community gardens, school grounds, parks, paths, play areas or village greens.
- Strengthen green corridors or local habitat networks, including modest planting that links existing trees, hedgerows, verges, gardens, parks or open spaces.

A project does not need to be large or located on a major strategic site to be valuable. Small schemes in neighbourhood spaces can be a priority where they address a clear local opportunity or gap in tree cover.

Long-Term Survivability

- Provide a realistic maintenance plan that explains the duration of active aftercare, who will water, weed, mulch, check guards and monitor the trees during the establishment period.
- Identify how aftercare will be supported, whether through grant funding, volunteer time, existing site management arrangements or partner contributions.
- Set out clear management responsibilities so it is understood who will look after the trees and who should be contacted if issues arise.

For small grants, the Council will expect a simple and practical aftercare plan rather than a lengthy technical document. The key requirement is that the applicant has thought through how the trees will be kept alive and who will take responsibility for them.

Additional Guidance

Tree Sourcing and Biosecurity

To protect local trees, habitats and biodiversity, all projects funded through this scheme must follow good biosecurity practice when sourcing, handling and planting trees. Trees and plants can carry pests and diseases that may not be immediately visible, and these can spread into the wider environment and cause long-term damage to native tree populations, wildlife habitats, parks and green spaces. Good biosecurity helps protect the long-term success of planting projects and the surrounding landscape.

- Applicants should purchase trees from reputable nurseries or suppliers and should use UK-grown stock wherever possible to reduce the risk of imported pests and diseases.
- Applicants are encouraged to use suppliers that hold Plant Healthy Certification or follow an equivalent recognised plant health assurance scheme.
- Trees must be healthy, free from visible pests and diseases, traceable, and compliant with UK plant passporting requirements where applicable.
- Imported trees should only be used where necessary and must meet UK plant health regulations.
- Applicants should handle and store trees appropriately before planting, including protecting roots from drying out.

As part of the application process, applicants should confirm that trees will be sourced from reputable and bio-secure suppliers and that biosecurity considerations have been taken into account. For larger grants, the Council may request supplier details, evidence of certification or a short explanation of the sourcing approach.

7. Application Process & Timeline

The application process is designed to be straightforward and proportionate to the scale of the project. Applicants should provide clear information about what they want to do, why the project is needed, how it will be delivered and how the trees will be looked after. The Council may contact applicants during the assessment process if clarification or additional information is needed..

Stage 1: Preparing and submitting an application – Final date for submitting your application will be the 3rd October 2026

Applicants should complete the application form and provide enough supporting information for the Council to understand the proposal, the location, the costs and the likely benefits. For most applications this will include a site plan or sketch showing where trees will be planted, photographs of the proposed planting area, a

simple budget, and evidence that the applicant has permission to plant and maintain trees on the land. Small grant applications do not need to provide lengthy technical reports, but they should clearly explain what is being proposed and how the trees will be cared for.

Stage 2: Eligibility review

Once received, applications will be checked by Council officers to confirm that the basic eligibility requirements have been met. This review will consider whether the project is located within Braintree District, whether the applicant is an eligible organisation, whether the proposed costs are eligible, and whether the necessary permissions are in place. If information is missing or unclear, officers may contact the applicant for clarification before the application is assessed further.

Stage 3: Assessment and scoring

Eligible applications will be assessed against the funding priorities and scoring framework set out in this guidance. The assessment will consider the environmental and community benefits of the proposal, the suitability of the site and species, the strength of the maintenance plan, value for money and deliverability. The level of detail expected will be proportionate to the size of the grant requested, so small projects will not be expected to provide the same level of evidence as larger or more complex schemes.

Stage 4: Award decision

Following assessment, the Council will decide whether to approve the application, approve a reduced amount, request further information, place the project on a reserve list, or decline the application. Decisions will be made in line with the available budget, the quality of applications received and the extent to which each proposal meets the aims of the fund. Applicants will be notified of the outcome in writing.

Stage 5: Grant agreement and confirmation

Successful applicants will be asked to enter into a grant agreement before any funding is released. The agreement will confirm the approved project, the amount awarded, eligible expenditure, delivery timescales, monitoring requirements and any specific conditions attached to the grant. Applicants should not commit expenditure or begin works until the grant agreement has been completed and written confirmation has been issued by the Council.

Stage 6: Project delivery, completion and monitoring

Once the grant agreement is in place, applicants can proceed with delivery of the approved project. Planting should take place during an appropriate planting season and should follow the agreed proposal, budget and maintenance arrangements. After planting, successful applicants will need to provide basic completion information, including what has been planted, where it has been planted, evidence of expenditure and photographs. Ongoing monitoring will also be required so the Council can

understand survival rates, maintenance activity and the longer-term benefits of the scheme.

