

OVO Energy and The Conservation Volunteers

I Dig Trees Report 2020





Yet again, I find myself looking back on an incredible and record-breaking year for our I Dig Trees partnership – 370,000 trees planted and distributed by more than 700 community groups thanks to your Green Energy Tariff customers.

I'm sure we all recognise the contribution that I Dig Trees is making in the fight to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. But, with the high level of community engagement and delivery which is so central to I Dig Trees, and despite the challenges presented by a global pandemic, we have achieved so much more together. People have improved their physical and mental health and wellbeing, by being outdoors, active and connected with others. Communities have become stronger, by working together to improve the places where people live and tackling the issues that matter to them. And people have improved their confidence, skills and prospects, through learning inspired by the outdoors.

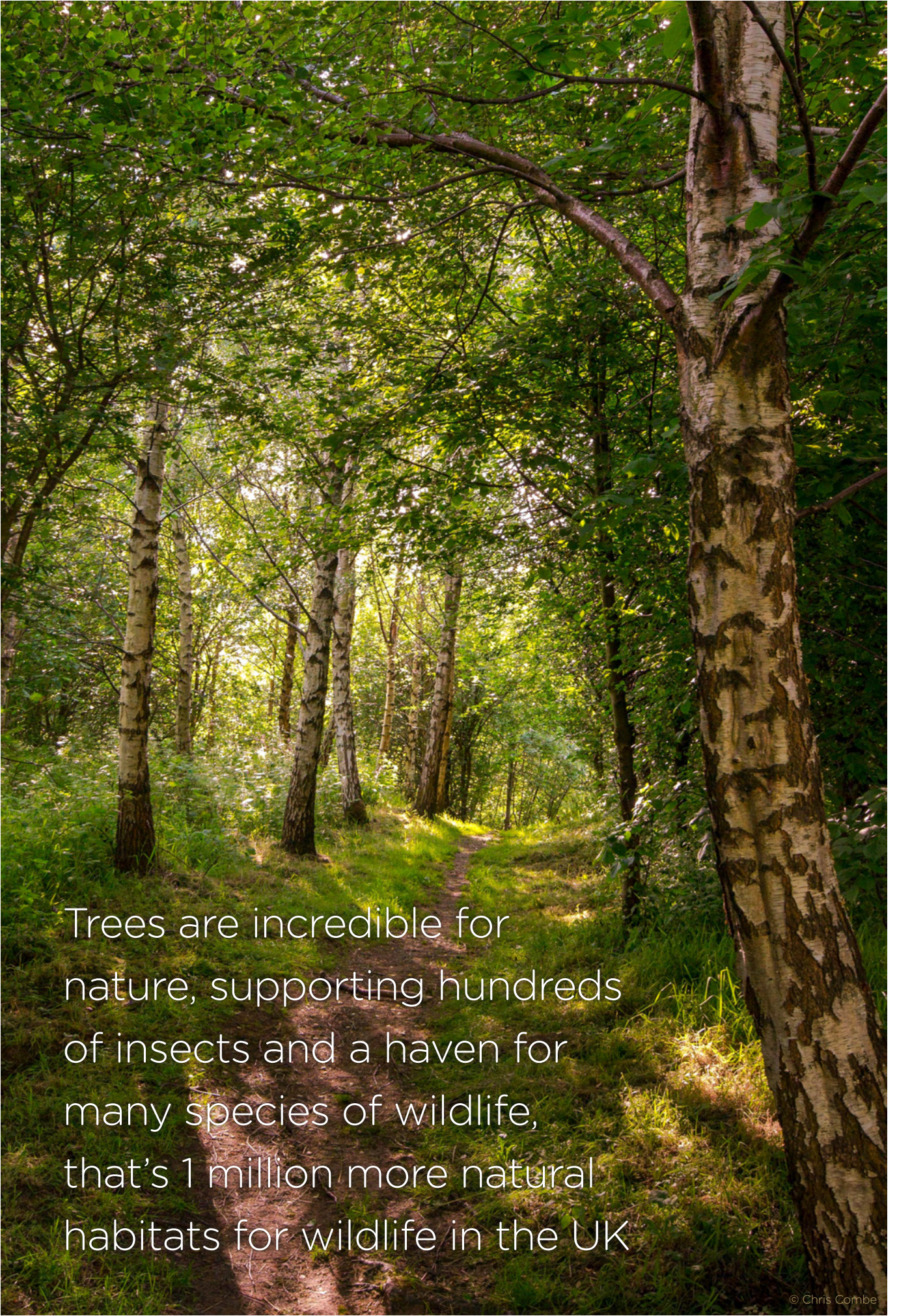
Since 2015, we've now planted and distributed a remarkable 1,448,000 trees. On behalf of everyone at The Conservation Volunteers, and the people and communities we work with, I'd like to say how grateful we are for your incredible support. Very many people are looking forward, with great excitement, to reaching the two million trees milestone in the planting season ahead.

