

1200 meters of hedgerow, 231 trees and a Fox!

- Construction begins on the £25m Butterfly World Project -

- Actress Emilia Fox lends her support to the conservation scheme -

Work began today on the £25m Butterfly World Project with the construction of the eco-friendly access road to the site. Once complete, the project will be a world-class visitor attraction and a massive conservation initiative located just off the M25, near St Albans.

Celebrating the cutting of the first sod was British actress and project Patron Emilia Fox along with project founder Clive Farrell and renowned landscape designer Ivan Hicks.

In-keeping with the conservation agenda for the entire development, the first task for the project team is to construct the eco-friendly, wildlife-attracting access road; Miriam Lane. The lane will be flanked on each side by 600 meters of hedgerow providing a continuous corridor for wildlife habitat.

Emilia Fox, project patron said: "I am very excited to see the first landmark steps of construction on this tremendously worthwhile project. With five of Britain's butterfly varieties disappearing in the last century and the number of species on the priority endangered species list having more than doubled in twelve years, the statistics are frightening. I am delighted to be supporting a project which looks to address this.

"That this conservation scheme begins as it means to go on – creating the access road which is also a haven for wildlife – shows the level of passion and environmental commitment from the project team".

Ivan Hicks, the chief landscape designer and gardener and one of the masterminds behind the project added: "Many of Britain's indigenous butterflies and other animal and plant life are hugely dependent on meadows and hedgerows. For this reason, Miriam Lane, like so much of the outside space on this project, is designed to create as natural a habitat as possible, ensuring Britain's wildlife can thrive.

"From the planting of 231 specimen trees to the sowing of wildflower and woodland seed mix, everything about this lane will be as environmentally friendly as possible. Even maintenance will be carefully managed to encourage bio-diversity, meaning no mowing of the edges is permitted!"

Miriam Lane will be lined with 6900 hedge scrubs and over 230 trees (including Dutch Elm resistant Elms, Silver Birch, Common Ash, Pedunculate Oak and Rowan); a vast improvement on the current brownfield site. Construction of the access road is expected to be complete by Autumn 2008.

The lane is named after the late Dame Miriam Rothschild, a great inspiration to Butterfly World and the project's Scientific Advisor until she died in 2005. Dame Miriam – who's maiden name was 'Lane' – was an entomologist, gardener, conservationist and a campaigner against the widespread use of insecticides.

Butterfly World, launched earlier this year by Sir David Attenborough, will be the biggest walk-through butterfly experience in the world with over 10,000 tropical butterflies filling the 100m biome.

The project, the vision of award-winning Lepidopterist, Clive Farrell, gives equal prominence to indigenous and tropical species and is expected to attract, educate and inspire up to 1m visitors a year when it is fully operational in spring 2011.

The £25m project will be self-sustaining. The economic impact on the region is conservatively forecast to be around £123,000,000 in the first five years of operation according to the London School of Economics. The project will help:

- Raise awareness of the extreme threats to the world's butterfly and moth population
- Educate the public about the conservation of all wild flora and fauna
- Preserve the natural environment for the benefit of the public
- Continually fund research into the natural environment
- Within the first few years of full operation, directly invest over £1m annually on community and charity projects in the area including advice centres, youth groups and crime prevention initiatives.

- ENDS -

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Notes to editors:

- Butterfly World Project Ltd is the company responsible for developing and running the £25m visitor attraction
- Project Founders: Clive Farrell; Co-Founder John Calvert

- Project Trustees:
 - Professor David Bellamy (Chief Trustee)
- 1 The Dowager Lady Pamela Egremont
 - 2 Doctor Jeremy Thomas
 - 3 Malcolm Tucker

- 4 Stella Smith
- Project Patrons:
- Sir David Attenborough CH FRS
- 1 The Marquess of Salisbury PC DL
- 2 Emilia Fox
- 3 The Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, The Countess Verulam
- 4 Baroness Helena Kennedy QC
- 5 Prof. John A Pickett CBE DSc FRS
- 6 Martin Lane Fox FRICS VMH
- 7 Allan Titchmarsh MBE VMH DL
- 8 Rosie Boycott
- 9 Priscilla Rattazzi-Whittle
- 10 Ian Worlock
 - Butterfly World Trust, the charity will receive 10% of annual profits generated by Butterfly World Project Ltd to invest into research, conservation and community projects.

www.butterfly-world.org