



UK's first Young People's Forest helps ease volunteers' climate anxiety

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Volunteers who have helped create the UK's first Young People's Forest have seen their climate anxiety levels fall, managers have said.

The Woodland Trust has planted 250,000 trees on a former open cast coal mine near Heanor, in Derbyshire, in a project aimed at young people.

Managers said young volunteers had told them it had helped some of their stresses fade away.

Elyse White, 22, said being involved had helped her "massively".

A recent [YouGov poll found seven out of 10 young people were worried about the environment](#) and the harm to the future of the planet.

The Woodland Trust acquired a 400-acre (162-hectare) site, called Mead, next to Shipley County Park in 2018 and has since enlisted schools, scout groups and other young people to cultivate the area.



Volunteers have planted the vast majority of the 250,000 trees

Emily Moore, the trust's youth development manager, said: "Climate anxiety is affecting young people significantly but we have seen those levels of anxiety are lower in young people who work here regularly because they are taking action themselves.

"They are making a physical difference and fighting climate change."

Ms White, who began volunteering at the site in 2019 and now works for the Woodland Trust, said: "I have felt climate anxiety like many other young people but this place has helped me with it - as well as other stresses.

"Being outdoors helps me massively physically, but mentally it helps massively - hearing the birds, feeling the calm and the warmth on your back on a sunny day.

"I just take in the little things nature has to offer.

"There is lots of pressure on young people today - to dress a certain way, to have a certain job but nature doesn't judge like that."

'Work in progress'

Ms Moore said the woodland was "created for young people by young people" but for the enjoyment of everyone in the community.

She said young people have been asked to do wildlife surveys and build bird hides, litter picking and fence repairs.

She added: "Most of the planting has been done by young people in the local community and school and college groups.

"This place will be a work in progress for a long time to come.

"We are getting a lot done this year but it'll be continuing for a long time yet as the site develops."

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-65350704>