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**Media release**

**5 June 2018**

**Big Garden Bee Count – This Weekend**

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is calling on people to create a buzz this weekend to help build a picture of the status of bees in Cheshire. The Trust have organised a Big Garden Bee Count for Saturday 9th June and Sunday 10th June and are inviting everyone to take part.

The conservation charity has teamed up with RECORD, the Local Biological Records Centre serving Cheshire, Halton, Warrington and Wirral, which is producing a bumblebee distribution atlas for Cheshire, and wants you to record your sightings of these hard-working insects.

Most UK species have declined in recent years, and two have become extinct since 1940. Martin Varley, Director of Conservation at Cheshire Wildlife Trust, explained the work that the Trust is undertaking to support pollinators. "Bees and other pollinators such as moths and butterflies have lost much of their habitat in the past 60 years, including a staggering 99% of wildflower meadows in Cheshire. We’re taking practical action to help pollinators - we have restored meadow habitat at our reserves and are focused on restoring 100 hectares of meadow in the region in the next 10 years. But everyone can help and this activity creates the perfect opportunity for people to discover the bees they have in their gardens.”

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is also working locally to promote the importance of pollinators, through its *‘Wildlife Friendly Garden Awards’* scheme. The scheme encourages gardeners to keep pollinators in mind when choosing plants and is open to everyone. It doesn’t matter how big or small the outdoor space, as long as it is possible to showcase what has been done to help wildlife. This might be through creating a mini wildflower meadow, avoiding chemical weed killers or building insect hotels. Entries to the scheme receive a plaque, certificate, and gardening booklet.

“We all need pollinators in our lives,” said Martin Varley. “They are essential to food production and in maintaining a balanced ecosystem. We mustn’t take them for granted and this Big Garden Bee Count will help us to create a picture of their status in the region.”

This weekend, the Trust wants as many people as possible to take part in its annual Big Garden Bee Count and to report what type of bees they see on this day. There are many different species of bee and Cheshire Wildlife Trust is on hand to help you identify which you have seen, just visit their website at [www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/beecount](http://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/beecount). Here identification information is available, as well as the opportunity to submit sightings.