Thank you.

Darren York

Chief Executive

The Conservation Volunteers

A photograph of a forest path. The path is a narrow, dirt trail that winds through a dense forest. It is flanked by tall birch trees with characteristic white bark and dark, horizontal lenticels. The ground is covered in green grass and fallen leaves. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of green leaves, creating a dappled light effect on the path and the surrounding vegetation. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Trees are incredible for nature, supporting hundreds of insects and a haven for many species of wildlife, that's 1 million more natural habitats for wildlife in the UK

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What we have achieved since 2015



1,448,000
trees planted
across the UK



3,348
community groups
joining in



3,606
different sites were
planted



12,308,000
sq metres covered by
newly planted trees



724,000
tonnes of CO₂ saved



53,568
volunteers planting
trees



321,408
volunteer hours
committed



28,960
packs of mixed
variety trees





2020 was another incredible year for I Dig Trees and for our climate and the environment.

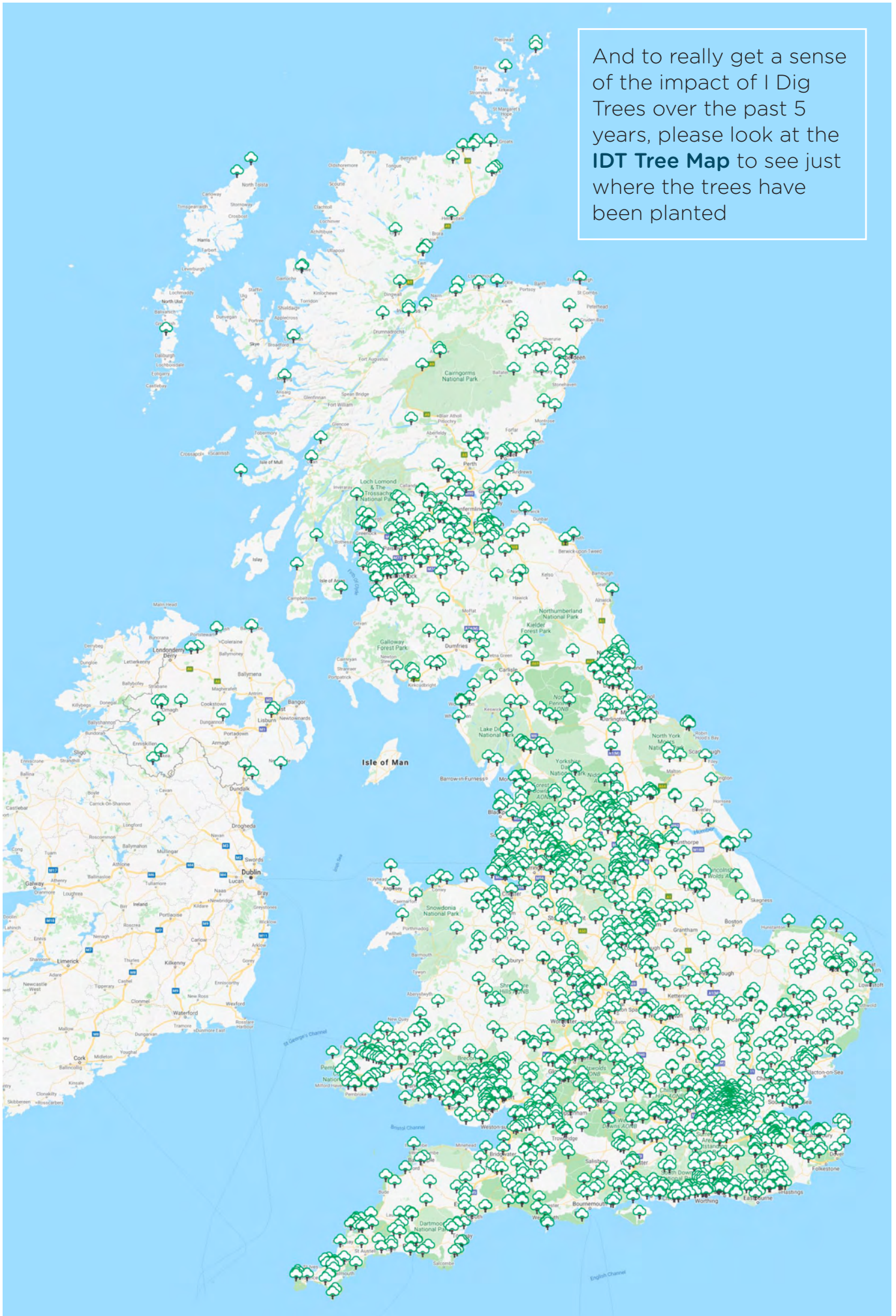
The season wasn't without its issues given the impact of Covid, not least 60,000 trees having to be rescheduled for delivery due to our delivery partner having to isolate, but we love a challenge!

