

# Celebrating rewilding initiative's path to urban forest protection

GREEN group Free Tree Society (FTS) hosted a celebration at Bukit Bandaraya Community Centre in Kuala Lumpur to mark the upcoming gazettelement of the Sha Pulai Trail urban forest.

The event brought together residents, local school leaders, partner organisation and volunteers to recognise the milestone for the community-driven rewilding initiative to enhance green corridors between the Pulai Trail urban forest and neighbourhood green spaces in Bangsar.

The announcement of the gazettelement was made in Parliament by then minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories), Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa last August.

The decision follows years of advocacy, ecological reporting and stewardship led by FTS, which formally applied for the forest's protection in 2024.

It was a crucial step in securing permanent legal protection for this remnant primary and secondary forest where researchers had identified three new Malaysian fungi, FTS said in a media statement.



The Pulai Trail urban forest area in Bangsar provides the public access to biodiversity in the city.

As attendees revelled in the good news, FTS shared project progress and updates and gave away native plants to strengthen ecological gardening at homes, schools and community areas, directly benefitting local wildlife.

Over 1,700 trees, shrubs and epiphytes have been planted at Pulai Trail, with numerous ecological studies and continuous engagement with local authorities conducted.

To date, FTS has given away over 84,300 plants and trained more than 78,000 environmental stewards.

In her speech, FTS general manager Carolyn Lau said, "It's the community that is key to building ecological connectors."

"It's early days to seed this movement, but we have been inspired by the enthusiasm and support from community leaders to champion rewilding.

"I'm looking forward to seeing our landscapes come alive with birdsong and butterflies."

Also present at the event was Lembah Pantai MP and Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil, who has been an active supporter of the initiative since 2019.

FTS said over the last 18 months, it had distributed 2,771 native trees and plants across the ecological connector.

The organisation also hosted 23 forest stewardship workshops and marked out newly planted areas via the Bangsar Ecological Connector Map.

Its social media channels share forest stewardship knowledge, spotlighting native species and inspiring residents to participate in urban biodiversity restoration.

These efforts have strengthened habitat connectivity, improved wildlife-friendly streetscapes and expanded community participation in urban biodiversity.

Citizen science activities further empowered residents to monitor bird and butterfly populations, helping track ecological improvements over time, FTS added.

The Pulai Trail Urban Forest and Bangsar Ecological Connector community programmes are supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme under United Nations Development Programme and corporate sponsors, and in partnership with residents associations, schools and community groups across Lembah Pantai.