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Press Release | 18 September 2015

**The Mersey Forest hosts visit from prestigious Japanese academics**

The Mersey Forest has welcomed a prestigious team of three Japanese academics for a tour of community forestry in action. Led by Professor Tomoko Miyagawa, from the University of Wakayama, the academics have been undertaking ground-breaking research on the work of the Forest for more than ten years. This year the focus of their visit was the value of the green space and industrial heritage around Northwich, and how this benefits the economy, tourism and residents of the town.

Prof Miyagawa said “We are delighted to be visiting The Mersey Forest again, and continue our collaboration with colleagues into research around brownfield land regeneration. The international significance of Cheshire’s salt industry and how it has shaped the landscape, local people and economy is a story to be told across the world.”

On Thursday the academics visited the Lion Salt Works Museum at Marston, Northwich. Thanks to a £5m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and funding from Chester West and Chester Council, this Museum was restored and was re-opened this June. It is set to become one of the finest industrial heritage attractions in the country.

The academics held discussions with officers from Cheshire West and Chester Council who managed the four-year, £10m project to restore the crumbling 19th century buildings – one of the last four historic open-pan salt-making sites in the world.

On Friday, further meetings were held at another ‘jewel in the crown’ of nearby Cheshire industrial heritage sites - the Anderton Boat Lift. This is the world’s first boat lift. The academics viewed the Boat Lift and the latest project, the refurbishment of two toll houses. As part of the Saltscape Landscape Partnership project, the £90,000 restoration project has been delivered by The Canal and River Trust, the charity which cares for the lift and the nation’s 2,000 miles of historic canals, and was jointly funded by public donations to the Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Paul Nolan, Director of The Mersey Forest said “We know that Northwich has a fantastic woodlands and parks, connecting Budworth Mere, Anderton Boat Lift, Lion Salt Works as well as the Weaver Navigation, the Trent & Mersey Canal and the town centre. This unique area has been valued as a £150m asset and has the potential to become a major destination for visitors, as well as proving a great place for local residents and whilst underpinning sustainable economic growth.”

Attached picture shows the (caption, as appropriate)

**ENDS**
**Media contact:** Clare Olver, tel. 01925 816217 / 07787 152 477
**Notes to editors:**

**The Mersey Forest**
The Mersey Forest is a growing network of woodlands and green spaces spread across Cheshire and Merseyside, which has been creating 'woodlands on your doorstep' for more than 20 years.

The Forest is one of the leading environmental regeneration initiatives in the North West. Through community and partnership working, we have planted 9 million trees - equivalent to five new trees for every person living within the Forest area.

The Forest helps our towns and cities adapt to climate change, creates woodlands that 20% of local people visit at least once a week, and by improving the image of our towns and cities sets the scene for growth within the region's £98 billion economy.

We achieve all of this and more through our partnership of local authorities, landowners, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Environment Agency and businesses.

[www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/)

Lion Salt Works - westcheshiremuseums.co.uk

**Saltscape**

The Saltscape Landscape Partnership runs over three years until the end of 2017. Delivered by a group of local and national partners, Saltscape will run a programme of developments designed to protect, restore and celebrate mid-Cheshire’s salt heritage and unique salt landscape. The partnership is funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and is expected to generate £1.4million of investment in the Weaver Valley during its lifetime.

Partners include Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire and Merseyside, Cheshire West and Chester Council, The Mersey Forest, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Canal and Rivers Trust, Friends of Anderton and Marbury, The Weaverham Trust, Middlewich Town Council, Cheshire RIGS and many others. For more information visit www.saltscape.co.uk.