**Open Eye Gallery is awarded a £70,000 grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop Tree Story: A History of Liverpool Through its Trees.**

Today, Open Eye Gallery, working with dot-art and the Mersey Forest, has received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £70,822 for an exciting heritage project, Tree Story: A History of Liverpool Through its Trees. Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the project will engage schools, community groups and the general public across the Liverpool City Region over the next 18 months, exploring natural heritage by investigating, documenting and celebrating locally and personally significant trees, as well as planting new ones.

Four schools will work with a photographer Andy Yates to creatively investigate local trees: when they were planted, how their surroundings have changed over time, the biodiversity they support, folklore and their cultural significance. Pupils will also spend time at Formby Woods enjoying a forest school taster day. The photography and creative work they have made will be shared within school, with the public at LOOK Photo Biennial and on a newly created website. Each school will plant new trees with the support of Mersey Forest, learning about how to choose an appropriate tree for its environment, and how to care for it as it grows.

Four community groups with an interest in horticulture, the environment and the wellbeing benefits of nature will also take part in the project, targeting activity at people facing physical and mental health issues. They will join photography sessions and their work will be shown online and at LOOK Photo Biennial. At the end of the project they will plant - and commit to the care of - new trees.

The public will be invited to celebrate trees that are significant to them, pinning images and stories to a specially commissioned interactive online map, hosted on a new web platform that will also show a timeline history of Liverpool City Region and its trees. The web platform will provide a resource for teachers and community groups across the region, with creative ideas and links to archive material as well as information about trees, biodiversity and the climate crisis.

Commenting on the award, Sarah Fisher of Open Eye Gallery said: “We are so grateful to National Lottery players for enabling so many local people to celebrate their natural heritage. As a result of the project, we hope people will feel more connected to their environment and recognise the importance of local trees.”

David Renwick, Director of England, North at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “Through our conversations with National Lottery players, we know that nature is incredibly important to them, and the funding for ‘Tree Story’ means that they can play their part in celebrating the significant and varied wildlife that the North of England is home to. At the Heritage Fund, we’re incredibly proud to be playing a role in ensuring our natural heritage is safeguarded for generations to come, but also that the projects we fund give people the chance to connect with the nature and wildlife that is on their doorsteps.”

## Notes to editors

**Participating Schools**: Rainhill High School, LIPA Primary, Egremont Primary, Northwood Primary and Wirral Hospitals' School.

**Participating Community Groups**: Growing Sudley, Faiths4Change, Rimrose Valley Friends and The Spider Project.

### About Open Eye Gallery

Open Eye Gallery is an independent, not-for-profit photography gallery based in Liverpool. One of the UK’s leading photography spaces, it is the only gallery dedicated to photography and related media in the North West of England. A registered charity, Open Eye Gallery believes photography is for everyone and can be meaningful, informing our present and inspiring positive futures. Open Eye Gallery works with people to explore photography’s unique ability to connect, to tell stories, to inquire, to reflect on humanity’s past and present, and to celebrate its diversity and creativity.

Open Eye Gallery is open 11 - 4 pm Wednesdays to Sundays with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

### See: <https://openeye.org.uk/>

### About dot-art

dot-art is a social enterprise with artists at its heart, supporting visual artists and championing art as an integral part of everyday life.

We do this by selling locally sourced, affordable art, working with businesses to put art in the workplace and public realm, running art classes and working with schools and community groups.

All this is underpinned by our unique membership scheme for artists in the North West which gives access to all the activities above and a package of support and advice, creating and developing artists’ careers.

See: <https://dot-art.co.uk/>

### About the Mersey Forest

The Mersey Forest is a growing network of woodlands and green spaces across Cheshire and Merseyside, which has been creating 'woodlands on your doorstep' for over 25 years.

Through community and partnership working The Mersey Forest Partnership has planted more than 9 million trees – equivalent to five new trees for every person living within the Forest area. Praised as a "visionary concept", our 'more from trees' approach brings a whole host of environmental, health and economic benefits.

### See: <https://www.merseyforest.org.uk/>

### About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK’s heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/HeritageFundUK), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HeritageFundUK) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/heritagefunduk/) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK.

## Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact Lucy Byrne at dot-art on 0345 0176660 or lucy.byrne@dot-art.com.