

**MEDIA RELEASE****29 November 2023****Thamesmead schoolchildren help plant hundreds of trees for National Tree Week**

*Year 6 Children from St John Fisher Primary School*

Children from three schools in Thamesmead took a hands-on approach to tackling the climate crisis this week (28 & 29 November), helping to plant more than 500 trees in Southmere Park.

The planting coincided with National Tree Week – the UK’s largest annual tree celebration, running from 25 November to 3 December. It was coordinated by Peabody which is leading Thamesmead’s long-term regeneration. A key part of its work is focussed on improving and maintaining the town’s remarkable landscape and creating sustainable places.

Students from Willow Bank Primary School, St John Fisher Catholic Primary School and Harris Garrard Academy took part in the planting activities which were led by North West Kent Countryside Partnership.

As well as getting their hands dirty, they learnt about the many benefits urban trees can bring – from capturing carbon and creating wildlife habitats to reducing flood risks and improving air quality.

The school planting activities will be followed by a wider community planting day on Saturday 2 December. More than 500 trees of different ages and sizes will be planted over the course of the week, spanning 33 different species. These include hawthorn, blackthorn, guelder rose, hardy rubber-trees, tulip trees and golden rain trees.

Desiree Shepherd, Peabody’s Public Realm and Landscape Manager for Thamesmead, said: “National Tree Week is a time to recognise and appreciate all that trees do for us. It’s been great to see so many children take part in helping to plant more than 500 trees – they’ve all done brilliantly well and deserve a pat on the back!

“Many of the existing trees in Southmere Park have been standing for more than 50 years, so the newly planted ones will be of huge benefit to the local environment. We look forward to seeing how they develop over the coming years as we continue to develop, enrich and maintain Thamesmead’s landscape.”

Mary Tate, Partnership Manager for North West Kent Countryside Partnership, said: “We are happy to be involved in this tree planting initiative in Thamesmead. Having worked with Peabody on a number of projects over the years, we know how beneficial sessions like this are for the community and the environment.”

The group of newly planted trees will sit alongside Southmere Park’s ‘Tiny Forest’ which was the first to be planted in South London. Made up of 600 trees of 18 species, the woodland is a rich source of biodiversity, capable of attracting over 500 animal and plant species in the first three years. Planted in a semi-circle, it works as a mini-outdoor classroom and is a popular spot for school children, the wider community and visitors to the area.

They will add to the 53,000 trees (of 99 different species) that Peabody looks after in Thamesmead, alongside 240 hectares of green space, five lakes and 7km of canal network.

Find out more about how Peabody is working to improve Thamesmead’s landscape [here](#).

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