

Forestry England's York Plastic Policy

Forestry England are committed to minimising the use of plastics in the creation of York Community Woodland. Tree shelters and guards are an essential means of establishing broadleaved trees, providing protection from browsing mammals and enhancing tree growth. Tree shelters and guards can be made from a wide range of materials. To date, most have been made from plastics which are not biodegradable. More recent designs use plant-based sources, compressed paper or cardboard however there are currently issues over their longevity as they need to be designed and constructed to provide adequate protection throughout the establishment of the tree. Further field-based trials and research are required before non-plastic alternatives are proven viable to use on a large-scale. Forestry England will host a field experiment at York Community Woodland in partnership with Forest Research as part of a UK wide network of research trials to determine the practicality, durability and efficacy of non-plastic biodegradable tree shelters produced by independent manufacturers as alternatives to those made from conventional plastics. An assessment of likely environmental impact and degradation end points will be conducted as well as their costs and practicality. The output will be in the form of a report which will be shared with City of York Council and inform Forestry England's approach to tree protection on woodland creation sites, including any future opportunities in York arising from Forestry England and City of York Council's partnership. The trial will be subject to material supply.

Forestry England will minimise the use of plastic tree shelters by following Forestry Commission Best Practice Guidance on the use of tree shelters and guards. This [guidance](#) sets out a framework which poses several questions to determine what form of protection is needed for successful tree establishment, with the primary aim of avoiding or reducing the use of plastic. An important consideration is the level of damage that mammals are likely to pose, and legal culling should be the primary method of protecting trees from damage by reducing deer populations to sustainable levels. Forestry England will conduct a baseline survey to understand current mammal populations and their likely increase following woodland creation, to inform the exact forms of protection required. It is expected that the majority of trees at York Community Woodland will be rabbit or deer fenced except where the size of woodland blocks or scattered planting renders this economically unviable. In these circumstances, tree shelters or guards will be required to enable successful establishment. Forestry England will use at least 1000 NexGen tree shelters made of cashew nutshell resin, castor oil and British wool in the creation of York Community Woodland, subject to supply. Early testing of this product by Forestry England has shown promising results and the product should be fully biodegradable, although volume production is unlikely to start until late 2022. Any plastic tree shelters or guards will be removed from trees following their successful establishment and recycled, along with plastic planting bags. Yorkshire Forest District currently work with Agricycle to recycle plastic who issue a Waste Transfer Note, which documents the transfer of waste from one person to another and evidences it has been recycled. Forestry England are certified by the UK Woodland Assurance Standard of which preparing and implementing a plan to remove redundant plastic material is a mandatory requirement for woodlands.

Forestry England supports the Forestry Plastics Working Group which aims to reduce plastics across the forestry sector. The Working Group majority funds a UK wide network of non-plastic tree shelter trials of which York would form an additional experiment and contribute towards this important research. Importantly, there are currently no formal research sites in Yorkshire nor new woodland creation sites, so York Community Woodland would contribute important data to the trial.