



For immediate release

Rare Butterfly Wins Hampshire MP's Vote

Conservative MP for Romsey and Southampton North, Caroline Nokes, has 'adopted' one of the UK's most threatened butterflies in a bid to boost its numbers.

The Duke of Burgundy has declined by 40% since the 1970s, but wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation (BC) has helped landowners across Hampshire to turn the county into a stronghold for the butterfly.

Ms Nokes has agreed to work with BC as a 'Species Champion' for the Duke of Burgundy.

BC's Conservation Officer, Rachel Jones, said: "The Species Champion project is about MPs promoting species, habitats and positive management within their constituency and in Parliament.

"There are now 42 MP Species Champions across England and we're really grateful that Ms Nokes has chosen to support BC and in particular, raise awareness of this declining butterfly."

The Hampshire MP recently joined BC staff on a visit to a Duke of Burgundy site near Stockbridge which is being looked after by woodland management company Tilhill Forestry.

She said: "I'm thrilled to be working with BC to raise the profile of this rare butterfly and I'm hoping that by being a 'Species Champion' I can contribute to securing its future in Hampshire.

"We're very lucky to be the national stronghold for this lovely butterfly and it was eye-opening to see how important it is for woodland managers like Tilhill Forestry to work together with others - not just on their land, but across an entire landscape – to conserve some of our rarest wildlife."

Tilhill Forestry Senior Forest Manager, Stephen Taylor, said: "We've been helping the owner of this particular woodland to maintain and improve conditions for the Duke of Burgundy and it was a pleasure to show Ms Nokes the work that has been carried out here."

The Duke of Burgundy can be found across Hampshire throughout May and June with some of the best sites on the South Downs between Winchester and Petersfield.

The butterfly is fiercely territorial and despite measuring less than three centimetres across, will attack any flying insect that crosses its path.

The Duke's upper wings are orange and brown, overlaid with a network of dark bars and stripes, while its underwing is a mix of burnt-orange and pale ochre with distinctive flashes of white.

Females are elusive and spend much of their time resting or flying low to the ground looking for suitable egg-laying sites. Eggs are laid on the caterpillar foodplants, either Cowslip or Primrose.

Contacts

For further pictures or interviews, please contact Katie Callaghan on 01929 406037, or email kcallaghan@butterfly-conservation.org

Notes

There are now 42 MP Species Champion's across England and each one is partnered with a conservation organisation like BC, who will keep them updated with the issues facing their species and the work being done to save it.

Organisations taking part include BC, the RSPB, Buglife, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Plantlife, the Bat Conservation Trust and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

The initiative is based on a highly successful scheme launched in Scotland in 2013, involving dozens of MSPs.

Caroline Nokes is MP for Romsey and Southampton North www.carolinenokes.com

Tilhill Forestry, a wholly owned subsidiary of the BSW Timber Group, was established nearly 70 years ago. It is a national company operating from a network of offices throughout the UK. The company provides a full range of consultancy and contracting services to the forest owner and forestry investor. There is also a complementary soft landscaping operation. Further information is available at www.tilhill.com

BSW is the most technologically advanced sawmill company in the UK employing over 1,200 people. The Company's roots date back to 1848 and, with seven sawmills in the UK and one in Latvia, has a production capacity of more than 1.2 million m³ of sawn timber which is distributed throughout construction, fencing and landscape markets www.bsw.co.uk

Together, BSW and Tilhill Forestry form a strong partnership in the forest industry that will deliver quality from beginning to end - from creating new forests through to producing timber end products.

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