

## Green shoots

Prime time  
for butterflies

DUNWICH Heath has been named by the National Trust as the top coastal site in eastern England for seeing butterflies.

The conservation charity is one of this region's major landowners. Stuart Warrington, the trust's nature conservation advisor for the east of England, said: "Butterflies are incredible insects and it isn't hard to love them. Every year when the temperatures rise and they begin emerging as fresh adults it just lifts your spirits to see them flying around you, feeding on flowers like a busy rable of small stained glass windows.

"In July and August butterfly populations peak, both in terms of numbers and different species you can see, so this is the best time to go looking for them."

Awash with colour in high summer, Dunwich Heath is a precious example of prime heath habitat for butterflies. With plenty of purple heather and vivid yellow gorse for the adults to feed on the heath attracts its own set of butterflies and is a perfect place for a walk and picnic lunch to enjoy them." Look out for species such as the small heath, the small copper and the wall brown, a striking orange butterfly with dark markings.

MEANWHILE, butterfly numbers are declining all over the world, according to the famous wildlife expert and television presenter, Sir David Attenborough.

Their disappearance is, he says, a clear indication that something is going very wrong in the global environment.

"Butterflies are sensitive indicators. They decline when habitats are destroyed and when man harms the environment. We have known about butterfly losses in Britain for more than 50 years. Now there is mounting evidence that it is a global problem."

Butterfly Conservation, the UK-based conservation charity, has this year published a new "red list" of European butterflies suggesting that about 120% of species are facing extinction. This year is the deadline set in 2002 for halting the loss of biodiversity, the UK range of species. While the target will not be met, most conservationists believe that efforts have not been in vain and that good results have been attained in trying to save some species.

ALL the world's tropical coral reefs will be disintegrating by the end of the century because of the rising acidity of the oceans, a new report forecasts. Researchers at the Carnegie Institution of Science in Washington used a computer model to assess how 9,000 coral reefs around the world would respond to rising levels of acidity caused by carbon dioxide emissions. Coral reefs are regarded as the rainforests of the ocean because they sustain so many varieties of plant and animal, about one quarter of all marine organisms

The challenges of building  
inside town's 'green lung'

The new Treehouse hospice being built in old woodland on the outskirts of Ipswich is living up to its name. **DAVID GREEN** learns about the environmental expertise behind the project

THE WONDER of nature is at the heart of a project to create a new hospice for children.

An old woodland – on the eastern outskirts of Ipswich less than 100 years ago but now acting as a "green lung" within an urban expanse – is the site of a building where seriously and terminally ill youngsters will be given respite or end-of-life care.

The site, donated by a local charitable trust, was not designated for development but, largely as a result of measures to protect and enhance most of the woodland habitat, planning permission was finally obtained.

The highly-insulated building will take advantage of modern ideas in environmental design – including the installation of a "living" sedum roof – and efforts are being made to reduce the carbon footprint of the construction process with materials and expertise being sourced as locally as possible.

But the wonder of nature will never be far away because the building will be surrounded by existing and newly-planted trees, new hedgerows and wildflower areas.

The stumps of some of the old trees felled by the 1987 gale are being retained for both their sculptural and habitat benefits while an oak tree – thought to be between 150 and 200 years old, will be the centrepiece of a courtyard.

East Anglia's Children's Hospices has launched a Treehouse Appeal to raise the £3million needed to cover the costs of a project which will significantly bolster the region's hospice facilities for youngsters.

The current children's hospice in Ipswich, a bungalow, is inadequate to meet the needs of youngsters with terminal or life-threatening conditions and their



**SENSITIVE:** Chris Bruce, of Barnes Construction, at the hospice site where the company has erected a secure fence to prevent construction spilling over into the retained woodland

families. There are not enough beds and rooms, nor is there dedicated space for specialist services.

The new building, designed by Ipswich architects, Barefoot and Gilles, will allow end-of-life care to be delivered in greater privacy, provide more bed spaces for life-threatened children, provide private overnight accommodation for families and include dedicated areas for hydrotherapy, physiotherapy and music and play therapies.

Susan Deakin, project ecologist, said species of plant in the "sedum" roof would be those beneficial to wildlife and it would form an integral part of the local ecosystem. Plants would include cowslips, wild thyme and primroses but climate change forecasts were also being taken into account.

"There will be a built-in irriga-

tion system but the species planted will generally be tolerant of summer drought. Use of this type of roof will slow down water run-off and reduce heat loss from within the building," she said.

Susan, who has lived in Suffolk since her marriage 26 years ago, was brought in at an early stage to help in drawing up the planning application, controversial because of the "protected" woodland siting next to the Ipswich-Felixstowe rail line, a "feeder" route for wildlife travelling through the concrete urban jungle.

Her first job was to establish what exactly was already on site in terms of habitat and wildlife species. Valuable habitats included a number of mature deciduous trees and also rotting timber – oak, elm and beech – from the 1987 storm, now hosts for insects and fungus.

There was evidence of occupation by wood mice and other small mammals as well as reptiles.

However there were no signs of use by badgers or great crested newts – the kind of species which would have certainly led to delays, the need for mitigation measures or, possibly, refusal of planning permission.

With a lack of management, the ecological condition of the woodland was considered to be "degraded" and Susan drew up a plan to protect and enhance its valuable features while increasing the stock of trees and habitat around the hospice.

"We want it to be as lovely as possible for the children and their families," Susan said.

