



For immediate release

City Council win prestigious conservation award

Work to create 15 new butterfly havens in Brighton & Hove has been recognised with a national award.

Brighton & Hove City Council has won the prestigious 'Promotion of Lepidoptera Conservation Award'. The award recognises an outstanding, unprecedented or major contribution to the conservation of butterflies and moths. The award was presented by Peter Titley, Trustee of the Marsh Christian Trust, the charity that supports organisations across the fields of conservation and education, at the recent Annual General Meeting of Butterfly Conservation.

Over the past seven years, council staff and conservationists have been working to create new Butterfly Havens, across the city from East Brighton Park and Carden Avenue to Hove Lagoon, Greenleas and Mile Oak recreation ground.

"These havens have effectively brought the delights of the chalk downs within the reach of city dwellers," said Dr Dan Danahar, Habitat Restoration Officer for Butterfly Conservation's Sussex Branch. "They have allowed precious downland wildlife to flourish on poor quality grassland sites. Careful grazing in a plan designed to benefit wildlife has further enhanced this green network of biodiversity hubs and corridors."

The city's first Butterfly Haven was created at Dorothy Stringer School in 2007. Work involved landscaping a chalk slope, sowing a carefully selected wildflower seed mix and planting 5,500 locally sourced wildflower plugs. Since then, 27 different butterflies have been seen on this site, a staggering three quarters of all the different species found in the city!

Inspired by this success Brighton & Hove City Council submitted an application in conjunction with the South Downs National Park in 2012 to become a Nature Improvement Area. The application was successful and the Council secured £91,000 funding for its part of the "South Downs Way Ahead" project.

John Gapper, at Stanmer Nursery, worked with staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, who provided advice on how to collect single species of seeds. These were planted and grown into small plant plugs by volunteers. During the winter, council rangers worked with more volunteers to plant 200,000 wildflower plugs.

This work has already benefited many butterfly species, including the Dingy & Grizzled Skippers, Small and Chalkhill Blues and, in one case, bringing a colony of the spectacularly beautiful Adonis Blue directly into the city centre.

Councillor Pete West, Chair of the council's Environment, Sustainability and Transport Committee said: "I'm extremely proud that we have been able to create these magnificent havens which are already attracting many butterfly species back to the city.

All credit must go to John and Mark Gapper and their hardworking team of volunteers whose knowledge, inspiration and expertise has made this project such a huge success."

In 2014, Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere was internationally recognised by UNESCO as a new World Biosphere area. This was the first completely new Biosphere site in the UK established for almost forty years.

Picture shows (left to right) Peter Titley of Marsh Christian Trust, John Gapper and his son Mark Gapper of Brighton & Hove City Council, Dr Dan Danahar of the Sussex Branch of Butterfly Conservation at the award presentation.

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Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity dedicated to halting the rapid decline of butterflies and moths and protecting our environment. We run conservation programmes for more than 100 threatened species and manage over 30 nature reserves. www.butterfly-conservation.org