

Case Record

The Reintroduction of Sand Lizards on Wildmoor Heath



Date October 2002
Location Wildmoor Heath

Partnership between Highway Maintenance Area 5 and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

The Sand Lizard's extinction in Berkshire has been attributed to a loss of suitable habitat due to development, fragmentation of suitable habitat and inappropriate / lack of habitat management. Successful re-introduction programmes in Hampshire and West Sussex have recently begun to redress the balance.

The reintroduction of the endangered Sand Lizard

Business Benefits

- **Cash and in-kind support totalling approx £6,475**
- **Reintroduction of a rare species**
- **Volunteers helped deliver the project, gaining team working skills**
- **Environmental / biodiversity training for Carillion staff**
- **Improved community relations**
- **Positive publicity**

The sand lizard is the most endangered of the UK's three native lizard species and is only found living in Dorset, Surrey and Merseyside.

Wildmoor Heath is a 99-hectare site, one of the largest remaining sections of heathland in Berkshire containing a variety of wet and dry lowland heath. The area is the focus of a long-term conservation strategy by BBOWT to protect its habitats and species.

As such, Wildmoor Heath has been identified as a suitable area able to provide the mixture of dry heath and open patches of sand the sand lizard requires to hide, feed and in which to burrow to lay eggs.

After consultation with the Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT) to confirm that Wildmoor Heath was a suitable site for the re-introduction of the sand lizard, work began on the site in March 2002.

Members of staff from Carillion plc helped Trust conservation

staff to clear scrub, widen footpaths to provide fire breaks and create sandy scrapes. Further work took place in the autumn to remove any re-growth of bracken and saplings. The first juvenile sand lizards, obtained from a captive breeding project run at HCT, were released on the 16th September 2002 at a special release event with representatives from Carillion, English Nature and other local dignitaries. Following the successful re-introduction of the sand lizard to Wildmoor Heath will be used as a core area from which to identify other suitable sites for restoration. Subsequently a survey has been carried out on all Berkshire heathlands and hotspot areas most suitable for sand lizard release have been identified. This strategy will highlight these hotspot areas for reptiles and those that need restoring or a change in management. The strategy should be complete by the end of October 2002.