

## DEVELOPER CONSERVES LAWLEY BUTTERFLIES

Residential developers at the Ironstone consortium in Lawley, near Telford, and Butterfly Conservation have joined forces to protect a rare species of butterfly in the West Midlands.

The dingy skipper (*erynnis tages*) is native to England and can often be found in abandoned quarries, woodland clearings and disused railway cuttings – areas which are often prime targets for new housing developers.

Having been advised of the presence of an important colony at their new development in Lawley, regeneration agency English Partnerships and the Ironstone Developer Group, comprising Barratt, George Wimpey and Persimmon Homes, quickly recognised the importance of its preservation and began work with the Butterfly Conservation.

An action plan was put in place with the aim of organising safe carriage of the existing butterfly colony from the construction site and the creation of suitable habitat elsewhere on the development.

A programme of “transporting” the colony then commenced to encourage the butterfly to colonise areas identified within the development where the balance of nutrients in the soil creates the perfect habitat for its continued survival.

The area around the Wrekin is well known for surroundings rich in flora and fauna, making it attractive for future residents. It is hoped that such a proactive project will encourage the species to naturally colonise sites in and around the housing development.

The Project Director of the Ironstone Developer Group, Guy Scott, commented: “We instantly recognised the need to protect the dingy skipper having discovered the vulnerability of the species, which has suffered more than a 30 percent decrease in its presence throughout the UK in recent years.

“Lawley and the surrounding area is of utmost importance to us and we are prepared to do everything in our power to conserve wildlife, minimising the effect that building this development will have on the locality.”

Dr Jenny Joy of Butterfly Conservation, based in Telford, has provided support in administering the project, having organised volunteers for collection and future care of the colony:

“Ironstone has set a prime example of how developers might join forces with conservationists, setting measures in place from the moment they began to plan the building programme.

“By supporting the survival of this colony of the dingy skipper, they have played a key role in protecting Shropshire wildlife and inspiring other developers to do the same.

“A regional action plan strategy is in place with the aim to encourage the conservation and growth of dingy skipper colonies. Ironstone has contributed to this strategy in an effective manner.”

A commitment to the long term management of colonised sites and the creation of new habitat patches mean that the Ironstone-Butterfly Conservation partnership is set to last well into the future.