

# Living Countryside awards 2021



Promoting.  
Connecting.  
Inspiring.

The CPRE Bedfordshire Living Countryside Awards celebrate the people and projects that have a positive impact on Bedfordshire's rural environment and urban green spaces.

The 2021 Living Countryside Awards were, for the first time, digital – meaning more people than ever before can access them and are able to learn about all the projects via social media and our website.

CPRE Bedfordshire, the countryside charity, campaigns for a thriving countryside that benefits everyone. We are passionate about making the Bedfordshire countryside a better place for everyone to live, work and enjoy. The projects entered this year all have something special to offer and are even more impressive as they are surviving despite the challenges of Covid-19.

We are delighted to share the outcome of the awards with you and showcase these inspiring projects.





# Better Places To Live

## Winner:

### Abbey Fields Roundabout Group

The Abbey Fields Roundabout Group have replanted and taken on the care of all five roundabouts on the Abbey Fields estate in Elstow, planting shrubs, trees and flowers. The group has recently created a picnic area on the Abbey Fields Moor, with picnic tables, a planter box and trees providing a place for people to rest when walking on the Moor. During Covid the Group felt strongly that they made a difference by showing the community hope and care.

**Judges' highlight:** The way the community has engaged with the project and the different themes on the roundabout.

[www.facebook.com/groups/562849650802966](https://www.facebook.com/groups/562849650802966)



## Highly Commended:

### Linch Furlong, Community Orchard and Riverside

The project provides public open spaces which are managed to improve biodiversity. Three grassed areas have been transformed into environmentally friendly public spaces with wild flowers tailored to the differing soil type of each area. Long grass is mown and left to dry so that the seeds drop and are then collected but left on site in specific areas to provide habitats for invertebrates. The community orchard has been planted with heritage fruit trees which, as far as possible, are native to Bedfordshire. In 2020 several hundred pyramidal orchids flowered in Linch Furlong and they were seen for the first time in the Orchard and Riverside Meadow.

**Judges' highlight:** The attention to detail in the planting and management of the sites resulting in some stunning community spaces.

[www.oakleyvillage.co.uk/explore](http://www.oakleyvillage.co.uk/explore)

### Edible High Town

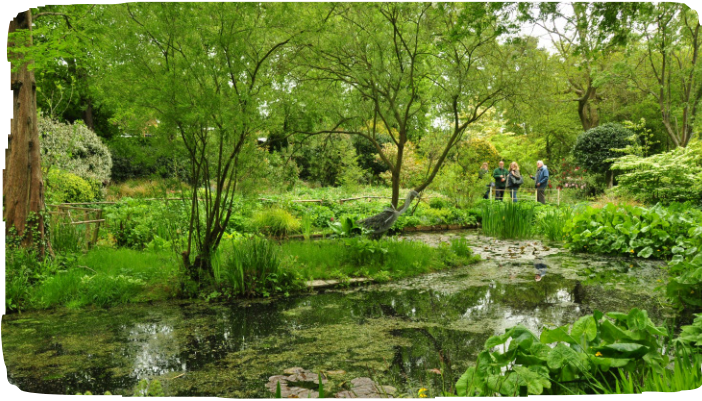
Edible High Town is a group of local residents who have helped transform six bits of disused land to create edible pocket gardens or raised beds around the High Town area of Luton. They help look after a community orchard in People's Park, grow vegetables and fruit in their community garden, have a pumpkin patch and work with local charity NOAH to support their gardening classes in the raised beds they manage. Edible High Town have taken pieces of land that have often been sites of fly-tipping or misuse and made them places that the community can work together and congregate to share growing skills and learn from each other. They have also helped support other local initiatives that are starting up around Luton and helped form the loose network of food growing projects across Luton called 'Edible Luton'.

**Judges' highlight:** The project continues to improve the local area and engage with a range of local people and projects.

[www.facebook.com/ediblehightown/](https://www.facebook.com/ediblehightown/)







## Commended:

### King's Arms Garden

The Gardens are a stunning oasis in the middle of Ampt Hill, a busy market town. The Friends Group manage the garden in ways that protect and enhance wildlife whilst providing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience, learn about and appreciate nature. As a secure and tranquil green space the gardens have many physical and mental health benefits for visitors and volunteers and provide social and cultural benefits associated with sense of place and belonging.

**Judges' highlight:** The tranquillity of the space and the range of plants hidden in the centre of a busy town.

[www.ampthilltowncouncil.org.uk/amenities/kings-arm-garden](http://www.ampthilltowncouncil.org.uk/amenities/kings-arm-garden)



### New Community Woodland – Houghton House

This new woodland has yet to be named and the Forest of Marston Vale will be working with local people and organisations to choose a name that reflects the site's social, historical and environmental significance. The first phase of planting started in January, and began a three year project that will involve residents, local people and community groups getting the opportunity to shape the Bedfordshire landscape and engage with their environment. The majority of planting will be done by people living in or connected to the area. The woodland will also be connected with local Rights of Way networks and will act as a buffer woodland for Kings Wood SSSI.