It was another record-breaking year with 370,000 trees planted engaging over 700 community groups across the UK.

As ever, we saw from the groups involved just how inclusive and special I Dig Trees is; from toddlers to grandparents, and from family and friends' days out to neighbourhood gatherings, thousands of people came together to green our towns and cities for climate, wildlife and communities.

Region	Trees
South West	54,750
South East	62,900
London Region	29,050
East Anglia	26,150
West Midlands	12,600
East Midlands	9,800
Yorkshire	34,250
North East	33,450
North West	29,800
Scotland	37,700
Wales	35,500
Northern Ireland	4,050
Total	370,000

And to really get a sense of the impact of I Dig Trees over the past 5 years, please look at the **IDT Tree Map** to see just where the trees have been planted



This year more than ever we were overwhelmed by the feedback and thanks from the community groups, schools and local associations which received our tree packs.

Planting their trees and engaging with the local community (safely!) was a genuine respite from Covid and a sense of isolation.

Below are just a few of the comments we received and in the remainder of this report you'll find images and case studies from across the UK.

Just to let you know I have been a customer of OVO for quite a few years now. I always recommend OVO to new tenants in the apartment block where I live. And it is so good to see big companies giving back to the community, like OVO is doing donating all these trees and shrubs.

Jonathan

Our volunteer days were a lifeline, providing an opportunity to take part in healthy activities alongside others all be it socially distanced. A real highlight for me in the face of the COVID pandemic.

Katie

I can tell you that we have received many "free tree" packs in the past and we have been a little wary of them, as they have often been more publicity schemes than actually focused on the trees long term viability and the swift arrangements we have had to make to get them into the ground, have almost seemed not worth the hassle (sorry for the negativity, I am sure they all start out with good principles). This scheme is clearly not one of those and has been of great benefit for the future of our woodland.

Viv

We had a wonderful time teaching the children about worms, soils, and trees' roles in our ecosystems, and received hugely positive feedback from all the schools we visited. One child hadn't realised food came from soil, which really hammered home how important the events was.

Miranda

Our packages arrived this morning, just when you said they would, with everything in order. I am really impressed with the completeness of the package, the neatness of the packaging, plus your really well-done guidelines on planting which we will share with the volunteers.

