

# News release

27 March 2018

## Museum of Natural History's HOPE for the Future wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

- Oxford University Museum of Natural History receives HLF development funding for British insect collection and community engagement project
- More than a million British insect specimens will be safeguarded and made more accessible if project is fully-funded
- Pre-Raphaelite-designed room will be restored to its 1860 condition and opened as a new multi-purpose public space
- Schools and community outreach programme will develop skills and inspire interest in British wildlife, conservation and the natural environment

Oxford University Museum of Natural History has received initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for its *HOPE for the Future – Heritage, Outreach and Preservation of Entomology* project, it was announced today.

Made possible by National Lottery players, the project aims to re-house and safeguard the nationally-significant British insect collections and restore an important Pre-Raphaelite-designed space, the Museum's Westwood Room, to its original 1860 condition.

*HOPE for the Future* will also support an extensive community outreach and public engagement programme centred on British animal wildlife, teaching skills and inspiring a lifelong interest in the natural environment and conservation.

Development funding of £63,700 has been awarded to help the Museum progress its plans ahead of a full grant application.

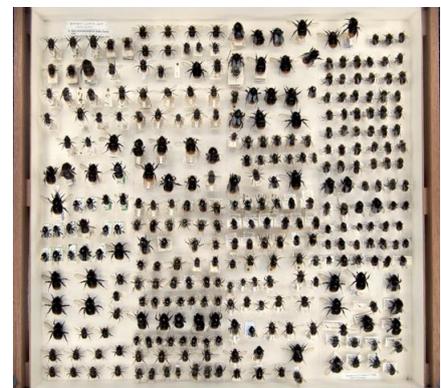


Professor Paul Smith, director of Oxford University Museum of Natural History, said:

“The Heritage Lottery Fund is founded on the principles of caring for and providing access to our country’s heritage, so we are very pleased to receive this initial support for our *HOPE for the Future* project. We will significantly improve storage and access for an important and irreplaceable collection of British insects, while simultaneously reaching out to schools and rural communities with an extensive education and outreach programme. We aim to inspire an interest in Britain’s natural environment and to safeguard natural heritage for future generations to access.”

### **‘Move a Million’ – recuration of the British insect collections**

The Museum’s insect collections span almost the entire history of British entomology. They document how the British fauna has changed since the Industrial Revolution, with relevance for current issues such as biodiversity loss, species conservation and climate change. New staff, curatorial apprentices and volunteers will move over one million insect specimens from the Museum’s Westwood Room to new higher-quality storage space with improved access. Relocation to better storage conditions is vital to safeguard the future of this important insect collection.



### **Restoration of the Westwood Room**

The Museum’s Westwood Room has held insect collections since the Museum was founded in 1860, but is currently inaccessible to the visiting public. The room was originally decorated by Henry Swan, follower of the art critic John Ruskin, and is a vibrant part of the Pre-Raphaelite design of the Museum, led by Ruskin. It features exquisitely painted wall borders, ceiling beams and entomological detailing, including a carved interpretation of stag beetle and hawkmoth life cycles on the stone fireplace. This Pre-Raphaelite decoration and architecture will be restored as part of the project, creating a beautiful new public space for a variety of uses.



### **Community Outreach and Public Engagement Programme**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



*HOPE for the Future's* outreach programme will take material from the British insect collections into schools and rural communities, reaching both young and older audiences. Insect Discovery Days will be developed for Year 6 and 7 pupils from local primary and secondary schools, along with a programme of out-of-school activities for ages 9+ (KS2, KS3, KS4 and KS5).

This will be complemented by events at the Museum, including behind the scenes tours, skills-based workshops and day schools, as well as opportunities to volunteer to work on the collection re-housing project.

#### **Further information:**

Download high-res images [here](#).

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#### **Notes to editors**

##### **About Oxford University Museum of Natural History**

Founded in 1860 as the centre for scientific study at the University of Oxford, the Museum of Natural History now holds the University's internationally significant collections of entomological, geological and zoological specimens. Housed in a stunning Pre-Raphaelite-inspired example of neo-Gothic architecture, the Museum's growing collections underpin a broad programme of natural environment research, teaching and public engagement.

In 2015, the Museum was a **Finalist in the Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year**. In 2016, it won the top accolade, Best of the Best, in the **Museums + Heritage Awards**.

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