Sent on behalf of Robin Offer of Exmoor National Park Authority. Please distribute as required. Please email Robin with any enquiries.  [roffer@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:roffer@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

In May 2021 the government launched The England Trees Action Plan with the aim of increasing tree cover in England.

When discussing increasing tree cover, it is quite common to immediately think about planting large new woodlands. However, individual trees and groups of trees outside of woodlands can provide the same benefits, particularly if they are allowed to reach their full potential size and are publicly accessible.

The Tree Council have a yearly tree planting fund called the Branching Out Fund to help pay towards the costs of planting new trees in public areas. The fund will officially launch on 10th July and closing dates are; for grants over £2.5k - Friday 29 September 2023 and must be planted by end Feb 2024. For grants under £2.5k - Sunday 3 December 2023 (end of National Tree Week) and must be planted by end Feb 2024.

The key requirements of this fund are that there is strong community involvement, and that children and/or young people up to the age of 21 are involved in the planting, and ideally the planning and aftercare of the project.

Projects which are planned with specific and special emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity are particularly favoured.

The full list of criteria can be eligibility criteria can be found here [The Tree Council Grants - Eligibility Criteria](http://treecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Eligibility-Criteria-30-June-2023.pdf)

I would like to encourage the Parish Council to look at where individual trees and small groups, hedges or orchards might be planted on public land within the parish. This could be land owned by the parish council or within the grounds of a school for example.

In my role as Treescapes Officer for the National Park Authority I would like to offer my assistance in helping to identify appropriate planting locations and to take forward an application for the Branching Out Fund as appropriate.

Exmoor National Park Authority is also developing its own tree nursery at Exford. We will be growing trees for planting in our own woodlands and woodland creation projects but also individual specimen trees. We aim to have a focus on local distinctiveness and character and hope to grow trees from seeds collected from locally important trees. I would therefore be interested to know if there are any important or significant trees within your parish that we might be able to harvest seed from to grow new trees for planting out in the same parish.

If you are interested in pursuing the Branching Out fund or have ideas for locally important trees we can collect seed or cuttings from, please do not hesitate to contact me at the details below, email preferred.

Kind regards.