

Duke of Burgundy Butterfly Project  
Larkhill, Wiltshire, United Kingdom  
**Aspire Defence Capital Works (ADCW)**

**BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement**

**Project overview**

The object of the project is to protect a small colony of the nationally scarce Duke of Burgundy butterflies found in a rural habitat within Larkhill Garrison, Wiltshire. The colony was first discovered in 2011 and has been monitored annually since then as part of a United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) transect.

When it became apparent that the area may be affected by proposed development as part of the Army Basing Programme (ABP), a Species Action Plan (SAP) was prepared in November 2014 with the aim of conserving the existing site and creating additional suitable habitat nearby where the butterfly would be able to expand its present range.

In 2015, a new habitat was created within Larkhill Garrison by clearing trees and planting wild flowers with further planting and monitoring in 2016.

**What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?**

The site is characterised by an open area once used as a motocross circuit. This area became colonised by typical calcareous grassland plants. In the north of the site there is woodland, hawthorn scrub and rough grassland which favour the Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

**Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?**

The ABP proposals involve construction of new buildings which may disturb areas close to where Duke of Burgundy eggs have been observed. This development is critical to the delivery of future UK defence capability. The main drivers for this work have been the conservation objectives and long term voluntary involvement of a member of the Aspire Defence Capital Works team, Mike Lockwood, who has monitored Duke of Burgundy butterfly numbers within the garrison.



*Duke of Burgundy Butterfly*

Planning conditions also require preparation of a Construction Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan. Long term site knowledge and monitoring programmes have helped shape mitigation and enhancement objectives.

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Suitable habitat was created along an adjacent woodland edge in a nearby area by opening up three separate scallops and planting cowslips which is the food-plant for the Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

This area had been surveyed previously and neither the butterfly nor cowslips were present. Some cowslips were transplanted from an area that would be lost to future development. Teams from Aspire Defence Capital Works volunteered their services during lunch breaks to carry out the digging and replanting work. Cowslips were also raised from seed then planted in the scallops and around the woodland edge.

This area was also been selected as a reptile relocation site to take lizards and snakes captured from areas to be developed as part of a site-wide mitigation plan.

The stumps of trees cut to create the scallops were treated with Eco-plugs to prevent regrowth and the brash from the trees laid around the edge of the scallops to provide hibernacula for reptiles. A circular track has been cut in grassland adjacent to the woodland edge to provide easy access to the scallops and a mixed sward favoured by the reptiles.

Regular cutting along the track will also prevent the spread of invasive cherry and bramble from encroaching onto the open grassland. The area will be added to the Scheme Design Report and Landscape and Ecological Management Plan so that routine maintenance can be carried out. It is also planned to have a rotational cutting regime on the open grassland.



*In June 2016, volunteers moved turves containing cowslip plants from grassland and transplanted them in the newly created habitat within Larkhill Garrison.*

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement.

### Further information

The first objective was to raise awareness of the plight of the butterfly and persuade the design team to avoid negative impacts on the original site. The main part of the site was then fenced off to prevent intrusion, with the habitat further enhanced by scrub clearance.

The second objective was to identify a suitable site where new habitat could be created, which would be untouched by proposed development and safeguarded for the future. This has been achieved through liaison with several concerned parties. Once the woodland had been chosen, three scallops were cut into invasive cherry growth to provide light, airy and sheltered glades. Two of these were cut by contractors and the third by Aspire Defence Capital Works volunteer staff. Mature cowslip plants were transplanted in October 2015 to give the best chance of survival and provide somewhere for the Duke of Burgundy butterfly to lay their eggs the following spring.

Further cowslip plants known to have eggs and likely to be lost during construction were removed from the original site in June 2016 and planted in the scallops. The new habitat has been visited regularly to check on the condition of the plants and remove any unwanted vegetation. A number of butterflies have taken up residence in the scallops, particularly large skippers with meadow brown, ringlet and marbled white all enjoying the grassy glades.



*In October 2015, mature cowslip plants were transplanted by Mike Lockwood (3rd from left) and other volunteers from ADCW*

### What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Mike Lockwood is a keen conservationist who supports local conservation groups and has a desire to save the Duke of Burgundy butterfly at Larkhill. This enhancement programme also provides an opportunity for the education and participation of staff from a construction team in a conservation initiative.