

PRESS RELEASE

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Bishop welcomes Merseyside woodland plans

The Bishop of Liverpool has welcomed plans to create more woodlands in Merseyside and North Cheshire, and urged people to have their say on the proposals.

The newly updated Mersey Forest Plan aims to plant millions more trees across the local area, with long-term aspirations to plant urban trees, copses, and larger woodlands and improve their management for people and wildlife.

The Rt. Rev. James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, said: "Our forests are nature's playground for the adventurous, pleasure for the curious, hospital for the stressed, cathedral for the spiritual, and livelihood for the entrepreneur. There is no finer example of this than The Mersey Forest's achievements of the past 20 years.

"I have no doubt this success will continue, and would encourage people to have their say on this new plan for the decades ahead."

The plan has been created by The Mersey Forest Partnership which has planted 9 million trees since 1991. The partnership is made up of seven local authorities, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency and local communities and businesses.

The draft document can be found at www.merseyforest.org.uk/plan, where residents can see proposals for their local area on an interactive map, and put forward their views until the end of April. Printed copies of the plan are also in libraries in Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St.Helens, Warrington and northern areas of Cheshire West and Chester (call 01925 816217 for further details).

The Bishop's comments follow hot on the heels of a new national approach to forestry unveiled by the government in January. This confirmed that England's public woodlands

will be held in trust for the nation, and saw the government endorse the vast majority of recommendations made by the Independent Panel on Forestry, chaired by the Bishop. The Panel was set up in 2010 following an uproar over plans to sell many public woodlands and forests.

GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure for Tomorrow – Together!) has contributed to the funding of The Mersey Forest Plan consultation. The Mersey Forest is working with partners in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands to share approaches and develop best practice between 2011 and 2014 as part of this EU Interreg funded project.

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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 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

The Independent Panel on Forestry

The Independent Panel on Forestry published its [Final Report](#) on 4 July 2012 and has now completed its work. The Panel was chaired by the Right Reverend James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, and the members were selected for their wide experience, knowledge and interests in the economic, social and environmental aspects of forestry and woodlands.

The Independent Forestry Panel was established on 17 March 2011 by the Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman, to advise government on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England.

www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel

GIFT-T!

GIFT-T! (Green Infrastructure for Tomorrow – Together!) has contributed to the funding of The Mersey Forest Plan consultation. The Mersey Forest is working with partners in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands to share approaches and develop best practice between 2011 and 2014 as part of this EU Interreg funded project. GIFT-T! started in Sept 2011 and involves seven partners that invest in creating jobs, protecting valuable habitats and boosting the rural economy.

GIFT-T! brings public and private partnerships together to address issues such as climate change, energy and food security, and facilitate new initiatives for green enterprises such as recreation and bio-energy.

www.gift-t.eu

