



## Making Tracks

**Keystone Environmental has been appointed as joint Environmental Advisor with Entran for Grant Rail** following the production of a proposal that was presented to the Grant Rail board of Directors. Grant Rail operates from offices in London, Glasgow and Doncaster. Keystone/Entran are to provide national coverage and we have kicked off our role by presenting a seminar for project managers covering all areas of environmental compliance, with the emphasis on the construction of new rail infrastructure.

## Branching Out into Highways

Keystone Environmental entered into a consultancy agreement with InterRoute, a joint venture between Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Services Limited and Mott MacDonald Limited, during August 2008. We are contracted to provide Ecological Services (consultancy and contracting). Our role is to provide support to InterRoute's existing team of ecologists. We are looking forward to the new challenges this role will bring to the team.



## A Noble Endeavour

**Noble Chafer**, which is Nationally Rare and is the subject of a recording scheme run by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), has been found in an orchard proposed for residential development in Kent. The orchard is the only location in the south-east in which it has been found to date. **Keystone Environmental are working with the PTES, the client and Natural England to design a mitigation strategy that will involve the translocation of all orchard trees affected by development.** The PTES are keen for the translocation exercise to take place as it can be used to trial various mitigation techniques and the work will be pioneering. The methods used and the subsequent success (or not) of each of these are of international interest and so we will be working with the PTES to present the findings at national and international conferences.

## Construction Site Safety

As part of Keystone Environmental's commitment to Health and Safety all our ecologists and ecological contractors sat the **Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS)** test. Everybody passed and our ecologists now hold Construction Related Occupation Cards, whilst our contractors hold Operatives Cards.



### Keystone Environmental

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## Working the Dirt

**By the end of 2008, Keystone Environmental will have worked on eleven quarry projects in the south-west, south-east, midlands and north of England.** The projects were varied and required ecological input for: quarry extensions; Review of Minerals Policy (RoMP) for continuation of quarry works, restoration, residential and commercial development combined with restoration of former quarries; Environmental Impact Assessment; and the discharge of conditions. Our input has involved: Extended Phase I Habitat Surveys, Phase II habitat and species surveys, Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and the production of Ecology Chapters for Environmental Statements; production of a Biodiversity Action Plan and negotiation with County Ecologists and other regulators regarding the need for, and scope of, Phase II surveys and mitigation. We are looking forward to continuing our work in the minerals sector next year.



## A Practical Approach to Utilities

Keystone Environmental have been approached by Dalcour Maclaren, chartered surveyors on various pipeline schemes where they are acting for the utilities and infrastructure sector, to carry out ecological surveys and assessments for a range of utilities schemes throughout England. To date we have carried out feasibility surveys, where we survey and assess potential pipeline routes to determine which would have the least impact on ecology, as well as Phase I and various Phase II surveys including Great Crested Newt and reptile surveys for a proposed 5km pipeline. **Dalcour Maclaren have indicated that they are "impressed with the way we take a proportionate approach to the need for surveys and mitigation works - linking such requirements to the nature and scale of the construction project being undertaken and in this way avoiding unnecessary effort and cost whilst maintaining legal and policy compliance."**



## Survey Reminder

Whilst the frantic rush of the spring/summer survey season has now drawn to a close there remains numerous surveys that can be undertaken during autumn. This is the best time of year for carrying out preliminary bat surveys of trees because the leaves have dropped making holes and cavities more obvious. Autumn is also a time when Badger activity peaks for a short while before the winter, which combined with the die back of Bramble makes it much easier for ecologists to detect field signs. Many other surveys can also be undertaken at this time of year including wintering bird surveys, preliminary bat surveys of buildings, Habitat Suitability Index assessments of water bodies to determine suitability for Great Crested Newts, Phase I Habitat surveys, Ecological Risk Assessments, Otter and Barn Owl surveys.

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## Keystone Expands its Core Business Operations:

Keystone Ecological Contracting has been fully operational for over six years providing clients with a 'one stop shop' facility for all aspects of ecological contracting and wildlife mitigation schemes. **In recent months the company has successfully expanded its core business functions to include three distinct divisions**, each with a strong focus on sustainability and ecological sensitivity.

