

## PRESS RELEASE

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*Spokespeople, including Plantlife's Jo Riggall, available for comment*

### MP for North Herefordshire to Champion Rare Wild Plant

- Plantlife welcomes Dr Ellie Chowns MP as Species Champion for Narrow-leaved water-dropwort
- Chowns pledges to support threatened plant found at Herefordshire's Lugg Meadow
- Flowering plant is found in floodplain meadows, an irreplaceable species-rich grassland habitat under risk

Plantlife is delighted to announce that Dr Ellie Chowns, MP for North Herefordshire, will act as Species Champion for Narrow-leaved water-dropwort (*Oenanthe silaifolia*), a slender wild plant that stands tall in wet, species-rich grasslands such as floodplain meadows.

The MP Species Champion programme (1) sees Members of Parliament join forces with Plantlife and other wildlife organisations to bring political support to the protection and promotion of threatened species.

Narrow-leaved water-dropwort, a member of the carrot family with frothy white flowers, is Nationally Rare and classified as 'Near Threatened' on Britain's Red List. Now confined to just scattered locations in England, the only known stronghold for the plant in Herefordshire is Lugg Meadow, one of the UK's most important and historic floodplain meadows. Herefordshire Wildlife Trust is currently delivering a Natural England Species Recovery project to secure the Narrow-leaved water-dropwort's future on the meadow.

Ellie's commitment to shine a light on the plant and its preferred habitat is timely; the Narrow-leaved water-dropwort has been steeply declining for centuries as it is easily destroyed by even modest agricultural intensification, such as the use of fertiliser. It clings on in special places for nature, like Lugg Meadow, where appropriately managed floodplain meadows provide a safe haven.

Floodplain meadows have suffered huge declines, with only an estimated 1,100 hectares remaining in England and Wales, less than the size of Heathrow airport. These irreplaceable meadows are incredible flood defences, as their deep and absorbent soils hold and slow the flow of flood water. Lugg Meadow is the ultimate multitasker. It stores carbon whilst being grazed by livestock and cut for hay, a bastion of farming traditions that stretch back centuries to the building of Hereford's Cathedral and beyond.

### Commenting on the new role, Dr Ellie Chowns MP said:

*"Championing an individual species is a powerful way of bringing greater understanding to the value and vulnerability of our natural world. I look forward to speaking up for the unheralded beauty that is Narrow-leaved water-dropwort, and our irreplaceable meadows like Lugg Meadow, in both Westminster and beyond."*

**Jo Riggall, Grasslands Advocacy Officer, Plantlife, commented:**

*"We are delighted to announce Ellie as our Species Champion. Conserving rare and threatened wild plants like Narrow-leaved water-dropwort is crucial as we face the interlinked biodiversity and climate emergencies; it attracts a wide range of pollinators including butterflies, bees and hoverflies. Lugg Meadow is teeming with plant species that have long roots reaching deep into the soil and helping to lock down carbon underground."*

**David Hutton, Reserves Project Officer, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, commented:**

*"Our conservation work is tackling the reduction in species diversity of the meadows because of increased nutrient deposition and the prolonged pooling of water due to the blockage of ancient, shallow drainage channels. We're working closely with Plantlife and are delighted Ellie is backing both the future of this wonderful plant and the iconic meadow landscape."*

**Ends**

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**To arrange an interview please contact [press@plantlife.org.uk](mailto:press@plantlife.org.uk)**

**Notes to editors:**

Under the Species Champion programme, over 40 iconic and threatened English species have been 'adopted' by MPs. The initiative is run by the [Rethink Nature](#) partnership of five nature NGOs - Plantlife, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Buglife, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, and Bat Conservation Trust.

**ENDS**

**About Plantlife:**

Plantlife is the global charity working to enhance, protect, restore and celebrate the wild plants and fungi that are essential to all life on earth. With two in five plant species at risk of extinction, biodiversity loss is now the fastest it's ever been and Plantlife's work has never been more vital. Plantlife champions and accelerates conservation action, working at the heart of a global network of individuals and organisations, to influence and inspire landowners and land managers, public and private bodies, governments and local communities. As time begins to run out, Plantlife's position as the global voice for wild plants and fungi will help to bring lasting and positive change to our natural world – for everyone's sake.

**About Herefordshire Wildlife Trust:**

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust is part of The Wildlife Trust movement. There are 46 Wildlife Trusts across the whole of the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. Together we have more than 870,000 members, over 32,500 volunteers, 2,500 staff and 600 trustees. The Wildlife Trusts are the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving the whole range of the UK's habitats and species.