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**April 20, 2016**

**A bright future for the over 50s**

Access to green spaces and spending time outdoors is fantastic for our wellbeing. That's why Cheshire Wildlife Trust is delighted to launch the Great Outdoors Malpas project – a new initiative to help older people from in and around Malpas access the countryside and connect with nature.

Thanks to a £50,000 contract with Brightlife – a Big Lottery funded project aimed at reducing social isolation and loneliness in the over 50s – the Trust will be helping people to develop new skills and interests while rediscovering the physical, mental and social benefits of being outdoors.

The new initiative will be run by the team behind the Trust's Heritage Lottery Fund Natural Futures volunteering project and a whole host of activities will be available to anyone aged over 50 from Malpas and the surrounding villages.

Sam Caraway, the Trust's Natural Futures Manager, said: "This is an exciting new chapter for us as it's the first time we have run a project involving social prescribing, an approach that aims to improve health by tackling people's social and physical wellbeing. One of our main aims as a Trust is to ensure that wildlife is enjoyed and valued by all – this project will allow people who might not otherwise be able to enjoy the benefits of nature the opportunity to explore the great outdoors."

Head of Brightlife Chris McClelland adds: "There are many long-term physical and emotional benefits to be gained by spending time outdoors. Experiencing nature can play a vital role in helping people with dementia to regain their confidence and begin to feel in control again. Brightlife is delighted to be working with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust team to help improve the lives of older people across Cheshire West and Chester."

Planned activities include landscape painting, bee keeping, and wildlife walks to begin with, followed by practical conservation volunteering, wildlife gardening, wildlife photography, and bird watching. There will also be supported activities such as nature walks for people with dementia.

**ENDS**

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NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**About Natural Futures:**

Cheshire Wildlife Trust Natural Futures is an ambitious new volunteering programme, taking place across the Cheshire region, Stockport and Wirral this September. Thanks to support from a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant of £706,400, over the next four years the Trust will be making a £1.2million investment in volunteering that will shape the county’s wildlife and natural spaces for the better.

Ambitious in scale, the project’s aim is actually very simple – let’s get more people doing more for nature in Cheshire.

**About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 35,000 projects with more than £5.3bn across the UK. www.hlf.org.uk

**About Brightlife:**
Brightlife is a partnership led by Age UK Cheshire (Registered Charity Number 1091608). It has been awarded £5m as part of the Big Lottery’s Fulfilling Lives, Ageing Better fund, which has given a total of £82m to 15 areas throughout England in order to improve the lives of up to 200,000 older people.

The Brightlife partnership includes: Age UK Cheshire, Older People’s Network, Cheshire West and Chester Council, West Cheshire CCG, Vale Royal CCG, Cheshire and Warrington Social Enterprise Partnership, Chester Voluntary Action, Deafness Support Network, Rural Community Services, Sanctuary Housing and West Cheshire Inter Faith Forum.

Over the next five years, Brightlife aims to work closely with older people to identify, design and implement a wide range of innovative solutions to address loneliness and isolation across Cheshire West and Chester.

Nationally, over 1 million older people say they are always or often feel lonely, and two-fifths say the television is their main form of company. With the numbers of older people aged 65 or over in the UK predicted to rise by nearly 50% in the next 20 years, loneliness is an urgent problem.