

Trees for Change Teacher's Guide

For Secondary Schools

Developing pupil voice through a practical and exciting Learning for Sustainability Challenge.

Support your pupils in exploring and learning about the benefits of urban trees through the lens of a real tree planting initiative taking place in your area.

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Trees for Change Challenge

Keep Scotland Beautiful has partnered with the Clyde Climate Forest (CCF) and Trees for Cities to bring the Trees for Change Challenge to schools and youth groups throughout the Glasgow City region.



CCF aim to plant 18 million trees across eight local authorities: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire.



As part of this goal, schools and youth groups from these councils are invited to take part in the Trees for Change Challenge. This Challenge provides an entry point for discussions on environmental and social issues associated with trees and serves as a gateway to enter the national and international Young Reporters for the Environment Competition.



The Trees for Change Challenge is designed to support pupils in exploring the benefits of urban trees. Trees planted in our towns and cities not only mitigate the effects of climate change, improve levels of pollution, and support nature but have been shown to improve wellbeing and mental health.

CCF focuses on three areas of resilience: capturing Carbon, increasing urban tree Canopy; making links between woodland areas to enhance connectivity. Pupils are encouraged to make consider these benefits within the context of their local area.

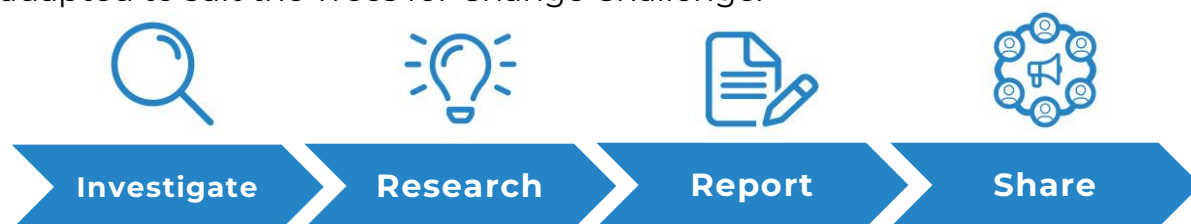
Using the Teacher's Guide

This guide is designed to help teachers support pupils to investigate the benefits of urban trees within their local context. The Trees for Change Challenge can be adapted depending on context so this guide should be viewed as a support rather than a template.

Structure:

Trees for Change Challenge follows the structure of the Young Reporters for the Environment Programme (YRE). This is an international environmental journalism programme which encourages young people to use journalism to drive positive solutions-focused change. On completion of the Trees for Change Challenge, pupils will be able to enter the YRE competition.

The project will lead pupils through the four stages of YRE, which are adapted to suit the Trees for Change Challenge:



Timeline:

As part of the Trees for Change Challenge, there is an introductory lesson, designed to outline key ideas and the process of creating a report. There are additional YRE videos available to support throughout the stages of the project.

This project can be adapted depending on setting. It could be completed over two lessons or constitute an extended research project. Potential timelines are detailed later in this guide.

Pupil output:

A Report, either in the form of a short video or written article explaining where pupils would choose to plant trees in their local area and the benefit this would have, focusing on a specific topic. This can be in the form of a short campaign video or written article.

Teacher role:

There is no expectation to be 'experts' in topics. The teacher's role is to facilitate and support pupils in selecting and researching a topic. A singular research topic could be chosen for the class by the teacher or pupils can focus on independent research topics.

Planning and Preparation

Suggested Teacher Checklist:

- Choose a delivery timeline for the Trees for Change Challenge.
- Consider cross-curricular links and whether you can complete the project in collaboration with other departments or subjects in your setting to create an Interdisciplinary Learning approach. For example, Science and Humanities can collaborate to bring a scientific and a social view of issues.
- Decide how pupils will work: in pairs, groups or whole-class.
- Decide on the report method: will the whole class create a campaign video together? Will everyone work on written articles?
- Check safeguarding policies relating to filming pupils.
- Check that suggested sources are available in your council. See [Appendix 2](#).

