



Walkers enjoying a stroll in Ballyseedy Wood, Co Kerry. (read more: page 37)

NeighbourWood watch

The NeighbourWood Scheme is a chance to plant a lasting and valuable legacy in your community

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The newly launched NeighbourWood Scheme, part of Ireland's Forestry Programme 2023–2027, offers a valuable opportunity for rural communities, farmers and other forest landowners to enhance local woodlands for public enjoyment.

Whether it's improving an existing woodland or turning unused land into a shared community space, this scheme provides generous financial support to make it happen. Funding is also available under the Afforestation Programme's Forest Type 4 to create new woodland.

Designed to support recreation, education, and biodiversity, the NeighbourWood Scheme will bring woodlands into daily life—offering places for walking, nature connection, school visits, and wellbeing. It also supports landowners who want to leave a lasting legacy in their locality.

Flexible funding to support farmers and communities

There are two main funding options under the scheme:

- **Element 1: Enhancement** – Up to €6,000 per hectare (capped at €72,000) to improve existing woodlands, such as removing invasive species or replacing conifers with native trees.
- **Element 2: Facilities** – Up to €4,200 per hectare (capped at €50,400) for paths, signage, benches, parking, and other visitor infrastructure.

Private landowners—including farmers—can apply for either, or both, elements.

In addition, they may qualify for an annual Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) of €90 per hectare for seven years, which recognises the environmental and social value of their woodland.



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Why farmers should take a closer look

For farmers and rural communities, the NeighbourWood Scheme offers more than just financial return:

- It helps make productive use of marginal or underutilised land
- Strengthens community links by creating a shared local amenity
- Enhances biodiversity and contributes to Ireland's climate and environmental goals
- Creates legacy woodlands for future generations
- Benefits from payments and ongoing support for maintenance and public access

Whether it's a small local initiative or part of a larger community plan, the NeighbourWood Scheme provides a practical, well-supported path for farmers and rural landowners to lead the way in creating shared green spaces.

A greener future, together

From urban riverfronts in Mallow to community-led forests in Mayo and ecologically rich heritage sites like Ballyseedy, the NeighbourWood Scheme is helping to shape Ireland's green future. These local woodlands offer space for recreation, health, education, and connection to nature—while supporting biodiversity and climate action.

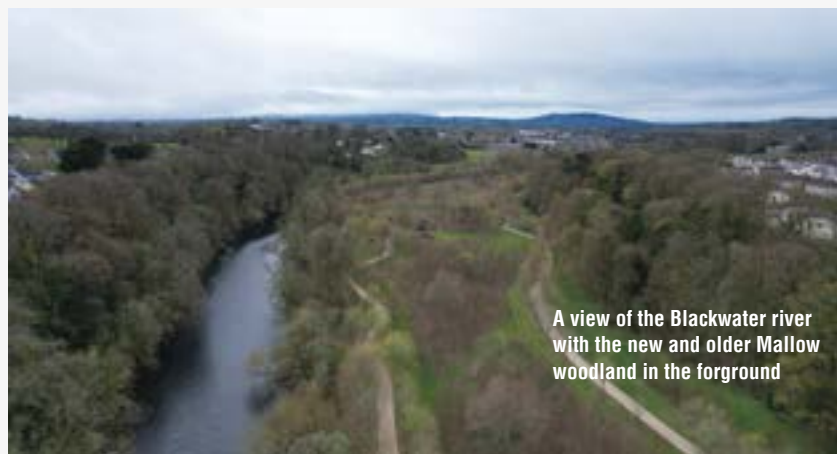
With targeted funding, practical supports, and long-term stewardship incentives, the scheme offers farmers and their communities across Ireland the opportunity to create and care for woodlands that serve both people and the planet—now and for generations to come.

For further details on the NeighbourWood Scheme and the overall Forestry Programme funding, contact your local Teagasc's forestry advisors. They are available to provide independent, objective advice to both farmers and other landowners and can be contacted through Teagasc offices nationwide.



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NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEMES around the country



A view of the Blackwater river with the new and older Mallow woodland in the foreground

Mallow: A woodland with a community impact

One of the best examples is the 10-hectare wooded area beside Mallow Castle in Co. Cork. This site was first proposed by the local Teagasc advisor and Mallow Development Partnership back in 2015. Subsequently supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's (DAFM) previous NeighbourWood Scheme and led by Cork County Council, this project has transformed old and new woodland into a local haven.

The site includes restored broadleaf woodland, new native oak planting, and family-friendly facilities like walking paths, signs, and benches. It's used daily by locals of all ages—for exercise, dog walking, picnics, and school visits and was of particular benefit to the community during Covid.

The project has helped link the town to the adjacent Blackwater river; protected a Special Area of Conservation; and created a space where nature and community thrive together. It also received the RDS Community Woodland Award in 2024.

Mayo: A grassroots woodland owned by the community

In rural Mayo, the Callacoon Woodland Project shows how a community can come together to create its own woodland from scratch. A 6.9-hectare greenfield site was purchased by local residents, who now own and manage it through a not-for-profit company.

Funded under DAFM's Afforestation Programme, the site was planted with native species like birch, oak, hazel, and Scot's pine. It's managed as a Continuous Cover Forest, with a strong focus on conservation and sustainability.

The woodland now has walking trails and even a conservation hive for native Irish black bees. It hosts open days, school visits, and has gained national attention through RTE's Nationwide. While the community raised funds to buy the land, the scheme covers annual maintenance and management costs, making it a viable model for other rural areas.

"The whole concept at Callacoon is fabulous and especially that local people are involved," said Richard Mannion, local sheep farmer and Secretary of Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Assoc. "I'd like to see this being used as a template for similar projects elsewhere."

Kerry: A woodland with rich heritage and ecological value

Ballyseedy Wood, just two kilometers outside Tralee, is a 32-hectare woodland was also supported by NeighbourWood funding and is owned by Kerry County Council. It is a prime example of how woodlands can serve both public use and environmental protection.

The site includes priority alluvial woodland and is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under EU law. A wide range of native habitats are present, from wet alder stands to dry ash and hazel woods. Ecological surveys have recorded protected species like otter and salmon, as well as regionally important plants and invertebrates.

Ballyseedy also has a strong local story. First mapped in the 16th century and