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New 'community forest' will be planted in Tees Valley by 2025

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| The new forest in the Tees Valley will be one of two community forests in the country

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BBC North East

A new 100-hectare forest will be planted in the Tees Valley by 2025, the government has announced.

The forest is one of two "community forests" that will be planted, with the other to be in Derbyshire.

It comes alongside the launch of a new government-backed competition to designate a new "national forest".

The winning location will be announced by autumn 2024 and will receive up to £10m in government funding.

175 hectares of woodland

The two new community woodlands will together span about 175 hectares, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) says.

The Environment Secretary, Steve Barclay, is set to reveal more detail later this week.

The competition follows the creation of the country's **first national forest** in the Midlands in the 1990s, which involved in part transforming former coal pits into dense woodland.

The 200-sq-mile (500-sq-km) forest now contains around nine million trees.

In this new competition, community groups will be able to nominate their local areas to become the new national forest.

'All the more important'

Sir William Worsley, the head of the Forestry Commission, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme that urban regions which contain very little woodland will also be considered in the competition.

"Trees and woods are wonderful things and bring so much," he said.

"Particularly when they're near urban areas and people, and I'd like to see this [new national forest] in an area where there is a considerable population and also an area with perhaps damaged landscape."

"Indeed in urban areas, our trees are all the more important," he added.

Defra said that more details about the new community forests and national forest competition will be confirmed later this week.

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