Required Resources:

- [Trees for Change Introduction Lesson](#).
- Trees for Change Pupil Workbook (printed or digital)

Supporting Resources:

Trees for Change Information Lessons:

- [Carbon](#)
- [Canopy](#)
- [Connectivity](#)

Young Reporters for the Environment Videos

- [The Environments and Rights](#)
- [YRE Good Sources of Information Video](#)

- Topic Information Sheet: Can be used as a task to introduce pupils to a variety of topics. Included in this guide as [Appendix 1](#).

Classroom Resources:

- Access to Chromebooks, computer, iPad for research.
- Phones/ iPad/ tablet/ camera to record campaign videos

Key Terms and Ideas

The following terms are referred to throughout this guide, the pupil workbook and lesson. Pupils can build their own word bank when completing their research.

Term/ Idea	Description	Link
3C's	The Clyde Climate Forest's three areas of focus, referring to Carbon, Canopy and Connectivity.	<u>CCF - Clyde Climate Forest</u>
Canopy	Canopies refer to tree cover, which can protect urban areas against extreme weather associated with climate change, such as heat and rain.	
Connectivity	Creating a network of connected woodlands, green spaces and trees to enhance biodiversity within urban areas.	
Carbon (within the context of the Clyde Climate Forest)	The capacity of trees to store absorb carbon dioxide and act as carbon sinks.	
Biodiversity	The variety of plants and animals that exist within the world or specific area.	<u>Restoring nature and biodiversity Keep Scotland Beautiful</u>
Ecosystem	The community of plants and animals which live within the same areas and rely on one another to survive.	
Urban Trees	Trees growing within towns and cities are shown to benefit environmental and social well-being.	<u>Urban Trees and Woodland - British Habitats - Woodland Trust</u>
Tree Equity	The idea that all communities should have equal access to trees and green spaces. This idea recognises the health, wellbeing, social, and environmental benefits that access to trees provides.	<u>Tree Equity Score UK</u>
Target 2030	Set of targets outlined by the Scottish Government. As part of this every learning setting should become a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030.	<u>Eco-Schools and Sustainable Learning Settings Keep Scotland Beautiful</u>

Research Topics

Choosing topics for the Trees for Change Challenge:

The Trees for Change Challenge asks pupils to think about where they would choose to plant trees in their local area and why. Pupils should select a specific research area to find out more about a specific benefit of urban trees and link this to their local area and the benefits that trees could therefore have on their community.

Research Topics:

Potential topics have been grouped into the 3C's to reflect the focus of the Clyde Climate Forest. See below a list of potential research topics for pupils.



Carbon:

- How can trees in cities help with climate change?
- How much carbon can trees in cities store and absorb?
- How can trees in cities help with air pollution?



Canopy:

- How can trees help with extreme heat?
- How can trees help with extreme rain and flooding?
- How can trees and green spaces improve people's wellbeing?



Connectivity:

- How do trees in cities create homes for animals and nature?
- How can trees help wildlife move safely through towns and cities?
- How can trees connect communities with nature?

The pupil worksheet 'Trees for Change: Topic Ideas' can be used to help pupils choose an idea and could be used as a carousel task to introduce pupils to a variety of ideas before identifying which they are specifically interested in.

Alternatively, one class topic could be selected if there are specific links with subject content.

Using the Pupil Workbook

The Pupil Workbook is designed as a planning document that will guide pupils in choosing a topic, completing research, and planning for their report. Once complete, pupils should then create their video or article.

What to look for at each step:



Step 1: Investigate:

Encourage pupils to think about trees in their local area.

Make links between trees and rights, use our YRE video to support this:

[YRE Lessons Video 1: The Environment and Rights](#)

Potential prompt questions are:

- Can they identify existing green spaces?
- Are there areas that lack green space/ have no access to trees?
- Are trees equally distributed in the area and the surrounding areas?
- Are there some areas with more trees than others?
- Why do they think this is the case?
- Do they think that this is fair or good for the environment?
- Are there areas that they think would be suitable for tree planting? Or areas where they would like to see trees?