Indicative dates, application deadlines and decision timescales will be confirmed by the Council. Applicants are encouraged to submit applications as early as possible, particularly where planting needs to take place within a specific season or where landowner permissions, quotations or volunteer arrangements need to be confirmed before delivery.

If an applicant fails to provide evidence that the planting has taken place by the agreed timeline deadline the Council will request return of the grant funding.

8. Assessment and Scoring Framework

Scoring Methodology

Applications that pass the initial eligibility review will be assessed using the scoring framework below. The framework is intended to support fair and consistent decision-making while recognising that projects will vary in scale, complexity and funding request. Scores will be based on the information provided in the application form and supporting documents, with the level of evidence expected proportionate to the size of the grant requested.

Score	Definition
0	No evidence is provided, or the response does not address the criterion.
1	Very limited evidence is provided. The proposal may mention the criterion but gives little detail or creates uncertainty about benefit, deliverability or suitability.
2	Limited evidence is provided. The proposal is relevant but lacks some important detail, supporting information or assurance.
3	Adequate evidence is provided. The proposal addresses the criterion in a reasonable way and appears deliverable, although there may be scope for further detail or stronger outcomes.
4	Strong evidence is provided. The proposal is well explained, relevant to the criterion and gives confidence that the intended benefits and delivery arrangements are realistic.
5	Excellent evidence is provided. The proposal is clear, well evidenced, highly relevant and demonstrates strong benefits, robust delivery and a high likelihood of long-term success.

Assessment Matrix

Criterion	Weighting	What assessors will consider
Biodiversity and species value	15%	Whether the chosen species are appropriate for the site and contribute to biodiversity, habitat creation, pollinator value, food sources, shelter or ecological connectivity.
Climate resilience and site suitability	15%	Whether the proposal responds to site conditions, future climate pressures, drought, heat, soil type, available space, exposure and the practical needs of successful tree establishment.
Canopy cover, shade and cooling benefits	15%	Whether the project will increase canopy cover, provide useful shade or cooling, improve the quality of local spaces and contribute to greener neighbourhoods.
Flood resilience and water management	10%	Whether the planting can help with surface water management, localised flooding, soil stability, rainwater interception or resilience in areas affected by drainage pressures.
Community and educational benefits	15%	Whether the project will involve or benefit local people, support volunteering, learning, health and wellbeing, community pride, food growing or access to nature.
Maintenance and long-term survivability	15%	Whether the aftercare plan is realistic, responsibilities are clear and arrangements are in place for watering, weeding, mulching, checking protection, replacing failures and monitoring survival.
Deliverability and value for money	10%	Whether the budget, timescale, permissions, costs, delivery arrangements and risks are realistic and proportionate to the grant requested.
Strategic fit	5%	Whether the proposal supports wider Council priorities, local green infrastructure, climate change objectives, nature recovery or identified local needs.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5 and then multiplied by its weighting to produce a weighted score. The maximum total score available is 500. The weighting gives greater emphasis to long-term environmental benefit, community value and the likelihood that trees will survive and establish successfully.

Where applications are of similar quality, the Council may also consider factors such as existing canopy cover and the geographic spread across the district, the balance between small, medium and large grants, readiness to deliver within the planting season, and whether the project addresses a clearly identified local need.

Funding Thresholds

Score	Indicative recommendation
400–500	High priority for funding, subject to budget availability, eligibility checks and any final clarification required.
300–399	Suitable for funding if budget allows. The Council may request clarification or make a conditional award where minor issues need to be resolved.
200–299	Further clarification or revision is likely to be required before a funding decision can be made. The proposal may have merit but needs stronger evidence or assurance.
Below 200	Not normally recommended for funding unless significant additional information is provided and the proposal can be strengthened.

The thresholds are indicative and do not guarantee funding. Final decisions will depend on the overall quality of applications received, the amount of funding available, the need to support a balanced programme of projects and any conditions required to manage delivery risk. The Council may award a lower amount than requested where costs are not fully justified or where a reduced award would still enable the project to proceed.

9. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting are a condition of funding and help the Council confirm that grant funding has been used appropriately and that funded trees are establishing successfully. Successful applicants must provide:

Completion Report

A completion report must be submitted within one month of planting, unless an alternative date has been agreed by the Council. The report should confirm that the project has been delivered in line with the approved application and grant agreement.

- Number of trees planted
- Number of bulbs planted
-
- Species planted
- Photographs of the completed planting
- Final project expenditure

Where the project has changed from the approved proposal, the completion report should explain what has changed, why the change was necessary, and whether prior Council approval was obtained. Significant changes to species, location, number of trees, project scope or use of grant funding must be agreed with the Council before they are implemented.

Evidence of expenditure

Applicants must keep invoices, receipts and other records showing how the grant has been spent. The Council may request copies as part of the completion report or during any later audit or monitoring check. Any unspent grant funding, or expenditure that is not eligible under the grant agreement, may need to be returned to the Council.