**Judges' highlight:** The way the planting complements the existing landscape and neighbouring ancient woodland.

[www.marstonvale.org/News/new-houghton-community-woodland-2021](http://www.marstonvale.org/News/new-houghton-community-woodland-2021)

## The Ampt Hill Buzz

"The Ampt Hill Buzz" project is managed by the Ampt Hill Climate Change Group which aims to turn selected close-mown turfed areas within the town into wildflower havens. Ten sites across Ampt Hill have been chosen with the aim of increasing local floral diversity and invertebrate populations by allowing the urban space to link existing supported habitats including County Wildlife Sites. Signage has been created and installed to tell residents more about the project. The group are also running a 'Be a Bee-Friendly Gardener' campaign, encouraging residents to provide more food and habitat for pollinators in their own gardens.

**Judges' highlight:** The attention to detail in the planning of the project and consultation with the community.

[www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk/projects/the-ampt-hill-buzz/](http://www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk/projects/the-ampt-hill-buzz/)



## Re-Phil's Zero Waste Shop

The zero waste shop is currently operating as a delivery service due to Covid restrictions. They buy food ingredients in bulk, dispense them in quantities according to customer request and deliver them in paper packaging, thereby reducing plastic waste. Customers can buy in smaller quantities than they can from supermarkets and other retailers, which makes the service accessible to more of the community and helps to minimise food waste. The shop also showcases a range of goods from local suppliers, including eggs, honey, freeze dried fruit, skincare products and knitted household goods such as soap savers and scrubbies.

**Judges' highlight:** Phil's commitment to developing the business and persuading others to embrace zero waste shopping.

[www.rephils.co.uk/](http://www.rephils.co.uk/)







## Connecting People to the countryside

### Winner:

#### Houghton Hall Kitchen Garden

The volunteer group brings together a host of varied members of the community. The produce and flowers that are sold provide healthy and sustainable options for the community, and all the profits from sales are ploughed back into the project. This is a holistic way to engage with nature and help with the issues of mental health, food poverty and healthy choices at the same time. The work that the volunteers produce is also a draw for the public, who often visit the park just to see the latest display.

The garden is managed using sustainable methods and uses recycled items where possible.

**Judges' highlight:** The commitment and creativity of the volunteers and staff that worked as a team to create this wonderful community garden.

[www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)



“Every project welcomed us like old friends, and it was an honour to hear their stories and share their passion.”





## Highly Commended:

### Penrose Roots

Penrose Roots connects with marginalized individuals who would not normally use nature, gardens or the great outdoors to improve their lives, working with the socially isolated, those with mental health, learning disabilities and the general public to create an inclusive community by gardening. They have a community garden and support and assist other growing initiatives across Luton. They recently assisted in planting a hedgerow in an area where they will be helping local residents make use of a space that locals have used as a fly tipping area for some years into a thriving community garden.

**Judges' highlight:** The commitment of everyone to make this space as inclusive as possible and encourage people to engage with nature in a positive way.

[www.facebook.com/PenroseRoots/](http://www.facebook.com/PenroseRoots/)



### Rural Revolution

Rural Revolution is about connecting people together in a community and connecting the community to the joys of the beautiful Bedfordshire countryside. Rural Revolution believes in making change through positive actions. From popular community litter picks to growing free plants for local residents and schools, Rural Revolution has something to offer for everyone. Already this year the team have cleared a huge amount of litter from the local area and have given away hundreds of free plants and trees.

**Judges' highlight:** The passion and enthusiasm of Keith and Mel to inspire everyone to connect with nature and share their love of the local area.

[www.rural-revolution.co.uk/](http://www.rural-revolution.co.uk/)

## Commended:

### Stopsley Community Garden

Based on a busy street, the garden opened after the first lockdown and aims to provide a great place for everyone in the community to come together, to share and learn new skills, whilst growing fresh produce to promote healthy living. The team believe that the garden will provide a multitude of therapeutic and well-being benefits to help improve the mental health for all in the local community. The community garden is a place where visitors of the garden can find out about local initiatives, take part in courses, meet others or just find a quiet space.

**Judges' highlight:** The huge amount that has been achieved in the last year to provide a welcoming and inclusive space for the community to share.

[www.facebook.com/Stopsleycommunitygarden/](http://www.facebook.com/Stopsleycommunitygarden/)



### Treewell Community Farm

Treewell was a dilapidated chicken farm when Richard and Meghan bought it nearly two years ago. The 30 vegetable patches were disused and a beautiful Victorian greenhouse was in a state of disrepair. The Community Farm now has over 30 volunteers who have transformed the land and grow their own vegetables for free. The project has provided an excellent opportunity for people struggling with mental health issues or for those who don't have gardens.