During this stage, pupils should also be encouraged to think about their 'why'. Why do they think trees are important? They may not, but this is also an opportunity to engage in class discussion around values and how we understand the world around us.

Extension:

Use the Tree Equity Map or Green Space Map to find out about trees locally.

Check the Tree Equity Score in your area:

<https://uk.treeequityscore.org/map>

Not all areas are covered on this map. If this is the case, use this as a discussion point to think about how high the pupils would rate their local area in terms of access to trees.

Pupils can also check Green space in their area:

[Greenspace map | Greenspace Scotland](#)

This could be conducted as part of a class discussion or by creating an ideas mind map, in groups or as a class.



Step 2: Research

Based upon the 3C's, Carbon, Canopy and Connectivity, pupils should be encouraged to consider potential topics, thinking about the benefits that trees could offer to their area.

Invite pupils to choose one area near their school where they think there should be more trees and discuss the reasons for this.

Select a specific research topic.

The Topic Ideas Sheet can be used at this stage to give more information on different topics and ideas to focus on. This could be used as an additional activity in the form of a carousel, where pupils gather information about a variety of topics to help inform their choice.

Research should be conducted using by finding sources online, in books or through interviews. Pupils should aim to find at least two trusted sources of information. If access to digital tools is limited, this could be using the Source Booklet and conducting an interview with someone at home about what they think about trees in their area.



Step 3: Report

Pupils should be supported in creating their reports.

The report should clearly address the question:

Where should trees be planted in my local area and why?

Pupils should be encouraged to outline their chosen location for planting trees and clearly explain why trees should be planted there, focusing on a specific topic.

For example: Trees should be planted along the road that they take to school because this will have benefits on well-being.



Step 4: Share

Check that reports meet YRE specifications for either the written [Article](#) or [Campaign Video](#). [Share completed reports](#). These will be considered by experts for the Clyde Climate Forest and Trees for Cities. A selection of entries will be shared via their channels. Entries can also be submitted to the national YRE competition.

Advice for Research

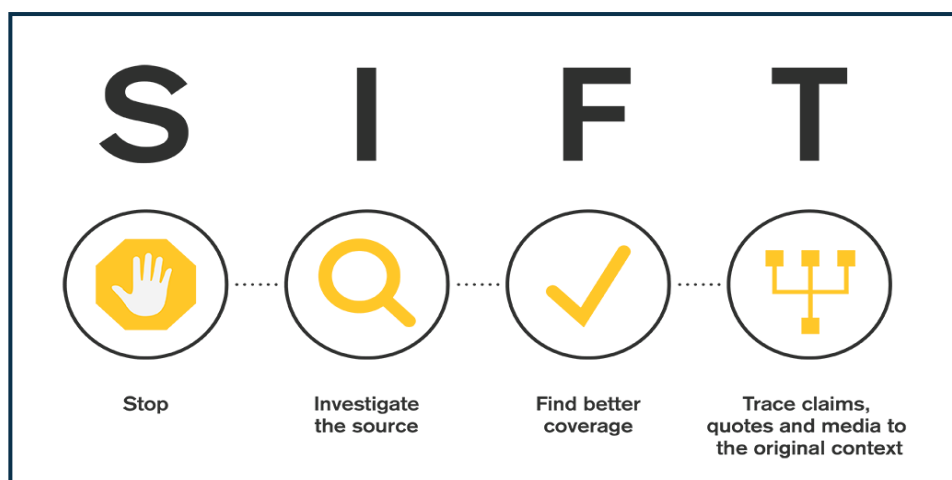
Evidence and Research:

Pupils should be encouraged to use a mix of Primary and Secondary Sources.

Primary Research: interviews, surveys or observations.

Secondary Research: looking at sources that already exist like books, newspapers, journals, or films.