Annual Monitoring

Annual monitoring updates will be required for the two years after planting. (The Council may request further updates for larger projects that are more complex, high profile, or where tree establishment risks have been identified.)

Annual updates should be submitted at a time agreed with the Council, usually during the growing season or shortly after the main establishment period.

What should be monitored

- The number of trees still alive and the number lost or replaced.
- General tree condition, including signs of drought stress, damage, disease, vandalism or failed protection.
- Maintenance undertaken, including watering, mulching, weeding, guard checks, stake adjustments and replacement planting.
- Any changes to site conditions, public access, land ownership, maintenance responsibility or risks affecting the trees.
- Community involvement, volunteer activity, educational use or other benefits delivered during the year.

Photographic evidence

Applicants should provide photographs at completion and with annual updates. Photographs should show the planted trees, wider site context, tree protection where relevant, and any community planting or engagement activity where appropriate permissions have been obtained. Photographs may be used by the Council for monitoring, reporting and publicity, subject to consent and data protection requirements.

Outcomes and learning

The Council may use monitoring information to understand the overall impact of the Community Tree Planting Grant Fund, including the number of trees planted, survival rates, areas improved, community participation and examples of good practice. Applicants are encouraged to share lessons learned, including what worked well, any barriers experienced and any changes that would improve future planting projects.

Council monitoring visits

The Council may carry out monitoring visits or request additional information where this is necessary to verify delivery, understand establishment issues or support the applicant to resolve concerns. Visits will normally be arranged in advance and will be proportionate to the value and risk of the project.

Failure to provide monitoring information

Failure to provide required monitoring information may affect eligibility for future funding and, where grant conditions have not been met, may result in the Council seeking repayment of some or all of the grant. The Council will normally seek to resolve issues through discussion first, particularly where applicants are taking reasonable steps to maintain the trees and address problems.

10. Grant Conditions

Successful applicants will be required to comply with the grant conditions set out below and any additional conditions included in the grant offer letter or grant agreement. These conditions are intended to ensure that public funds are used properly, projects are delivered as approved, and trees are cared for during the critical establishment period.

Grant agreement and acceptance

No grant funding will be released until the applicant has accepted the grant offer and completed any required grant agreement documentation. The agreement will confirm the approved project, grant amount, eligible expenditure, delivery timescales, reporting requirements and any project-specific conditions.

Use of grant funding

Grant funding must only be used for the approved purposes set out in the application and grant agreement. Funding must not be used for retrospective costs, general organisational running costs, unrelated works, private financial gain, or any items that have not been approved by the Council.

Permissions, consents and legal responsibilities

- Applicants must obtain all necessary permissions before planting begins, including landowner consent, leaseholder consent, statutory approvals, utility checks, and any other consents required for the site.
- The applicant is responsible for ensuring that planting does not conflict with underground or overhead services, easements, covenants, public rights of way, access requirements, drainage infrastructure, protected habitats, protected species, existing trees or other site constraints.
- Where consent is required from another organisation, landowner or statutory body, evidence may need to be provided before funding is released or planting starts.

Project delivery

Projects must be delivered in accordance with the approved application, grant agreement and agreed budget. Planting should take place during an appropriate planting season and must be completed within the timescale agreed with the Council, unless an extension has been approved in writing.

Changes to the approved project

Any significant change to the approved project must be agreed with the Council before it is made. This includes changes to the planting location, number of trees, species, project scope, delivery timetable, budget headings, use of grant funding, maintenance arrangements or responsible organisation.

Minor practical adjustments may be acceptable where they do not affect the purpose, quality or outcomes of the project, but applicants should contact the Council if they are unsure whether approval is required.

Maintenance and tree establishment

Applicants must maintain the funded trees for a minimum of three years after planting, or for any longer period specified in the grant agreement. If responsibility for the land or maintenance changes during the establishment period, the applicant must inform the Council and ensure that suitable alternative maintenance arrangements are in place.

Health, safety and safeguarding

Applicants are responsible for managing health and safety during project delivery and maintenance. This includes completing appropriate risk assessments, ensuring safe working practices, supervising volunteers where required, using competent contractors where relevant, and ensuring that appropriate insurance is in place.

Where children, young people or vulnerable adults are involved, applicants must ensure that appropriate safeguarding policies, permissions, supervision and procedures are in place.

Monitoring, records and evidence

Successful applicants must provide completion and monitoring information in line with Section 10. The Council may request photographs, invoices, receipts, delivery records, maintenance updates, survival information, site visit access or other reasonable evidence to confirm that the grant has been used correctly and that the project is being maintained.

Applicants must keep financial and project records relating to the grant for a reasonable period after completion, normally at least six years, and must make them available to the Council if requested for audit, monitoring or evaluation purposes.

