

## **KEN'S IDEA AND NETWORKING EARNS MAJOR ENVIRONMENT AWARD**

A small idea by Derbyshire Butterfly Recorder Ken Orpe that grew and grew into a major project – aimed at luring the Purple Emperor butterfly further north into Derbyshire – has earned a prestigious Green Apple International Environment Award.

Ken believed that planting Goat Willow saplings (or sallow whips) in key locations across south Derbyshire would provide numerous preferred egg-laying sites for the Purple Emperor species and a food source for the larvae as they emerge from hibernation to gorge on the sallow buds as they open in the spring.

Although it was gauged to take 2-3 years before the whips would be mature enough to serve as a firm foundation for this gloriously colourful species to get a grip on its new territory, a few early examples were found in the county this year, so the march north of “His Imperial Majesty” seems already to have begun.

Ken, on behalf of Butterfly Conservation East Midlands, took the initiative and engaged South Derbyshire District Council in a joint project to acquire 575 of the two-year-old sallow whips, which were then donated to dozens of local organisations, companies and private ventures that planted quantities on their carefully-selected sites.

Organisations involved include the National Forest, Severn Trent Water, the Woodland Trust, Derby College, St Modwen Homes, Toyota, Lubrizol and several regional councils in Derbyshire, plus a number of private landowners.

South Derbyshire District Council representatives Councillor Sean Bambrick and Kate Allies attended the award presentation at the Orangery at Kensington Palace on 18 November on behalf of the extended team.

This collaboration is unlikely to prove a ‘one-off’, however, and is viewed as a blueprint for improving the habitat of species that are likely to be spreading north due to climate change – and already a second initiative is looking at a similar project, led by Butterfly Conservation, to support the White Admiral butterfly.

Commenting on the award, Ken said: *“I am absolutely delighted that this small idea of mine has resulted in this fantastic environmental award: this is a fitting tribute to the hard work of Butterfly Conservation East Midlands branch, South Derbyshire District Council and the 30 landowners who allowed nearly 600 trees to be planted on their land.*

*“The fact that we recorded the first-ever sightings of this amazing butterfly in the county just a few months later was a huge reward, and an inspiration to keep doing what we do at Butterfly Conservation. Thank you to everyone involved for all of your help.”*