Encourage pupils to consider the ‘trustworthiness’ of a source. This is particularly relevant when conducting online research. This can help pupils when evaluating where they are finding their information.



Use our YRE video to help pupils understand conducting research and finding sources:

[YRE Good Sources of Information Video](#)

1. **Stop:** Pause before using the source.
2. **Investigate the Source:** Who created the information?
3. **Find better Coverage:** Look for other, more reliable sources that say similar things or back up information.
4. **Trace Claims, Quotes and Media:** Try to find the original claim, finding where it came from will help ensure that the information is accurate.

Any sources used should be kept in a Source Sheet.

AI should be avoided when pupils are completing research and can only be used for translation purposes.

Advice for Reporting

Report Methods:

Reports can take the form of a Video Campaign or Written Article. These can be created independently, in groups or as a class, depending on context.



Video Campaign:

Create a short engaging video, this could take the form of a sketch, a speech to other creative way of presenting information.

Videos must also meet the following specification:

- Film in portrait for a maximum of one minute (like TikTok or YouTube Short).
- You can choose any language you like, but please include English subtitles.
- Your video should be 70% your own footage.
- List any other footage or quotes in a Source List.
- Tell us three places you have shared your video.
- No AI or copyrighted music please.



Written Article:

This could take the form of an essay, newspaper article or blog post.

Articles must also meet the following specification:

- Maximum length of 1,000 words.
- Write your article in any language you like as long as you provide an English translation.
- You can include up to three images (photos, illustrations, or diagrams) with captions of no more than 20 words each.
- Please list your sources for images and facts.
- Tell us three places you have shared your article.
- No AI or ChatGPT please (except for use as a translation tool).

Delivery Ideas

Suggested Schedule:

The Trees for Change Challenge is designed to ensure that it can be used across settings, so it can be adapted to suit the needs of a timetable. See below suggested timelines:

Short Project: (2-3 Lessons)

Pupils should spend the first lesson identifying a topic and gathering information. The second lesson should be used to create a video based on the information that they have gathered.

YRE Project: (4 lessons)

Using the four YRE steps to structure this series of lessons, pupils should aim to Investigate, Research, Report and Share their learning, with one lesson being used for each step. When sharing, pupils can create a campaign around their Report which they can share with the wider school community, to extend learning.

Long Project:

An extended project will allow pupils to more deeply understand their topic, create a more detailed report and share their findings with peers.

Differentiation:

Using the pupil workbook provides a structure to this project, however, there are ways of adapting this to suit different settings, pupils or needs. Below, find some ideas about how to increase accessibility or to add challenge.

Additional accessibility:

- For one of the sources, use interviews. Pupils conduct simple interviews with peers, staff or could be a homework task.
- Use the Source Booklet to simplify the research process.
- Focus on one topic and research as a class. An example of this could be finding out about biodiversity in your area and creating a report about the animals that would benefit from more trees being planted.

Additional challenge:

- Require pupils to gather more information from a wide variety of sources and ask pupils to evaluate how reliable their sources are.
- As an extension task pupils could be asked to think on a larger scale, out with their local area, what would they suggest in terms of Reforestation in Scotland or around the world?

Curriculum Links

Curricular Links

SOC 3-08a, SOC 4-10b, SOC 3-15a, LIT 3-15a, LIT 3-25a, SCN 3-05b

Learning for Sustainability Links:

Target 2030 4Cs – Culture, Community

SDGs – Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal 13 (Climate Action)

UNCRCs – Article 13 (Freedom of Expression), Article 24 (Health, Water, Food and Environment), Article 29 (Aims of Education)



Meta Skills – Initiative, Communicating, Creativity

Subject-specific research areas:

Subject	Links with Trees for Change Challenge
Modern Studies	Rights. Social Inequality. Research Skills.
Geography	Weather and Climates. Environmental Quality and Sustainability.
RMPS	Morality and Beliefs.
English/ Languages	Literacy. Persuasive writing.
Science	Carbon Sequestration. Biodiversity and urban ecosystems.
Art and Design	Stop motion or creative approaches to making reports.
Citizenship/ PSE	Green spaces and wellbeing.