Publicity and acknowledgement

Applicants should acknowledge Braintree District Council funding in appropriate project publicity, communications or signage where requested. Any use of Council branding, logos or press material must be agreed with the Council in advance.

Photographs or case studies may be used by the Council to promote the fund and report on outcomes, subject to consent, safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Repayment, withdrawal or breach of conditions

The Council may withhold, reduce, withdraw or reclaim grant funding if grant conditions are not met, if the project is not delivered as approved, if false or misleading information has been provided, if funds are spent on ineligible items, or if monitoring and evidence requirements are not met.

Where issues arise, the Council will normally seek to work with the applicant to resolve them first. However, repayment may be required where public funding has not been used for the approved purpose or where the applicant has failed to take reasonable steps to meet the conditions of the grant.

11. Payment Process

The payment process will be confirmed in the grant offer letter or grant agreement. The Council may make payments upfront, in stages, or retrospectively depending on the value, risk and delivery arrangements for the project. Applicants should not commit expenditure or begin works until written approval and any required grant agreement have been completed.

Evidence may be required before payment is released or after payment has been made. This may include invoices, receipts, photographs, confirmation of planting, evidence of expenditure, delivery records or other information needed to demonstrate that the grant has been used for the approved purpose.

12. Key Dates

Key dates, including the application deadline, expected decision date and project delivery window, will be confirmed by the Council. Applicants should plan delivery around the appropriate planting season, typically November to March, and should allow enough time to secure permissions, quotations, volunteers, contractors and planting materials before works begin.

13. Support and Contact Details

Applicants should contact the Council if they are unsure whether their project is eligible, need advice on the application process, or would like to discuss site suitability, supporting information or delivery requirements before submitting an application.

14. Data Protection

Braintree District Council will collect, and process personal information provided as part of the Community Tree Planting Grant Fund application, assessment, award,

monitoring and evaluation process. This information will be handled in accordance with UK data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Personal information may include applicant names, job titles or roles, organisation details, contact addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, signatures, bank or payment-related information, photographs, project records and any other information needed to assess, administer and monitor the grant.

How information will be used

The Council will use the information provided to check eligibility, assess applications, make funding decisions, issue grant agreements, process payments, monitor project delivery, evaluate outcomes, manage audit requirements, respond to enquiries and report on the overall impact of the fund.

The Council may also use project information, photographs and case studies for publicity, reporting and promotion of the fund where appropriate permissions and consents have been obtained. Applicants should ensure that anyone appearing in photographs or publicity material has given appropriate consent, particularly where children or vulnerable adults are involved.

Lawful basis for processing

The Council will process personal information where it is necessary to carry out a public task, administer public funding, comply with legal obligations, manage financial records, prevent fraud, and protect public money. In some circumstances, consent may be requested for specific activities such as publicity photographs, case studies or promotional use of project images.

Sharing information

Information may be shared with Council officers, assessment panel members, finance and audit teams, elected members where required for governance or reporting purposes, and external organisations where this is necessary to administer, monitor or audit the fund. Information will only be shared where there is a legitimate reason to do so, and appropriate safeguards are in place.

The Council may also be required to disclose information where this is necessary to comply with law, respond to a freedom of information or environmental information request, prevent or detect fraud, or support an investigation. Personal information will not be sold or used for unrelated marketing purposes.

Retention of information

Application, financial, monitoring and grant management records will be kept only for as long as they are needed for the purposes of administering the fund, meeting audit requirements, resolving disputes, complying with legal duties and evaluating the scheme. Grant records will normally be retained for at least six years after the end of the grant agreement, unless a longer retention period is required.

Applicant responsibilities

Applicants must ensure that any personal information they provide is accurate, relevant and submitted with the knowledge of the individuals concerned. Where applications include personal information about volunteers, landowners, partners, contractors or community participants, applicants should ensure that those individuals understand how their information may be used.

Applicants must not submit sensitive personal information unless it is necessary for the application or requested by the Council. If a project involves children, young people or vulnerable adults, applicants should avoid providing unnecessary personal details and must follow appropriate safeguarding and consent procedures.

Individual rights

Individuals have rights in relation to their personal information, including the right to request access to information held about them and, in certain circumstances, to request correction, restriction, objection or deletion. These rights may be subject to legal exemptions where information must be retained for audit, legal, financial or public interest reasons.

Further information about how Braintree District Council handles personal information, including how to contact the Council's Data Protection Officer or make a complaint, is available in the Council's privacy notices and data protection guidance. Applicants should contact the Council if they have any questions about how their information will be used.

15. Appendices List

Appendix A1 – Essex Tree Palette

Appendix A2 - Eligible Species Guide

Appendix B – Tree Planting Best Practice and Guidance

Appendix C – Site Plan Requirements

Appendix D – Tree-Planting Risk Assessment

Appendix E – Assessment Panel Scoring Sheet