

Public urged to help bees, butterflies and other pollinators

The public are being encouraged to count bees, butterflies and other pollinators as part of the latest drive to protect and increase these vital species launched today (Monday 23 May).

The free '[FIT Count](#)' phone app – supported by Defra – will help track pollinator numbers and movements, providing crucial data that can be used to support pollinators in our natural environment. It could reveal previously unknown colonies of pollinators, where numbers are diminishing, or how populations are shifting in response to climate change.

It is part of a survey being co-ordinated by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. Their Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) survey asks people to spend 10 minutes a day collecting data on the number of insects that visit particular patches of flowers, including dandelion, buttercup and lavender.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow made the call to action at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, alongside the launch of the government's new Pollinator Action Plan (PAP), which sets out how government, beekeepers, conservation groups, farmers, researchers, industry and the public can work together to help pollinators in England thrive. This will build on the progress of our world-leading Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) established through the National Pollinator Strategy launched in 2014.

Pollinators are an essential part of our environment and play a crucial role in food production – they contribute the equivalent of more than £500 million a year to UK agriculture and food production, by improving crop quality and quantity – and are also vital to our wider, natural ecosystems.

Today's announcement is part of the government's drive to improve nature recovery and reverse declines in species, such as pollinators. The Pollinator Action Plan will support this, and support the delivery of the commitments in the Environment Act 2021, which requires legally-binding targets to be set to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

We all want to see an abundance of butterflies and bees in our gardens, parks and countryside. We are encouraging people to give just 10 minutes of their time to count the pollinating insects they see using this app to help us track their numbers and movements, and support our efforts to reverse the decline of these vital species.

I am very excited to be launching the latest Pollinator Action Plan at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, where the essential role of bees and pollinators are rightfully taking centre stage. It sets

out a range of actions over the next few years to support these species, and is part of our wider drive to improve nature recovery and increase biodiversity through our world-leading Environment Act, and through a range of our new farming policies too, where restoring nature will complement food production.

The Pollinator Action Plan will focus a number of key areas, including:

- strengthening the evidence base to improve our understanding of trends and impacts on pollination;
- managing our land more effectively to encourage better connected habitat and recovered species;
- sustaining pollinator health of managed and wild populations' by supporting beekeepers and bee farmers, ensuring there is surveillance of diseases and invasive species, as well as research and advice; and
- engaging the public through Bees' Needs events, alongside celebrating successes and promoting a wide range of training.

Dr Claire Carvell, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), said:

FIT Counts are a great way for people to connect with nature. We would like to thank the hundreds of volunteers who have submitted more than 8,000 counts to the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme so far.

This data is helping us build a unique picture of the changing patterns of pollinator visits to flowers across the gardens and countryside of the UK.

Dr Chris Hartfield, Senior Regulatory Affairs Adviser, NFU Plant Health Unit, said:

The NFU has been involved with the National Pollinator Strategy since its inception and the strength of the strategy has always been how it has followed the science and evidence, and as part of this approach has established the world-leading pollinator monitoring scheme 'PoMS'.

We look forward to continuing to help steer the work under the new Pollinator Action Plan.

Five simple actions everyone can take to help pollinators and make sure their populations are sustained include:

- Grow more flowers, shrubs and trees
- Let your garden grow wild
- Cut your grass less often
- Don't disturb insect nest and hibernation spots

- Think carefully about whether to use pesticides