



PRESS RELEASE

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Knowsley kids launch Merseyside's Big Tree Plant

A four-year tree planting drive to create a greener, healthier Merseyside has been launched by Knowsley youngsters.

Pupils from Northwood Community Primary School dug in at a tree planting day at the rejuvenated Northwood green space to kick off Merseyside's part in The Big Tree Plant, the national campaign to get more people planting and caring for trees.

Locally the campaign has set aside £255,000 over the next four years to support tree planting and get people involved in their environment across Merseyside and North Cheshire. The funding for the local area was secured by The Mersey Forest who will use the cash to help community groups and schools to brighten their neighbourhoods with new street trees, woodlands and mini-orchards – starting with more than 15,000 trees to be planted at local sites this winter.

Cllr Eddie Connor, Knowsley Council's member for The Mersey Forest, joined in the tree planting and said: "It's fantastic to see young people from the area getting involved – it's their generation that will benefit most of all from a greener Merseyside. There's a real appetite for more trees and it's been wonderful to see both young and elderly residents coming to my surgeries eager for their new woods and wetlands to be completed as quickly as possible so they can enjoy them to the full."

The saplings planted at Northwood will add to the site's woodland area, where local pupils will soon be able enjoy outdoor "Forest School" lessons to help them re-connect with nature. The young trees were co-funded by The Woodland Trust through their MOREwoods project and include willow which can be used for willow weaving craft sessions, and elder – the berries from which can be used to create dyes to help children to learn about science and art. The sessions will be run by not-for-profit company 'The Forest School Experience Ltd', led by former headteacher, Grahame Watts.

The outdoor learning area is among the final touches to a project that has turned a previously unwelcoming and under-used public green space the size of 10 football pitches into a positive asset for Northwood residents and local wildlife alike.

Improvements at the Knowsley Council site have included a new entrance, all-access paths, tree planting, woodland management, signage, bins, seating, fishing pegs and work on the site's ponds and wetland habitats. Funding for the project has come from the Forestry Commission's Setting the Scene for Growth programme (funded by the Northwest Regional Development Agency), Marks & Spencer 'Green Living Places' fund, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 'Environmental Blight Fund', Big Lottery Fund 'Community Spaces Fund' and Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme.

Paul Nolan, Director of The Mersey Forest, said: "Northwood is a great place to begin The Big Tree Plant campaign. The site has been transformed through the hard work of an array of organisations working in partnership with the local community. It shows that even in the current tough economic climate, if we work together we can make Merseyside an even better place to live and work."

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Notes to editors:

The Big Tree Plant

1. The Big Tree Plant is a national campaign that helps people and communities across England to plant more trees where they live and work. Our target is to plant 1 million additional trees by April 2015.
2. Details of the campaign can be found at: www.direct.gov.uk/thebigtreeplant
3. Details on how community groups can apply for funding can be found at: <http://thebigtreeplant.direct.gov.uk/funding>
4. The Mersey Forest funding was applied for through Community Forests Northwest, the charity that supports The Mersey Forest, Pennine Edge Forest and Red Rose Forest - the latter of which has also been offered an additional £184,000 for tree

planting in Greater Manchester.

5. The campaign has the support of major bodies, environmental charities and agencies including National Forest Company, The Tree Council, Trees for Cities, the Woodland Trust, England's Community Forests, Keep Britain Tidy, BTCV, Civic Voice, Groundwork, Natural England, Mayor of London, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Authority and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

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 20 years.

The Forest is one of the leading environmental regeneration initiatives in the North West. Through community and partnership working, we have planted more than 8 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 and has won the Brian Redhead Award for Environmental Sustainability, 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 and businesses including United Utilities.

www.merseyforest.org.uk