



Ovington Tree Planting Project

 Ovington, Northumberland, England

The Ovington Tree Project aims to deliver increased biodiversity, new wildlife corridors and improve carbon sequestration in the Tyne Valley area of Northumberland, with around 2,500 trees planted to date.

Spring 2021 saw the first major planting driven by Ovington Parish Council, followed by the Woodland Trust and Northumberland County Council donating hedgerow and copse trees in November 2021. Northumberland County Council and Woodland Trust supplied more trees in autumn 2022. These were planted by local families following a treasure trail to create a mini copse.

New hedgerows started to be planted November 2022 next to the River Tyne supervised by the Tyne Rivers Trust with special advice from Woodland Trust and a landowner.

In February 2023 more tree planting across the parish brought the total planted to date to 2,480 trees, including new hedgerows.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?

A local parish councillor concerned by the amount of ash dieback in the parish convinced the Parish Council to pay for a survey of free-standing trees in gardens or roadsides. The community was presented with the outcome of the survey and the impact of ash dieback. The consultant produced a map to show trees in 10 years' time, 25 years' time and 50 years' time. Nearly 65% of all free-standing trees are ash.

This process enabled the community to agree the key objective of planting new trees to address climate change, combat the loss of mature trees which is a major threat to local wildlife, and replace diseased trees being felled.

How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?

Following the survey results the Parish Council and Ovington Community Group collectively agreed to plant new trees, hedgerows and replace diseased and dying trees in the foreseeable future. Parish councillors were then asked to come forward to form a project group and Anne was appointed project manager. By working with landowners, Northumberland County Council, Highways England, Forestry England and Woodland Trust, Anne identified the 'right tree / right place' for a specific location.

Describe the process by which you achieved consensus around objectives and projects. Has that consensus held or does it remain challenged by some in the community? If so, how are you dealing with that?

Consensus has been achieved and held by working with the Ovington Community Group (OCG), Northumberland County Council and local schools. For example, events and activities include:

- A small test day of tree planting for local families.
- Booked the local village hall and the OCG provided free refreshments and the Parish Council provided an exhibition with a Q&A session. This also involved filming the event for the Queen Green Canopy project, which created a lot of local interest and consensus.



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- Discussed the project with the children in local schools and children can use the project as a living classroom.

How did you approach planning and project management around your selected idea?

Project management and planning is undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis by Anne, involving networking with parish councillors, other communities and a range of external organisations.

Parish councillors are involved and Anne enables volunteers to undertake certain actions around organising tree planting and events. Anne was an insurance risk manager and was involved in many large projects at the same time.

The key approach is ensuring the Parish Council and project has a clear strategy, outcome, and approach for grant funding.

How has that stood the test of time through the project? Have you had to revise your plans. How have you managed that process?

Anne has ensured contingency planning is in place and identifying risks from the outset. There are always alternative plans to ensure some members of the community turn up for events and for planting activities.

To ensure ongoing activity and external interest to generate funding or donations, Anne has advertised the name of the project widely with other Parish Councils, community groups, Northumberland County Council, the Woodland Trust and CPRE (The Countryside Charity).

How did you identify a funding need?

Ovington Parish Council has raised £6,500 in grants and donations as an ongoing process to obtain funding for planting and protecting the trees. For example, Anne directly approached the Woodland Trust and Northumberland County Council who have shared grant funding to buy trees.

Ovington Parish Council, jointly with the Ovington Community Group have undertaken fund raising events and provided letters to businesses and community members who are known to be potential benefactors. Anne also directly applied for grants from the Queen Greens Canopy, Northumberland County Council and private charities.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

All bidding for grants is undertaken internally by the Parish Council and Ovington Community Group. Members of the community are also invited to contribute to writing bid applications and has supported local community spirit and sense of community.

Did you have a need for specialist expertise for your project? If so how did you handle that and approach experts?

Planting alongside the River Tyne requires licenses and permissions. The Tyne Rivers Trust therefore supervised the planting activity and requested donation following the Parish Council directly approaching. This relationship has been built through local community connections to the Tyne Rivers Trust. In addition, local tree maintenance contractors are directly procured to remove any bracken or bramble to prepare for tree planting.

What have been the hardest difficulties to overcome and how did you overcome them?

Generating interest for volunteers on the day in the winter and in bad weather is the largest challenge. This has been overcome by working closely with volunteers and ensuring they are supported, recognised and praised, helping them visualise of what their impact would be.

Has the community managed to stay true to the original project vision? If not, why not? If it has, how has this been achieved?

The community has stayed true to the original vision. However, it has been extended through a Linear Tree Arboretum linking Ovington to Ovingham. This has allowed people to have greater access to the trees through two walking circuits and has been the basis of using grants from the Woodland Trust and Northumberland County Council grants.

This has been achieved by having a clear collective strategy and geography for planting to avoid scope creep and to remain focused.

What have been the biggest learnings from the delivery of your project?

Accessing information on land ownership is key and applying per field or piece of land can be very expensive to access land ownership information. This required an enormous amount of effort and networking by Anne and the Parish Council.

Approval of tree planting projects also requires approval from multiple stakeholders including Northumberland County Council, landowners, Highways England, Natural England and trusts.

What decisions, or elements of organisation have been the most important in the delivery of your project?

The key decisions included:

- Identifying dates for planting.
- Ensuring suppliers can deliver on certain dates.
- Identifying where the trees will be delivered.
- Ensuring tree protection storage in bulk to reduce costs.

What were the most important sources of advice and guidance for your community as you moved through the different phases of the project?

The Woodland Trust has provided expert advice upon soil types and tree types which has aided the decision making for identifying trees which can last at least 100 years.

Advised by other Parish Councils and Northumberland County Council to potentially restructure the Ovington Tree Planting project into a CIC (Community Interest Company) to manage increasing donations and to have a sustainable model with committee members as landowners from neighbouring villages. This may create a more cohesive and larger scale project.

Key contact

Anne Hudson, Ovington Community Group/Ovington Parish Council
anne.hudson@live.co.uk

Links

Website: <https://coronation.gov.uk/event/tree-project-wildlife-survey-ovington/>