



**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



**Worcestershire**

**LOTTERY FUNDED**

Lower Smite Farm  
Smite Hill, Hindlip  
Worcs WR3 8SZ

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

16 August 2017

### **Celebrating 20 years of nature reserve**

**Photos: 10:50am Sunday 27 August – Three Parishes Village Hall, Grafton Flyford, WR7 4PG. Contact on the day: Helen Woodman 07768 334054**

A Worcestershire nature reserve that is home to over 40 species of bird, a nationally rare bat and a declining butterfly, is celebrating 20 years of conservation.

Grafton Wood nature reserve was purchased by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation in 1997 with help from a National Lottery grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Wychavon District Council and a public appeal.

Sir Peter Luff, then MP for Mid Worcestershire and now Chair of HLF, officially opened Grafton Wood and will be returning to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as part of the annual Brown Hairstreak Walk on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August.

Graham Martin, Chair of Trustees for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, explained “We were delighted in 1997 when the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £122,000 for ourselves and Butterfly Conservation to buy Grafton Wood and begin a programme of establishing it as a nature reserve.

“We’re indebted to the volunteers who have been managing the wood since its purchase and, with their help, we have seen so many successes, not least of which is the increase of the rare brown hairstreak butterflies.”

Brown hairstreak butterflies have disappeared from surrounding counties, and in the West Midlands they remain only in this small part of Worcestershire with Grafton Wood being the core of this stronghold.

Butterfly Conservation's John Tilt, volunteer manager for Grafton Wood since its purchase in 1997, said "When we took over the management of the wood there were no brown hairstreaks in the wood itself; last year there were hundreds.

"Now 31 species of butterfly have been seen in the woodland and, as we are managing it for insects, it's not surprising that we have good bat and bird populations. The spring birdsong in the coppice plots is astonishing.

"On a personal level, I have been privileged to have been given such a great retirement project over the last twenty years."

Grafton Wood originally formed an important part of the ancient royal Forest of Feckenham with historical records dating back to 1086. Its boundaries survive almost intact; current boundaries match those on a map of 1700.

Current management replicates traditional management and involves creating wide sunny rides and glades, great for both flowers and insects.

In spring, Grafton Wood is carpeted with bluebell and wild garlic, followed by early purple and common spotted orchid. Herb paris, a classic indicator of ancient woodland, joins sanicle and wood anemone in the woodland flora.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, commented "It's fantastic to return to Grafton Wood and see what has been achieved over the last 20 years.

"It just goes to show the incredible and lasting impact that National Lottery players' money can make, not only in helping our wildlife to survive and thrive but also in reconnecting and engaging local people with their natural heritage."

In 2014 Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation bought an adjacent piece of woodland to complete ownership of this ancient woodland and further protect wildlife in the area.

Over 40 species of bird breed in Grafton Wood and the woodland also boasts the most northerly breeding population of the nationally rare Bechstein's bat as well as being one of just ten UK woodlands with a population of the aspen leaf-rolling weevil.

- Ends -

## Contact

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## Editors Notes

- **Grafton Wood** is a 56 hectare wood (138 acres) near the village of Grafton Flyford. The woodland lies just off the A422, parking is available by the church. From here, the woodland is a c1km walk through the adjacent farmyard and fields to the east.
- **Worcestershire Wildlife Trust** is the foremost organisation actively restoring and protecting wildlife and wild places in Worcestershire. The Trust owns and manages over 75 nature reserves throughout the county and works with local community members and other organisations to encourage a landscape for people and wildlife. It has over 20,000 members and around 450 volunteers who support the Trust by active involvement in its conservation, education, fundraising and administration work. [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk)

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- **Butterfly Conservation** is the UK charity dedicated to saving butterflies, moths and our environment. Our research provides advice on how to conserve and restore habitats. We run projects to protect more than 100 threatened species and we are involved in conserving hundreds of sites and reserves. [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org) Much work is delivered through the charity's regional branches and the West Midlands branch holds an annual programme of events aimed at raising awareness of the region's butterflies and moths ([www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk))
- **Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)**. Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about – from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk) Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and use #HLFsupported