- **Ecological Contracting**
- **Aquatics**
- **Countryside Management**

To facilitate this expansion we have recently recruited a number of new key members to the team with expertise in habitat management, aquatics, arboriculture and tree surgery.

For further information please take a moment to visit [www.keyenv.co.uk](http://www.keyenv.co.uk)



## Bridging the Gap

**Keystone Ecological Contracting were commissioned by Ward Homes to implement the mitigation strategy for a European Protected Species licence at a housing development site in Maidstone** that included; 450m of hedge laying, planting of native hedge species, and the installation of a 'Dormouse Bridge' to nullify the impact of a gap created by an emergency access road leading into the development site.

The Dormouse bridge, designed and constructed by us, is one of only a few in the country. The tunnel design serves as an effective access crossing that encourages unrestricted Dormouse movement linking the gap between two hedgerows. Light gauge galvanised steel mesh tubes were linked together to form a tunnel which was suspended on tensioned parallel steel cables suspended between two supporting telegraph poles. The bridge is modular in design so that each of the mesh tube sections can be connected together for ease of installation. To make the tubes inviting as a crossing for Dormice, they were filled with a variety of native climbing plant species.

Dormouse bridges are increasingly being used to link habitats where hedgerows become fragmented by roads and development schemes. Habitat fragmentation is a particular problem for Dormice because of their reluctance to cross sections of open ground, and therefore mitigation works of this nature are essential to prevent localised populations of Dormice from becoming increasingly isolated.

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## Badger Housing Dilemma Successfully Averted!

A housing development in Heston, Cornwall earlier this year prompted a housing issue of a different kind for a population of Badgers residing in a sett within a field boundary, placing the unsuspecting Badgers just metres away from the rear doors of a row of proposed new semi-detached houses. An ever vigilant Taylor Wimpey conscious of their environmental responsibilities in preserving wildlife, sought expert ecological advice to address the problem.

EAD on behalf of Taylor Wimpey subsequently commissioned Keystone Ecological Contracting to devise a practical solution to resolve the Badgers' territorial land dispute. After exploring surrounding foraging territory, a site was identified approximately 0.5km away from the sett, which provided a suitable safe refuge in which to relocate the family of Badgers for many years to come.



We quickly set about designing a new artificial main sett and a further two smaller annexe setts that closely replicated the form and function of a natural sett, which would prove sufficiently inviting to tempt the Badgers away from their original home. On completion of the new setts, subsequent monitoring indicated that the Badger population had taken up residence within a matter of a few weeks. Using exclusion fencing and Badger gates we then commenced destruction of the original setts.

Following the successful relocation, Taylor Wimpey were able to continue with their building programme once more, safe in the knowledge that conservation interests and protection of local wildlife had been accomplished.

## Winning Ways with Wessex Water

**For the last several years Keystone Ecological Contracting has worked in partnership with Wessex Water as an approved ecological contractor to assist the organisation fulfil its ecological objectives in respect of essential pipeline upgrades across the south-west.**

During 2007 and 2008, we installed over 12km of newt fencing and a similar length of stock fencing to protect the newt fence from livestock at sites in Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset.

A senior ecologist from Wessex Water commented on the scheme saying "We were extremely pleased with the professional approach of Keystone's staff, and the quality of their workmanship during the several amphibian mitigation projects that they have done for us in recent years. As a company committed to ecological best practice, we are always on the lookout for specialist contractors who can deliver thoughtful and innovative solutions, and Oliver, John and the team certainly came up with the goods in this department".

## It's Official - Things are Going to get Wetter!

**Following the appointment of John Stone (Associate) who joined Keystone Ecological Contracting in 2007 the foundations have been laid to create an Aquatics Division that taps into John's specialist aquatic skills and expertise gained over 18 years of working within the industry.** Having qualified in both Environmental Science and Fisheries Sciences John went on to join the National Rivers Authority/ Environment Agency as Fisheries and Ecology

Technical Officer for seven years before founding Thamesia - a specialist freshwater environmental contracting/consultancy for a further seven years. In that time, he has acquired substantial expertise in delivering sustainable stillwater and riverine habitat creation, restoration and enhancement schemes, fisheries surveying and monitoring programmes, pond and lake construction projects, and aquatic weed control operations for the public, private and commercial sectors.

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