

News Release

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Buzzing Woolton volunteers protect tens of thousands of bumblebees

Woolton volunteers have helped to protect tens of thousands of threatened bumblebees by planting bee-friendly wildflower meadows at Woolton Wood and Camp Hill – and are aiming to go on to make Liverpool the UK's first citywide "bumblebee haven".

30 volunteers from Woolton Village Residents Association (WVRA) and Friends of Woolton Woods (FOWW) have spent the past two years creating specially designed meadows the size of a football pitch to provide habitat and food to fight the worrying decline in bee numbers nationwide.

Now they have celebrated their achievements so far by unveiling an interpretation board at the main entrance at Coronation Drive to tell visitors about the project.

The first two years of the scheme were funded by The Veolia Environmental Trust, who awarded a grant of £16,385 through the Landfill Communities Fund, which enabled the volunteers to buy wildflower seed, a mini tractor, trailer and other equipment.

The volunteers are now aiming to build on the progress to-date by turning the new meadows into a long-lasting annual home for the bees, and a base from which the creatures can spread out to colonise other green spaces across the city.

The ultimate aim is to create further wildflower meadows and make Liverpool the UK's first citywide bumblebee haven, and to then encourage other towns and cities across the country to follow suit.

Peter Eustance from the WVRA said: "Bees are vital to society thanks to their role in pollinating plants, but they are under threat from a loss of habitat, and especially from a scarcity of quality food sources.

"The two residents associations thought it was time to do something practical to help reverse the decline in the UK's bee population and in particular to help bumblebees thrive on Merseyside again. We joined forces with The Mersey Forest, the city council, Glendale Liverpool, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Landlife, Liverpool's wildflower charity, and we've already made a real difference.

“Bumblebees are amazing creatures and can travel 4km or more to forage for food, so the creation of just a handful of sizeable wildflower ‘feeding stations’ across Liverpool will go a long way to securing their future in the city.”

The Executive Director of The Veolia Environmental Trust, McNabb Laurie, adds, “It is great to hear about the progress and success of this interesting and important project. Everyone involved should be really proud of their achievements. I look forward to hearing about this project’s future development.”

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The Mersey Forest media contact: Mike Bray, tel. 01925 859 611 / 07770 735 755

mike.bray@merseyforest.org.uk

The Veolia Environmental Trust media contact: Oliver Blackburn tel: 01902 794 669

oliver.blackburn@veoliatrust.org

Notes to editors:

Liverpool Bumblebee Haven project – further info:

The project has created a 0.75 hectare wildflower area (one hectare of high pollen/nectar wildflower beds has the potential to support 80,000 bees).

Experts from Landlife helped the group to identify the types of flowers that bees love, and species being planted include Kidney vetch, Greater knapweed, Birds foot trefoil, Vipers bugloss, Wild carrot, Field scabious.

The scheme has also seen the creation of landscape features, such as low banks of earth, tussock grasses, and hedgerows, which will create a home from home for the bees.

The volunteers are also members of the Liverpool Parks Friends Forum network. Nationally, parks and public open space represent one of the few remaining city/inner-city large green areas still available for development to cater for wildlife habitats, and wildflower areas in support of bumblebees, butterflies, moths, and other insects. Support for these species will in turn help develop and strengthen wild bird and mammal colonies, increasing biodiversity across green open spaces.

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' since 1994.

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. www.merseforest.org.uk

The Veolia Environmental Trust has been supporting community and environmental projects for 14 years. Under the Landfill Communities Fund, landfill site operators can donate a percentage, currently 5.6%, of their landfill tax payment to these projects. Since we were established in 1997, Veolia Environmental Services (UK) plc has supported us by contributions of over £49 million to 1400 projects.

We have helped fund a diverse range of projects, including the repair of woodland footpaths, the renovation of community halls and the installation of playgrounds and play areas. For more information, or to find out how to apply for funding, visit our website www.veoliatrust.org.