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Retiring Altcar Commandant plants 100,000 trees in Sefton

The retiring Camp Commandant at Altcar Training Camp is leaving a legacy of over 100,000 trees planted.

After a long military career, including a number of operational tours, Major Bill Hunter took up employment at Altcar in 1988. His passion for conservation meant that he became the driving force behind tree planting on the site.

Tens of thousands of pine trees provide a habitat for a thriving population of red squirrels, help to absorb some of the noise from the firing range, and contribute to the 9 million trees in The Mersey Forest.

Last week, a celebratory Bosnian pine was planted on the site to mark Major Hunter's conservation efforts.

Major Hunter said: "I am proud to have left a lasting environmental legacy at Altcar. The trees span over 18 hectares, transforming the landscape and making the site a better place for training soldiers, while limiting the impact on local people."

He will be succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Black, who has vowed to preserve Major Hunter's green legacy and take responsibility for the woodland management on the site.

The planting has taken place in partnership with The Mersey Forest, who helped the camp secure funding for its Military Force woodland, and has also helped the camp to run woodland training courses for local landowners.

Nigel Blandford, Timber and Bioenergy at The Mersey Forest, said: “We are looking forward to continuing to work with Altcar Rifle Range in order to both help deliver the objectives of the recently refreshed Sefton Coastal Woodlands Plan, and to maximise the conservation benefits of the trees on the site.”

Photo caption: L-R: Nigel Blandford, Timber and Bioenergy at The Mersey Forest; Colonel Mark Underhill, Chief Executive of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for the North West of England and the Isle of Man; Major Bill Hunter, outgoing Camp Commandant of Altcar Training Camp; Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Black, incoming Camp Commandant; Rifleman Courtney Thompson, of Infantry Training Centre Catterick; and Mr Gerry Allen, Range Liaison Officer.

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Media contact: Laura Johnson, tel. 01925 859 616

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