

GTRM biodiversity initiatives - Badgers & Butterflies

Case Record



Location Various
Client Railtrack
Main Contractor GTRM

GTRM are currently raising awareness of environmental issues within the workforce.

As part of their business they undertake works in some of the most important wildlife corridors throughout the UK.

Environmental Initiatives

Biodiversity Badger relocation in Preston
 Large Blue Butterfly habitat improvement

Through their normal course of patrolling and track inspection, Preston-based staff discovered poor longitudinal and cross level in the vicinity of no.7 milepost Up Line at Arnside on the Cumbrian Cost Line. The root cause of the problem appeared to be a substantial colony of badgers that had established in the embankment, giving rise to track subsidence. As a consequence, track maintenance staff found they were frequently visiting this location to carry out track remedial repairs.

A licence to relocate the badgers was applied for from English Nature. The licence covered works to remove the badgers and all permanent repairs to the embankment and track.

A licence was granted and preliminary works took place to deter the badgers from returning. The work entailed de-vegetation of the area fitting outward-opening, one-way doors at the sett entrance and, once vacated, fitting Tornado Badger Netting in the vicinity to prevent the return.

The conditions of the licence stated that a period of time must elapse prior to the commencement of extensive remedial works, as some assurance is required that the badgers have vacated their premises.

Vegetation clearance is often a contractual requirement it helps to provide safe sighting distances for train drivers and maintenance contractors. Lineside vegetation surveys showed that the work would impact upon the SSSI's at Bruton and at Polden Hills.

Local Wildlife Trusts and English Nature were consulted who gave the following guidance:
 Bruton SSSI is of a geological nature and will actually benefit from the proposed vegetation clearance as it will remove woody vegetation and restore low-growing vegetation in the five metre swathe.

It was brought to the companies attention that Polden Hills SSSI was home to the rare Large Blue Butterfly (the largest of all of Northern Europe). There was particular concern that the work may potentially damage a colony in hibernation or potentially remove their essential food supply for the next season. English Nature informed the project team that the Large Blue thrives on steep embankments and requires short open vegetation for its preferred food source, which is the low-growing thyme plant. It was concluded that again we would be enhancing the colony of the breeding site by targeting works on woody vegetation that may be encroaching on the site within the five metre swathe adjacent to the track.