

Cabinet minister praises nature site

By Web Reporter

THE Government's Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs praised Amwell Nature Reserve as an "island of respite" during a site visit.

MP Hilary Benn was given a special tour of the Great Amwell reserve, including a preview of the new dragonfly trail, which will open to the public this summer.

He told the **Mercury**: "I think it's magnificent. There are a lot of development pressures on land but it makes places like this more precious.



"Because of the pressures, there needs to be awareness of islands of respite like this one.

"Amwell will give a lot of joy and pleasure to people and encourage them to go away and think about other pieces of land."

The Labour MP, who visited the reserve last Thursday, thanked the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT), which owns the 43-hectare site, and its partners, for the work they carry out in preserving the wildlife on the former sand and gravel working spot.

The trust's chief executive Judy Adams said: "We were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State to our nature reserve and give him the opportunity to find out more, not only about Amwell's wildlife, but also to hear how important a part landscape scale initiatives with landowners, fellow conservation bodies and strategic partners are playing in the conservation of wildlife locally and regionally."

The Amwell reserve is part of the Lea Valley Living Landscape project, which aims to restore and connect nature areas along the Lea Valley from Hertfordshire to East London.

It is home to more than 1,500 birds and all 19 species of dragonfly and damselfly have been known to pay a visit.

The new dragonfly trail is due to open on Friday July 4 and will remain open until September.

The season will usually run from May-September.