

Climate Newsletter

From Spelthorne Borough Council



January 2026

Join our community Miyawaki Forest Planting days!

Help transform local green spaces and boost biodiversity by joining one of our upcoming community planting days! We're creating *Miyawaki micro-forests* which are dense, fast-growing woodlands that support wildlife, capture carbon, and improve wellbeing.

We'll be planting a mix of native tree and shrub species to establish two brand-new mini forests at:

Hengrove Recreation Ground, Ashford

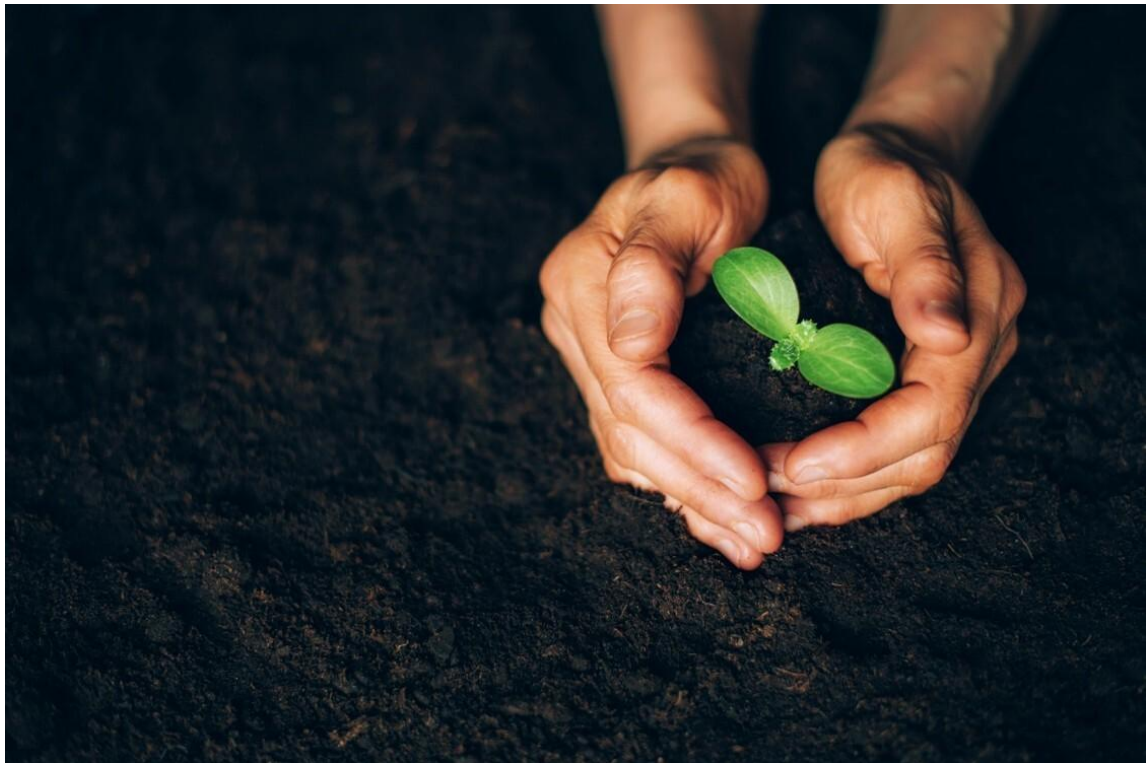
- **Wednesday 19 February**
- **Thursday 20 February**

Littleton Recreation Ground, Shepperton

- **Thursday 26 February**
- **Friday 27 February**

No experience needed, just enthusiasm! All tools and guidance will be provided. It's a great chance to meet neighbours, support local nature, and make a tangible contribution to Spelthorne's journey to net zero.

 **Interested in taking part?** Email: netzero@spelthorne.gov.uk



What is a Miyawaki Forest - and why are they perfect for our communities?

Miyawaki forests are compact, fast-growing woodlands inspired by a method developed by Japanese botanist Dr. Akira Miyawaki. Unlike traditional planting schemes, this approach mimics natural forest ecosystems by mixing a variety of native trees and shrubs planted *very close together*.