Next Steps

Submit work to the Trees for Change Challenge

Submitting work to the Trees for Change Challenge allows your pupils to have their voice heard by change makers involved in tree planting projects around Glasgow. Submissions will be considered by representatives from Trees for Cities and The Clyde Climate Forest.

A selection of submissions will be chosen to be circulated via their channels and with educators as examples of good practice. The winning entry will receive a trophy.

If you want to submit pupil work, please send it to:
Education@keepsotlandbeautiful.org with the subject line 'Secondary Trees for Change Challenge Submission'

Full consent of every young person feature within any media submitted must be gathered by the school.

The deadline for submissions is the 29th of January 2027.

YRE Competition

If pupils plan to enter the Young Reporters for the Environment competition, they should complete the form which is attached to this guide and within the pupil workbook.

If you do not intend to enter pupil work in YRE, simply do not print this page of the pupil Workbook. This is also attached to this guide as [Appendix 4.](#)

If you have any questions about YRE, please contact:
catriona.rae@keepsotlandbeautiful.org

Eco Schools

Taking part in the Trees for Change Challenge and understanding the causes and effects of climate change work well for the Eco-Schools Topic of Climate Action and can be counted towards an application for a Green Flag Award.

If you have any questions about taking part in Eco-Schools, please contact: ecoschools@keepsotlandbeautiful.org

Learning Outcomes

The below learning outcomes list the intended focus of each stage of this project. These will also be the criteria under which submissions are considered.

Challenge Question: Where would you plant trees in your area and why would you choose to plant them there?

Learning Intention:

To learn about the benefits of Urban Trees and express opinions around this topic.

Success Criteria:

This success criteria should be used to construct successful reports and will be used when considering submissions.

1. Investigate:

- ☐ 1.1 Describe trees and green spaces in the local area.
- ☐ 1.2 Identify areas that lack trees locally.
- ☐ 1.3 Identify locations where trees could be planted.

2. Research:

- ☐ 2.1 Identify a specific research topic.
- ☐ 2.2 Explain benefits of urban trees, linking the chosen research topic and the areas identified for planting trees.
- ☐ 2.3 Use at least two reliable sources of information.
- ☐ 2.4 Use referencing structure to record sources.

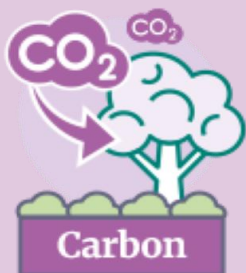
3. Report:

- ☐ 3.1 Introduce and explain where trees should be planted in the local area.
- ☐ 3.2 Explain chosen research topic and make links to chosen area for planting.
- ☐ 3.3 Use at least two pieces of supporting evidence.

Appendix 1: Topic Information

Topic Ideas:

Use this bank of topic ideas to support pupils in choosing the area that they want to research

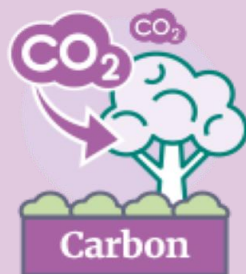


Carbon: Trees and Climate Change

Trees help us fight climate change because they absorb CO₂ which is causing the world to heat up.

Find out about:

How trees can help stop climate change and think about if it is realistic that trees can fix this problem.

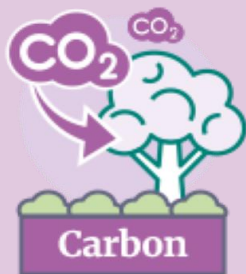


Carbon: Trees and Air Pollution

Trees trap pollution and clean our air.

Find out about:

Air Pollution and the impact this can have on people. Think about your area and where trees could be placed to help reduce pollution.



Carbon: Storing Carbon

Focus on a single tree and find out how they store CO₂ and turn it into oxygen.

