



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Hundreds of families join the magic at The Elf & Fairy Fair

Hundreds of families descended on a sun-drenched Sutton Manor Community Woodland last weekend (Sat 22 Sept) for The Elf & Fairy Fair. They enjoyed woodland crafts, enchanted storytelling, marshmallows around the fire and more as part of The Mersey Forest's Access to Nature project to encourage more people to explore their local environment.

More than a thousand revellers came along dressed as wizards, elves and fairies and added to their costumes throughout the afternoon by using natural materials to make wands, wings, fairy crowns and jewellery in the Fair's six woodland workshops.

Mum of two Dawn Holden said: "We have some beautiful countryside just outside our front door but we don't always see its beauty - an event like this brings people to these beautiful places. We had a tired elf and fairy in our house that evening!"

Sharon Prendergast from Newton-Le-Willows added: "What an absolutely fabulous day – we need more family days out like that."

The free event was opened by Mayor of St.Helens Councillor Geoff Almond, who began the proceedings at midday by presenting a special gift to birthday girl Abigail Atherton, who had chosen to celebrate her third birthday at the event with her mum Ellen and family.

The afternoon was organised by The Mersey Forest in partnership with Forestry Commission and St.Helens Council as part of Access to Nature, a national scheme run by Natural England and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The Fair was also part-funded by the EU Interreg IVb programme, as part of the Pure Hubs project.

You can find out about future Access to Nature events in south St.Helens, including “green gym” sessions and a family survival day on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October, at [www.boldforestpark.com/events](http://www.boldforestpark.com/events) or by calling The Mersey Forest on 01925 816217.

## ENDS

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## Notes to editors:

### Access to Nature

Access to Nature is run by Natural England and is part of the The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments.

Natural England manages this £28.75 million Lottery-funded programme on behalf of a consortium of twelve national environmental organisations comprising BTCV, British Waterways, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Greenspace, Groundwork UK, Land Restoration Trust, The National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.

Through this programme, it is Natural England's ambition to create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to have greater access to our natural environment and bring a lasting change to their awareness and understanding as well as improved links to the natural world, which many of us can take for granted.

For further information about the programme visit [www.naturalengland.org.uk/accesstonature](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/accesstonature)

For further information about the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards visit [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

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

### **PURE HUBS**

This EU Interreg IVB project supports Pioneers in Urban-Rural Entrepreneurship to create vital new hubs, using funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

Find out more: [www.nweurope.eu/index.php?act=project\\_detail&id=4207](http://www.nweurope.eu/index.php?act=project_detail&id=4207)

### **Bold Forest Park**

Bold Forest Park is an evolving idea to develop the woodlands and businesses of south St. Helens as a place to visit and enjoy, bringing local jobs and prosperity. The Forest Park area straddles the M62 between Junctions 7 and 8. At its heart are areas of community woodland planted at the former colliery sites of Colliers Moss, Clock Face and Sutton Manor. The proposed park boundary also takes in woodland at Wheatacre, Maypole and Griffin Wood and a wider area of urban fringe farmland.

[www.boldforestpark.com](http://www.boldforestpark.com)