

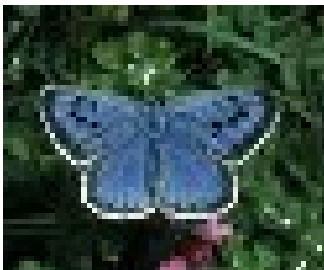
Big business protects the environment

Last year, Dreweatt Neate formed a joint venture company, Dreweatt Berrys, to provide infrastructure consultancy and project management services to clients such as Network Rail and Defence Estates (MOD). A number of recent client projects have involved similar issues regarding environmental management and protection.

For example, Network Rail property encompasses a wide variety of habitats and associated species, both common and rare, all of which can pose challenges for us to overcome as land agents working on their behalf. There is, of course, the ubiquitous badger and the troublesome rabbit but there are also a number of rarer species, for example, the water vole, various bats, birds such as the dipper, together with slow worms, orchids and the Yellow Ant.



Dreweatt Berrys' Land Agents and Ecologists are adept at recognising the importance of environmental issues that affect work sites and are skilled at bringing all parties together to achieve engineering and environmental goals. For example, two ongoing Network Rail projects in the South West of England border SSSIs (*Site of Special Scientific Interest*) and have now become two of the ten internationally recognised breeding sites for the Large Blue butterfly. This is a species that was reintroduced in the early 1990s at one of the locations, following its extinction in the UK in 1979.



The principal reason for the extinction of the Large Blue was the loss of its habitat. Its needs are individual (to say the least) as a result of its unusual life cycle, requiring the association of short turf, wild thyme and a certain species of ant. The adult butterfly lays its eggs on the thyme, where the larvae initially feed, before falling to the ground, where they exude a sugary liquid. This liquid attracts the ant, which adopts the larvae, only to find they then gorge themselves on the ant's own larvae, before eventually emerging as adult butterflies.

It is this unique habitat which Network Rail has tried to recreate on one of its embankments, during a major repair project in 2003. Dreweatt Neate provided the vital role of bringing Network Rail, Civil Engineering contractors, the neighbouring landowners and environmental bodies together for the benefit of both the rail network and the environment.

In 2005, another nearby breeding site was discovered whilst undertaking emergency works and, in order to complete the necessary repairs, Network Rail has temporarily transferred around half an acre of turf incorporating the association of thyme and anthills. This turf will then be re-laid once the works have been completed, thereby protecting the habitat which would otherwise have been lost.

In both these examples Dreweatt Berrys has been able to bring all parties together - including English Nature, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, the local Wildlife Trust, Network Rail and the contractors responsible for the works - to broker a solution that has created a safe habitat for the butterfly and its inter-related species. This not only demonstrates the importance of the rail infrastructure as a wildlife corridor but, critically, the skill of bringing relevant parties together via a robust and open dialogue to achieve a win-win situation for Network Rail and the environment.

Alastair Martin, Chairman of Dreweatt Berrys says: "handling sensitive and potentially disruptive environmental issues such as this is an important part of our service. We are delighted to be able to help businesses deliver a more diverse and sustainable environment for the future."

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