Find out about:

How Carbon Storage is measured and think about how and where this could benefit your area.





Canopy: Rain and Flooding

When it rains hard, trees catch and slow down water from hitting the ground. They also absorb water from the ground which can help to stop floods.

Find out about:

How trees could protect against flooding and rain in your area.



Canopy: Extreme Heat

In the sun trees offer shade and through a process known as transpiration they can cool the air around them. Cities are at risk of high temperature as buildings make the heat more intense. Trees can help to protect against the sun and cool the temperature.

Find out about: How trees could protect against the heat in your area.



Canopy: Health and Wellbeing

Spending time around trees has been linked to better mental health and lower stress. Green spaces have been shown to improve people's moods and even help stop anger or violence.

Find out about:

How trees benefit wellbeing and think about how this could help your local area.





Connectivity: Homes for Nature

Trees are home to lots of different types of animals and plants. Birds create nests, insects live in the bark and fungi and mushrooms grow in the roots.

Find out about: Animals and plants in your area which rely on trees.



Connectivity: Nature Pathways

Roads and buildings can mean that animals and nature are trapped in smaller areas. Nature Pathways or Wildlife corridors allow animals to move around.

Find out about:

Nature Highways and areas that would benefit from these near you.



Connectivity: Connecting Communities

Trees can connect people. They create spaces where we can meet friends, family and feel like we belong.

Find out about: How trees can benefit community life and think about where this could benefit your community.

Appendix 2: Sources for pupils

Carbon:

- [Climate change | National Geographic Kids](#)
- [What is the Carbon Cycle? - NASA Science](#)
- [How Trees Fight Climate Change - Woodland Trust](#)
- [Scotland's climate emissions fall slightly as progress slows - BBC News](#)
- [How do Trees Store Carbon? - Creating Tomorrow's Forests | Restoring biodiversity by creating habitats and planting trees](#)

Canopy:

- [Why Cities Need Urban Trees for Clean Air | Trees for Cities](#)
- [Can trees and woods help reduce flooding? - Woodland Trust](#)
- [HOW TREES PROTECT AGAINST FLOODING | Trees for Cities](#)
- [How Urban Trees Cool Cities and Reduce Urban Heat | Trees for Cities](#)
- [Nature and mental health | Tips for everyday living | Mind](#)
- [The benefits of trees for mental health and... | Trees for Cities](#)

Connectivity:

- [Why are Trees Important for Biodiversity? - Woodland Trust](#)
- [How Urban Trees Help Us Feel Closer to Nature | Trees for Cities](#)

Appendix 3: Additional Resources for Teachers

Carbon:

- Task to measure the amount of Carbon stored with a tree: What are trees made of?
- Live Lesson about Carbon Footprints
- Live Lesson about Climate Change
- Live Lesson about Climate Justice

Canopy:

- Lesson Plan: How trees prevent flooding and pollution

Connectivity:

- Live lesson on Biodiversity
- Activity to learn about local Biodiversity
- Insect survey activity
- Nature Highway Activity

Reporting:

- Your local trees and forests: Activities to support pupils in using their voice to advocate for trees. Includes support on conducting interviews.
- Conducting interviews support.
- Youth Voice Communication Workshop.

Appendix 4: YRE Entry Form

Name(s)

Age

School

Local Authority

Teacher

Teacher's Email Address

Report Type

Video Campaign ☐

Photo Story ☐

Written Article ☐

Report Theme

Climate Change ☐

Biodiversity Loss ☐

Litter & Pollution ☐

Title (max 140 characters)

Three places you have shared your report:

Can we publish your name with your report?

☐

YES: it is OK to
publish my name

☐

NO: please do not
publish my name

Signature (for under 16s this should be a parent or carer)

☐

I understand my entry will be published and submitted to the national and international YRE Competition.

Thank You!



Contact:

T: 01786 471333

E: education@KeepScotlandBeautiful.org

