



Press Release | 3 February 2014

Future of urban trees discussed in Liverpool

The future of urban tree planting, and the role that trees have to play in boosting growth in the North West, has been discussed at a packed event in Liverpool.

Shadow Environment Secretary Maria Eagle was among the attendees of the seminar, which was organised by The Mersey Forest (www.merseyforest.org.uk) and held at Liverpool University. In a speech to the assembled delegates – ranging from built environment professionals to forestry experts – Eagle stressed the importance of protecting urban trees in order to improve access to nature.

Her comments echoed recent remarks from Sir Tony Farrell, who, upon being made a trustee of the Trees and Design Action Group, identified the need for a “rethink” of urban planning to include more trees.

Street trees provide a range of benefits to residents of urbanised areas, including improving air quality and boosting health and wellbeing. But there is also a strong link between urban trees and the local economy – an important factor for people living and working in the North West.

“It’s vital that urban tree programmes are delivered in Merseyside and North Cheshire,” said Paul Nolan, Director of The Mersey Forest, which is spearheading street-tree delivery in Merseyside. “Part of this seminar’s purpose was to establish how these programmes will be resourced in the future, so that they can continue to be delivered in the areas they’re needed most.”

The Mersey Forest's Merseyside Green Streets programme is set to plant over 1000 trees in the first quarter of this year. In Liverpool, over 90 trees will be planted in streets in Speke, with around 78% of residents saying that they would like a tree outside their house. In Knowsley, planting will focus on key sustainable travel routes, with over 130 trees planted in partnership with Knowsley Council. In St Helens, 50 trees will be planted along roads that lead to housing, jobs, and Bold Forest Park (www.boldforestpark.com).

The programme is being funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Big Tree Plant, EU Interreg, ForeStClim and BIS.

"The Forest works in some of the most tree-poor areas in the North West and the transformative effect of the trees in these neighbourhoods is undeniable," added Paul. "With the launch of our strategic guide in 2014, we're looking to the future to find innovative ways of delivering these vital programmes for years to come."

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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 more than 20 years.

The Forest is one of the leading environmental regeneration initiatives in the North West. Through community and partnership working, we have planted 9 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, 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, the Environment Agency and businesses.

www.merseyforest.org.uk

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

Merseyside's third Local Transport Plan (LTP) has a long term strategy to 2024 and a short term implementation plan to 2014/15 containing a delivery programme of transport investment and service improvements. Visit www.TransportMerseyside.org for more information.

Its vision for Merseyside's transport network is for a city region committed to a low carbon future, which has a transport network and mobility culture that positively contributes to a thriving economy and the health and wellbeing of its citizens and where sustainable travel is the option of choice.

The Merseyside Transport Partnership consists of Merseytravel and the five local authorities of Merseyside – Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, and Wirral. TravelWise Merseyside is Merseyside Transport Partnership's campaign to help people in Merseyside to make smarter travel choices – to walk, cycle and use public transport. www.LetsTravelWise.org

ForeStClim

ForeStClim brings together a wide range of experts from the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe to work on issues relating to climate change and forestry. This project has received European Regional Development Funding through Interreg IVB.

The Big Tree Plant

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. Details of the campaign can be found at:

www.direct.gov.uk/thebigtreeplant

The campaign has the support of major bodies including Defra and the Forestry Commission, environmental charities and other agencies including England's Community Forests and the Woodland Trust.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is making a difference by supporting sustained growth and higher skills across the economy. Almost everything that BIS does – from investing in skills to making markets more dynamic and reducing regulation, and from promoting trade to boosting innovation and helping people start and grow a business – helps drive growth. www.bis.gov.uk