

Phoenix and Woodland Trust plant new futures for people in recovery

The Woodland Trust and drug and alcohol recovery charity Phoenix Futures will be celebrating the hundreds of people who have completed structured rehabilitation treatment over the last 12 months by planting a tree for every successful graduate in Heartwood Forest near St Albans on Friday 20 February.

Over 1,000 native saplings will be planted by former Phoenix graduates and those currently seeking treatment, which marks the number of people in the UK the national charity rehabilitated back into community in 2014. This is the fourth ceremony and will add to the Phoenix Forest within 850-acre Heartwood Forest, which will contain 5,675 trees representing Phoenix graduates over one and a half acres of woodland.

Phoenix and Woodland Trust's partnership offers recovering users the opportunity to take part in conservation therapy through a Recovery through Nature Programme, which supports outdoor projects around the country. Individuals also come out of the programme with a recognised qualification, which helps their long term recovery and integration back into society.

Jon Hall, Commissioning and Development Manager at Phoenix Futures, said: "The aim of our Recovery through Nature programme is to empower service users to understand their personal recovery by producing positive results working in nature rich settings as part of a therapeutic team. WE offer an alternative treatment away from traditional settings, and the programme creates a powerful relapse prevention and engagement tool that benefits people in recovery by building self-esteem and confidence."

The impact of the innovative Recovery through Nature programme is shown by Phoenix Futures' statistical data which indicates that retention in treatment improves by 55 per cent for service users who take part in the programme.

Jon continued: "We envisaged a living, breathing monument to celebrate and commemorate the immense achievement of the service users who completed treatment programmes with the support of Phoenix and achieved abstinence. Each tree symbolises the growth and renewal of each individual recovery journey and will stand as a testament to the courage and determination of the recovery community which supported that journey."

Louise Neicho, Woodland Trust Site Manager, added: "Our work with Phoenix Futures is a great example of how woods are the perfect environment for people to develop physically and emotionally by connecting with the natural world. Planting a tree provides a lasting experience and also helps the Woodland Trust's aim of increasing the amount of native woodland in the UK."

The Woodland Trust has already seen an increase in wildlife activity since it began planting trees at Heartwood Forest in autumn 2009, with a recent survey recording 64 different bird species and 27 butterfly species. The trees being planted will create new habitats to adjoin the existing pockets of ancient woodland found on site.

Heartwood Forest is supported by individual donors, charitable trusts, Disney Store UK, Forestry Commission, The Veolia Environmental Trust and Biffa Award, with the latter two grants being awarded through the Landfill Communities Fund.

For more information visit woodlandtrust.org.uk/heartwood or phoenix-futures.org.uk

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Notes to editors:

For further information contact the Woodland Trust press office on 01476 581121 or email chrishickman@woodlandtrust.org.uk

- The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. It has 500,000 members and supporters.
- The Trust has three key aims: i) to enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees ii) to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future iii) to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.
- Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres). Access to its sites is free.
- Phoenix Futures is a leading provider of services for people with drug and alcohol problems.
- We offer services within community, prison and residential settings in England and Scotland.
- Established in 1969, Phoenix has 46 years' experience in helping people through recovery.