Caroline

We delayed our planting to make it a parent and child special event so that we could work with the Covid guidelines and have the greatest impact. A great day and once again many thanks for the support that you and your funders give us. What we do has an impact now and for future generations to come. We will want to plant again next season so keep us informed.

Jonathan

There was a real buzz in our community about the event and people really enjoyed being outside and doing something to enhance our environment. This was such a brilliant thing to be involved in and we are very grateful to OVO and TCV for providing the trees.

Carolyn

And some community groups even made videos of their days and trees!



Scotland



On March 13th, a few families from our community supported by Kajedo our Land Manager helped to plant new broadleaf trees on the South East corner of Wilkies Woods, next to the pony field. The hazel, aspen, birch, wild cherries, and rowan trees that are now growing there add to the biodiversity of the woodland and will support our wildlife. Thank you to all the families for their helping hands! A big “Thank you” to The Conservation Volunteers who provided the trees with their initiative “I Dig Trees”.

Jonathan Caddy – Findhorn Hinterland Trust

South East



THANK YOU so much for the beautiful trees!

It was so good for the soul to be out there planting again today. It's just such a wonderful thing to be doing. I – like many others – have found this year pretty tough, partly due to Covid but also the whole environmental situation and the state of the world. I have been quite depressed and found that planning and organising this hedge has been one of the few things that cheered me up. Planting last weekend and chatting to neighbours and passing dog-walkers, was so therapeutic and I realise that's one of the most important things I've missed, just a casual chat with strangers & friends. It's been so lovely the last two weekends while planting, so many people I didn't know have asked what we are doing, have stopped for a chat and been so encouraging and interested. I think we've all felt much the same.

Jeannie Donald-McKim – Bladon Community Hope Hedge

South West



Thank you so much for the wonderful saplings we received. We were very impressed with the quality of the saplings. We have had the sad job of felling many Ash trees in our local wood, which is 50% Ash. The saplings are helping to fill the gaps plus natural regeneration.

Catherine Harvey - Allington Hill, Cooper's Wood and Field Community Group

Wales



The trees arrived a day ahead of schedule – great!

They've all now been planted. In the current lockdown, I planted the majority of them, but enlisted a couple of others to finish off – it was to have been a group planting with the local Brownies, but alas, they're not now meeting until after Easter, but they have agreed to take on the role of 'Plant Companions' as soon as they are able.

The trees are perfect for our purposes – we look after a heritage apple orchard on the outskirts of Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, with over 60 different varieties of older variety apple trees, and some pears too. The orchard is on former agricultural land and is rather exposed to the prevailing winds, so we were keen to plant a windbreak – The TCV trees have been planted on two sides of the orchard – the tree pack we received is ideal in that it has trees that are good for pollinators that we need to attract to ensure good pollination of the apples and pears. The hazel trees have all been planted on the south western boundary and will be managed as a mature hazel screen, with occasional coppicing. The crab apples, rowan and bird cherry have all been planted on the long southern boundary, alternately spaced to avoid too much shade on the apple trees. The willow have been planted in the corner of a damp meadow not far away where they can grow to their heart's delight!

Thank you very much indeed for this opportunity to move our community heritage orchard on to the next stage. We promise to look after them as best we can!

Philip James – Dinefwr Orchardeers

West Midlands



Thank you for the trees and your wonderful initiative that is making a real difference. We are very happy to be a part of it.

We ran two planting days back in December. One was for our 'Green Therapy' group and the other was a community planting day which saw local members of Long Marston come and plant hedgerow with us.

Both groups thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and we are extremely grateful for all of your help to make this happen.

Tom Donnison - Forest of Hearts

Yorkshire



Our trees arrived on the Friday, as expected. A small group of us checked them and sorted them according to our planting plan. We had allocated the whole weekend to planting but were blessed with wonderful weather and had lots of volunteers and got them all done on Saturday.

There was a real buzz in our community about the event and people really enjoyed being outside and doing something to enhance our environment. This was such a brilliant thing to be involved in and we are very grateful to OVO and TCV for providing the trees.