Why Miyawaki Forests Work So Well

- **They grow incredibly fast** Miyawaki forests can grow up to *10 times faster* than conventional woodland planting, reaching maturity in just 20–30 years.
- **They're biodiverse by design** Planting a layered mix of indigenous species, canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs which creates rich microhabitats for insects, birds, and small mammals.
- **They're small but powerful** A typical Miyawaki forest can fit into the size of a tennis court, making it perfect for parks, road verges, school grounds, and other hard to green spaces.

- **They store more carbon** The dense planting and rapid growth mean they lock away more carbon per square metre compared to traditional planting.
- **They thrive in urban and suburban settings** These forests improve air quality, reduce heat, quieten noise, and create attractive green pockets where people can connect with nature close to home.

By establishing Miyawaki micro-forests, we're helping build resilient ecosystems that benefit wildlife and the whole community—right in the heart of our borough.

This is the first Miyawaki forest in Spelthorne, delivered by Thames Water!



Why we chose Hengrove Rec and Littleton Rec for new Miyawaki Forests

Selecting sites for new Miyawaki forests isn't just about available space, we have used a scoring system to identify where Miyawaki Forests can deliver the biggest benefits for nature and local communities.

Hengrove Recreation Ground, Ashford

Hengrove scored highly due to:

- **Strong community links:** next to schools, The Talking Tree and overlooked by residential properties.
- **Easy access:** large car park, central location, good visibility.

- **Tree equity need** – boosting canopy cover in an area that will really benefit.
- **Great ecological potential:** close to Studios Walk, helping create connected habitat.

It offers a rare combination: high use, high need, and plenty of room for biodiversity to flourish.

Littleton Recreation Ground, Shepperton

Littleton also ranked well across key criteria:

- **Great ecological potential:** close to Studios Walk, helping create connected habitat.
- **Highly accessible and well used** – a popular, central green space perfect for community planting.
- **Clear opportunity for ecological uplift** – ideal for adding layered native woodland structure.
- **Great ecological potential:** close to Studios Walk, helping create connected habitat.

Together, these two sites give us the best mix of visibility, community involvement, and biodiversity impact—perfect launching points for Spelthorne’s first Miyawaki micro-forests.

Support your staff with Active Surrey's free Smarter Travel Toolkit

Active Surrey has launched a **free Smarter Travel Toolkit** to help Surrey businesses create healthier, greener and more productive workplaces by encouraging active and sustainable travel. The toolkit provides step by step guidance for developing a workplace travel plan and offers practical resources to help staff choose walking, cycling or public transport for their commute.

Whether you’re a small organisation or a large employer, the toolkit can help you:

- Reduce absenteeism and increase productivity through more active daily routines

- Cut business costs by easing pressure on parking and reducing staff turnover
- Boost your organisation's sustainability credentials by lowering its carbon footprint
- Improve morale and wellbeing by investing in staff welfare and work-life balance

The toolkit includes **templates, promotional materials, case studies and action plans**, making it easy to implement changes that support a healthier, low-carbon commute. It also links directly to the **Smarter Travel to Work grant scheme**, which provides funding to help deliver improvements.

Employers can access the toolkit by completing a short registration form via Active Surrey's website: [Smarter Travel Toolkit](#)



Apply for Active Surrey's Active Travel Grant Scheme

Local employers can now apply for funding through **Active Surrey's Smarter Travel to Work grant scheme**, designed to help workplaces support healthier, more sustainable travel choices for staff. Grants of **up to £5,000** are available to improve facilities, promote active travel, and reduce pressure on workplace parking.

The scheme supports a wide range of interventions, including:

- Improving pedestrian access on-site
- Running events to promote walking, cycling and public transport
- Installing or upgrading cycle parking, showers, drying rooms or lockers
- Offering “Dr Bike” maintenance sessions
- Introducing parking management measures
- Providing pool bikes or staff accessories like helmets, lights and locks

To apply, employers must have a **current workplace travel plan** and a **staff travel survey completed within the last two years**. Projects must be located in Surrey (or benefit staff travelling through the county), and all funded facilities must remain available for at least three years.

Applications close on 13 February 2026, and projects must begin within three months of grant payment. This is a great opportunity for local organisations to make active travel easier, safer and more attractive for their staff.

[Active Travel Grant Scheme](#)



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