However, some trees – mainly self-seeded sycamores – have had to be felled and roots removed to

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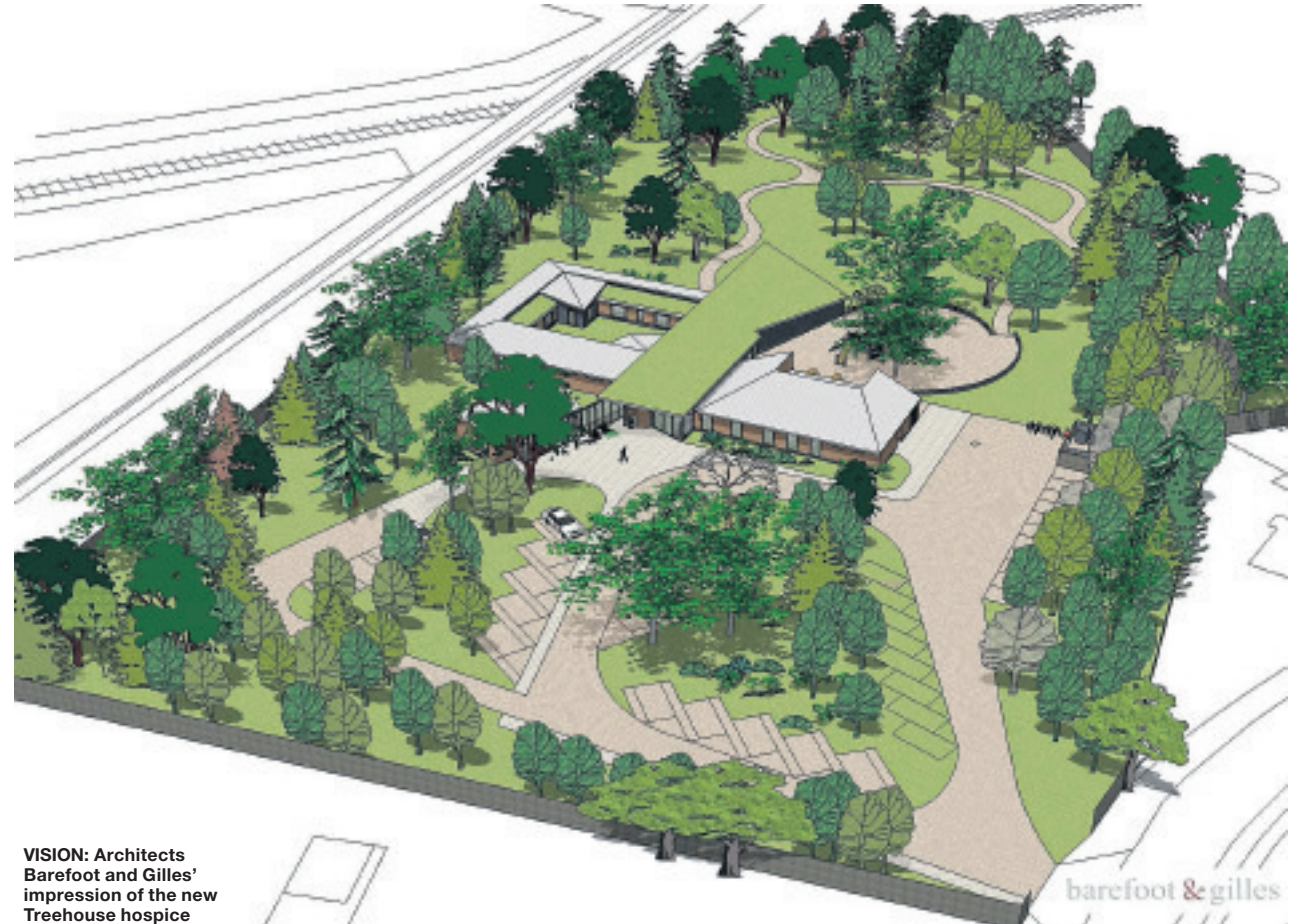


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**EXPERTISE:** Ecologist Susan Deakin was brought in at an early stage of the project



**VISION:** Architects Barefoot and Gilles' impression of the new Treehouse hospice

## Hospice care for children without spoiling the habitat

make way for the building. Even so, only a small part of the four-acre site is being developed. The rest is being given over to nature conservation.

"We've managed to retain all the good trees, including the oaks and a really good sweet chestnut, and all the trees which have potential for bats. The amount of wildlife already in the wood was much less than one would expect as a result of lack of management over the years," Susan said.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Natural England have both been consulted as part of the process of creating a management plan for the woodland. Existing and new trees will also help form a noise barrier, for the site is close to a busy road junction, as well as an active rail line.

The risk of construction spilling over into the retained woodland has been largely eliminated by the erection of a secure fence around the building site by the main contractor, Ipswich-based Barnes Construction.

Chris Bruce, the firm's pre-contracts director, said a great deal of effort was being made to "green" the construction process.

A nationally-recognised environmental impact measurement scheme was being used and the aim was to achieve a high rating. Timber used on site was from accredited "renewable" sources while other needs were met by recycled materials.

"We are monitoring the use of electricity and water on site and recycling as much waste as possible. Deliveries and other journeys to and from the site are also being monitored," said Chris who was born in Ipswich and is a former pupil of Chantry High School.

The support of the site workforce in minimising waste and monitoring input levels is obviously important and Chris believes employees and sub-contractors are well aware of the need to achieve good standards.

Low energy lighting systems will be installed and water-based paints will be used in the fitting out and decoration of the new building which is expected to be occupied by the spring of next year.

More information about the Treehouse Appeal and East Anglia's Children's Hospices can be obtained by logging on to [www.each.org.uk](http://www.each.org.uk)



**KEEPING THE HABITAT:** Rotting timber, much of it having fallen in the 1987 gale, is being retained on the site as a home for insects and fungus, along with some small mammals and reptiles

Photographs: SARAH LUCY BROWN

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