Thank you so much!

Carolyn Sandford - Shaw Mills Community Back

North East



We had a brilliant time planting trees over three weekends -and a few extra days – in two patches of land just outside the village. We planted over 2000 trees, 950 of which were donated by I Dig Trees, and we had the help and the wonderful company of 23 people, including two families who had not done any tree planting before.

We can't wait to continue the work next November and we are looking forward to seeing the trees grow and see the area thrive with life.

Many thanks for your generous help!

Jason Diaz – Trees for Lanchester

North West



We spend a lot of time removing scrub from our mosslands, but once in a while we do get to plant a small number of trees!

Earlier this Spring we received 250 whips of wildlife friendly species such as Hawthorn from the #IDigTrees scheme thanks to The Conservation Volunteers and OVO Energy.

Our volunteers planted these out at select locations around the border of Little Woollen, to add diversity to our shelter belt, additional food sources for wildlife, and hopefully the spikier species will also prevent some repass once they've grown a bit!

The recent sunshine has seen fresh leaves start to appear on the saplings, it looks like they like their new home.

Jamie Lawson - Friends of Chat Moss

East Anglia



Bungay Old Cemetery is a beautiful area of improved grassland and scrub mosaic which was identified by our local council as being in need of some restorative conservation work. We love it's messy, overgrown and lost feel and so does the wildlife.

Thank you for providing our community group with some whips which we have used to fill in gaps within the hedgerows and to create places where the hedge can spill into the cemetery further and provide additional habitat for nesting birds.

Our volunteer days were a lifeline, providing an opportunity to take part in healthy activities alongside others all be it socially distanced.

A real highlight for me in the face of the COVID pandemic.

Katie Utting - Bungay Old Cemetery Community Group

East Midlands



Friends of Gedling House Woods welcomed the opportunity to benefit from I Dig Trees in 2020 – the timing was perfect. Our woodland, originally part of the grounds of Gedling House, was once a well-established broadleaf wood with beech as the main species.

In 1955, most of the mature beech was felled for timber but, contrary to the felling conditions, no replanting took place. Much of the woodland is now self-seeded sycamore, ash and wych elm. Many of these older trees have fallen or have become diseased and been felled, leaving a number of clearings suitable for replanting.

Our small group of volunteers removed many very tall slender sycamore, ash and wych elm saplings and a good deal of undergrowth from the clearings. The Park pack from I Dig Trees fitted well with our plan for replacement species and 100 trees were all planted on 1 December, the day after delivery, again by volunteers.

The group is extremely pleased with the support we had from I Dig Trees.

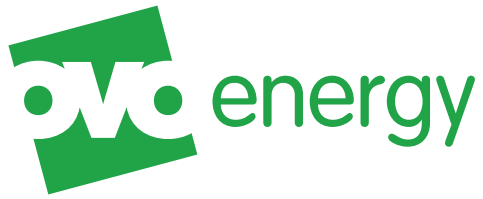
Frank Knowles – Friends of Gedling House Woods

London

We planted an area of future coppice for firewood (using the parkland pack). The small plot pack was planted parallel to a line of conifer trees to create a belt of woodland, extending down the main field from an area of native woodland (which included IDT trees from last 2019, all doing well). The wildlife pack will be a double row hedge around one edge of the top field and will also improve safety here by acting as a barrier to a steep slope. The next job will be to mulch them all with cardboard and woodchip, if we can get hold of some!

As land manager, I led the planting sessions and was helped by our 2 wonderful residential winter volunteers. They loved the tree planting and felt happy to be contributing to a great initiative. Thank you so much for supplying us with the trees. I was very impressed with the service, they came exactly when expected, the trees were in excellent condition with damp roots and in fact I think there were a couple more trees than we bargained for! We have a population of rabbits on site, so the tree guards were a must.





TCV looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with OVO Energy and your customers. Together we can leave a lasting, positive legacy for the UK's woodlands.

Douglas Palarm – Head of Partnerships and Fundraising

Join in, feel good