

Friends spruce up forest



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NORTH Manchester volunteers group, The Friends of Blackley Forest, along with the Irk Valley Project, are working on a unique new project to improve, enhance and manage the look of their local forest.

The group are to take ownership of a number of projects in the forest, and will decide between themselves which issues to address, and how.

In 2005, Blackley Forest was designated as a Local Nature Reserve - a first for north Manchester and only the second one in the city.

At an initial meeting ideas were discussed, and key targets and objectives set: these emerged primarily as the importance of generating more interest in and usage of the park, safety, by a wider section of the community.

Friends group member Dot Keller said: "Our aim is to encourage more people to visit the forest, more often, and we'll do this by arranging more occasional and seasonal events. With the support of Manchester City Council, and other partners, we'll also be working on longer-term projects."

In support of this new initiative,

Councillor Neil Swannick, Executive Member for the Environment for Manchester City Council, said: "This is an excellent example of dedicated community volunteers working with the council to protect and enhance their environment. It's great that they can set the priorities for this much-loved forest."

To officially launch the project, the Friends of Blackley Forest enjoyed a morning planting dogwood saplings along the south perimeter of the forest, and even Father Christmas turned out to help: obviously he was keen to plant some saplings in order to offset the carbon emissions from his sleigh journeys on Christmas Eve.

Anyone interested in joining the Friends of Blackley Forest and getting more involved in the life of the forest should contact Dot Keller on 0161 7950900 to find out more.

LEFT: In the picture, from left, Jerry Sorfleet and Glen Lewis-Gough of the Friends of Blackley Forest, Mel Kirby and Sarah Hawkins of Manchester City Council, Bernard Healy and Dot Keller of the Friends of Blackley Forest