

Duke of Burgundy New Railway Home  
Saunderton Tunnel, Buckinghamshire  
**East West Rail Alliance and Butterfly Conservation**

**BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Client**

**Project overview**

A team from Network Rail and EWR Alliance, joined the Upper Thames Branch of wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation (BC) and Chilterns Rangers to help create a new habitat for one of the UK's rarest butterfly at a new site next to a Buckinghamshire railway line to improve the chance of a small and isolated colony surviving.

On Thursday 25 February 2016, the team volunteered their time to create new habitat for the Duke of Burgundy colony on a patch of land over the top of a tunnel on the London to Birmingham line.

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

The site of works was totally overgrown with scrub and unsuitable for the butterfly larvae. The small colony on land just next door is one of just three found in the

county but the site has recently gone up for sale. And the expensive management required meant that it's future was uncertain.

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

The East West Rail Alliance, as part of it's Sustainability Strategy, has committed to delivering a net gain in biodiversity from the project with a contribution to the regions strategic conservation aims.

To this end, the Project team has been reaching out to the conservation groups in the area, as part of this engagement the Butterfly conservation approached the Alliance with this idea.



*Duke of Burgundy*

### What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The project team of 24 spent one volunteer day cutting down the scrub and small trees that had colonised this small tunnel top. Care was taken to spare the rarer tree species and to leave a boundary of living scrub to act as a windbreak. The vegetation could not be burnt due to railway operational safety and so was stacked up to create a dense dead hedge surrounding the area. Simple but effective!

Our plan is to formalise this arrangement so that the butterfly conservation group will have continued access to this site for ongoing vegetation management and survey. The last thing we want is this great work to be undone once the East West Rail project is complete. We'll make this work part of our overall net gain strategy and make sure we show the gains in biodiversity here are counted as part of the bigger regional picture.



Twitter post

### How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement. This works is carried out in advance of any mitigation plans and totally additional to mitigation needed for East West Rail phase 2.

### Further information

The best news is that the site has already been used by Duke of Burgundy. We fully expected it to be two or perhaps three seasons, after the initial clearance, before the Duke discovered and used this extra habitat. So, you can imagine how pleased we are that the cowslips there are already showing the characteristic feeding damage that is left by the tiny Duke larvae creating windows through the leaves' softer parts.

This project outcome has potentially stabilised the decline of a threatened butterfly species (declined by 46% nationally until recent conservation effort helped it turn a corner, but still declining locally) and creating an area that can be utilised by various other invertebrate species that require warm sheltered clearings for their survival.

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

As Head of Environment and Sustainability for EWR Alliance, I have the full back of the leadership to make a real difference for Biodiversity in the region. We want to do things differently and want to work with nature conservation partners in a really meaningful way.

Lucie Anderton



*180 degree view of the area cleared at the end of the day*