

Northern Forest: Hull veterans to plant trees

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The tree planting is part of the new Northern Forest of 50m trees stretching from Hull to Liverpool

Ex-servicemen and women with PTSD will be retrained and offered employment as horticulturalists.

The initiative is part of the new Northern Forest which aims to plant 50 million trees between Hull and Liverpool.

Andrew Steel, who started the Hull project, said it helped the environment and the people involved.

"It links to mental health issues the associated stress and anxiety of transitioning from the service, but also combat PTSD," he said.

"So getting people out and about in nature has a significant benefit."

'Mammoth task'

Hull is the UK's least wooded city, with only 0.2% of land covered by trees. The average for England is 10%, according to environmental charity Trees for Cities.

Mr Steel, who served 13 years in the Royal Navy, has set up a group called One Hull of a Forest to run the project.

Four thousand trees will be planted over the next few days at St Richard's School in east Hull.

Mr Steel said employing veterans to plant trees would be necessary if targets for tree planting were to be met.

"When you look at the Northern Forest initiative there's 50 million trees to plant and unfortunately it is not going happen with just volunteers," he said.

"The element here was connecting mental health because of the benefits of being outdoors in green spaces and that mammoth task of getting 50 million trees planted."

One of the veterans, Ross Baldinger said it felt "great" to be planting trees.

"I was homeless for many, many years," he said.

"Drug and alcohol addition, which I'm proud to say I'm sober now and clean, and I have been for a few years, and to get the opportunity to start doing stuff again, it's just amazing."

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-humber-56336308>