



# AVON NEEDS TREES

*Buying Land to Plant Permanent Forest*

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## **LOCAL CHARITY PLANS 20 ACRES OF NEW PERMANENT FOREST NEAR CALNE, WILTSHIRE**

**Launch date Sunday 13th September, 2 – 4pm, Hazeland, near Calne**

**BBC's Miranda Krestovnikoff to host**

**Local 'ANTs' celebrate BIG achievement!**

Thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, local 'ANT' charity is celebrating its first land purchase, and has unveiled ambitious plans to create new, permanent woodland.

The 34 acres purchased, Hazeland, is in the river Avon's high catchment area, near Calne, Wiltshire. New woodland here will bring benefits to the whole region – more habitat for endangered species, natural flood management, a space for public learning and recreation, as well as critical carbon capture to help combat climate change.

Forest cleared post-1945 will be restored with a mix of planting and rewilding, and a further ten acres of existing ancient woodland will be managed to maximise biodiversity and tree health. Four acres of riverside meadow will be managed for pollinators and other declining UK species.

**“We know that critically endangered bat species use this river corridor for roosting and foraging,”** says Nikki Jones, Chair and founder of Avon Needs Trees. **“We’ll be managing the site to give them maximum help, and using citizen scientists to help monitor the numbers. We’ll be doing the same for the many woodland birds, butterflies, plants and fungi we’ve identified at Hazeland, that we know are in steep decline in the UK. All these species are part of our ‘web of life’: we need them – and we’re enormously grateful to all our funders, particularly the National Lottery Heritage Fund, for giving ANT the opportunity to help protect them.”**

Avon Needs Trees is a Bristol-based charity, founded in 2019. It is on a 20-year mission to create permanent woodland in the catchment of the River Avon. Funding for this first purchase has come from the public, local companies such as Natracare and Bristol Energy Company, and a massive grant of £240,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Nikki Jones, who founded Avon Needs Trees, said: **“The Avon catchment area has almost no woodland left. That puts us at tremendous risk of flooding, as well as adding to our carbon and wildlife loss. As individuals, we realise we are just ‘ants’ in the face of our climate change and biodiversity crises but together ants can do big things! We’re thrilled to have taken ownership of our first piece of land, Hazeland, which is a really rich and varied mix of habitats, including ancient woodland and wildflower meadows.**

**“Our long-term vision is to establish new, permanent woodland across the Avon catchment, one ant-sized bite at a time. We’ve chosen to buy the land, rather than plant on other people’s, so that we can guarantee the trees will still be there in years to come, protected, permanently.”**

Avon Needs Trees will be celebrating its purchase of Hazeland on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September with key funders, volunteers and engagement partners. The BBC’s natural history presenter and ANT ambassador Miranda Krestovnikoff will be hosting the event.

**“This project is a brilliant example of the tremendous power of community action,”** says Miranda Krestovnikoff. **“A small charity with big ambitions is harnessing the power of trees to mitigate the impacts of climate change, improve the landscape and creating a fantastic new nature reserve for everyone to enjoy.”**

Avon Needs Trees will be welcoming the public to Hazeland in managed events, so that the public can take part in monitoring the biodiversity and learn about woodland management. Forest schools, volunteer work days, tree planting and a wide variety of learning events are being planned. There is strong support from local schools, GP surgeries, walking and ‘green’ groups who will be using Hazeland for a variety of activities.

**“At Springfields Academy, a specialist school for children with autism in Calne, we’re thrilled to have the opportunity to use Hazeland for our ‘outdoor learning’, a key daily part of our activities,”** says Learning Mentor Ann Berrett. **“Our children come from a very wide area and, at the moment, we have to travel long distances to get to suitable woodland. Being able to use Hazeland is brilliant for us – less travel, more time in the open air, less money spent on fuel – and a lower carbon footprint, which is very important to us.”**

Avon Needs Trees is already looking to its next purchase and has recently launched a crowdfunder to help buy 19 acres at Seend, near Melksham.

**“This is 19 acres where we can really add value,”** says Nikki Jones. **“It’s ideal for tree planting, and already has great hedgerows and two pond areas that we will use to attract and monitor wildlife. We’re particularly excited about being able to offer a substantial area for community orchard, and engaging the local community in the planting – as well as harvesting!”**

Avon Needs Trees is hoping to raise the £200,000 for Seend before spring 2021. Baseline ecological reports are currently being commissioned, but anecdotal evidence from the community already points to the recent loss of key species such as cuckoo. New, permanent woodland at Seend should provide a foot-hold for such species, while providing some of the carbon capture and natural flood management that the catchment area needs.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **Why was Avon Needs Trees set up?**

Avon Needs Trees was set up as a response to the many recent reports on our ecological crisis which is seeing native British species being lost at an alarming rate. One quarter of the UK’s native mammals are now classified as being at imminent risk of extinction according to the first official Red List for British mammals, published by the [Mammal Society](#) in July.

Furthermore, a staggering 97% of wildflower rich meadows and grassland has been lost in the past 50 years. Although Wiltshire is carpeted by fields, these are mainly given over to agriculture and the region only has almost no canopy cover, compared to the 13% national average.

### **Top 5 priority species sighted at Hazeland:**

1. **Bats** – several priority species have been recorded at Hazeland, including the Greater and Lesser Horseshoe, Bechstein, Pipistrelle, Noctule and Barbastelle.
2. **Birds** – a wide variety of amber and red listed species have been sighted at Hazeland, including dunnocks, swallows, tawny owl, song thrush, house martin, stock dove and grey wagtails.
4. **Butterflies** – the wildflower meadows are teeming with butterflies and over 18 different species were recorded this summer, including the rare Silver-washed Fritillary and Small Heath.
5. **Otters** – using motion-sensor night cameras, Avon Needs Trees has confirmed the presence of another species with priority conservation status, otters
5. **Dormice** – these elusive and greatly endangered creatures have not yet been confirmed at Hazeland but ANT s providing dormice boxes and will be monitoring for these. The mix of canopy and scrub at Jazeland is ideal habitat for them.

To find out more and get involved, visit [www.avonneedstrees.org.uk](http://www.avonneedstrees.org.uk) or join the conversation online on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

### **About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

National Lottery Heritage Fund grant applications over £250,000 are assessed in two rounds. The Avon Needs Trees project has been granted support by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans.

Money raised by the National Lottery is allocated to projects that can inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk)

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### **About Avon Needs Trees**

Established in July 2019, Avon Needs Trees is a tree-planting charity with a difference. Rather than planting on other people's land, with no guarantees that the trees will still be there in years to come, Avon Needs Trees is buying land to ensure the trees they plant are protected, permanently.

The charity is working with a range of expert partners, including the Environment Agency, the Woodland Trust, Avon Wildlife Trust, Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Bristol City Council, the Forest of Avon Trust and the University of Bristol. The charity's major funders are the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Natracare, and Bristol Energy Company.

To find out more and get involved, visit [www.avonneedstrees.org.uk](http://www.avonneedstrees.org.uk).

### **Crowdfunder for next purchase of land at Seend**

Avon Needs Trees has six months to raise £200,000. The link for the current crowdfunder is: [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/AvonNeedsTrees](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/AvonNeedsTrees)