**Judges' highlights:** The commitment to develop the farm and involve the local community in different ways.

[www.treewellfarm.com/community-farm](http://www.treewellfarm.com/community-farm)







## Made in Bedfordshire

### Winner:

#### Riverside Dairy

This family farm sits along the banks of the River Great Ouse as it meanders through the beautiful Bedfordshire countryside. They use the fresh milk from their free range, pasture fed herd of cows to make artisan ice-creams. The herd of cross-bred Jerseys and Friesians produces high quality milk which is just perfect for making ice-cream. Customers not only love the taste of the ice cream, but love the fact they can see the cows, and that the ice cream has been made on-site, becoming far more aware of food provenance, food miles and standards.

**Judges' highlight:** The shift to a more sustainable way of farming – and the amazing ice cream!

[www.riversidedairy.co.uk/](http://www.riversidedairy.co.uk/)



## Highly Commended:

### The Pod

Local wood sculptor, Ian Freemantle, has created a bespoke climbing area, pod, and chill-out zone for older children. Timbers from trees in the Park, that have had to be felled, were used to create the structure. The sculpture was inspired by local youngsters who came up with the initial idea and worked with Ian to develop the design and test the structure during the construction phase.

**Judges' highlight:** The involvement of young people and the use of timber from the park.

[www.amphilltowncouncil.org.uk/park](http://www.amphilltowncouncil.org.uk/park)



### Wooden Hill Coffee

Wooden Hill Coffee Company set up a roastery just outside Millbrook, which since Covid has been turned into a takeaway cafe. Being a mile from Amphill, they have seen many people using the opportunity to walk up to the roastery, get some exercise, grab a coffee and some much needed normality during these stressful times. They roast Fairtrade Coffee, packed in compostable bags, with labels made of paper impregnated with wild flower seeds

“These projects, large or small, in countryside or urban settings, are all inspirational.”





to plant. They have also started to distribute coffee to customers in reusable plastic tubs, saving 300 bags per week and plant around 150 trees each year at the Forest of Marston Vale.

**Judges' highlight:** The sustainable business model and the way they adapted during Covid-19 to support the local community.

[www.woodenhillcoffee.co.uk](http://www.woodenhillcoffee.co.uk)

### Commended:

#### Hay Lane Flowers

Hay Lane Flowers are cut flower growers, growing on a three acre site in Stagsden. They produce a wide range of seasonal cut flowers for the wholesale and retail trade. Sustainable production techniques are a priority and they work with nature to produce high quality flowers without air miles, needless chemical usage and plastic



packaging. They also work closely with the community, including delivering primary school sessions during well-being weeks and with the Kings Arms Project pathways to employment team, giving talks and providing work placements.

**Judges' highlight:** Working with nature to produce local flowers that supply local outlets without any air miles. Willingness to share knowledge and supporting other producers.

[www.haylaneflowers.com](http://www.haylaneflowers.com)

#### Woburn Country Food

Based at their farm in Haynes, Woburn Country Foods have developed a unique cure to provide delicious nitrate free bacon and gammon. With health and well-being at the forefront of people's minds, they have developed a nitrate and E number free bacon and gammon that has the same great flavour as their traditional cured products. They have just begun the roll out to their four retail outlets and are ready to supply Bedfordshire farm shops as well as pubs and restaurants when businesses reopen after lockdown.

**Judges' highlight:** Seeing a local business considering health and well-being when developing new products.

[www.woburncountryfoods.com/](http://www.woburncountryfoods.com/)



#### Aragon Lacemakers

Aragon lacemakers was formed in 1977. The aim of the group is to 'Keep Lacemaking Alive' by promoting this local, traditional craft. Aragon lace members regularly undertake demonstrations at The Higgins, Hobbycraft, Steam Fairs and in Bedford town centre. This gave them the opportunity to show case not only the specific Bedfordshire laces but all other bobbins laces. Everyone is encouraged to 'have a go' and make a lace snake. Each year Aragon members select a charity to support and raise money through the sale of goods, raffle and the annual Lace Day open to lace makers across the country.

**Judges' highlight:** The passion to keep this traditional Bedfordshire craft alive and encourage people of all ages to try it.

[www.aragonlacemakersbeds.wordpress.com/](http://www.aragonlacemakersbeds.wordpress.com/)







## Bedfordshire Choice Award

A new award for 2021 voted for by the people of Bedfordshire. There were over 3,000 votes!

### Winner:

Treewell Community Farm

### Highly Commended:

Stopsley Community Garden



## Special Thanks

The Living Countryside Awards would not have been possible without the following support:-

Wixamtree Trust

CPRE Strategic Collaboration Fund

CPRE Bedfordshire Vounteers, Trustees and Staff

The Living Countryside Awards Judges

Barry Halton, Official Photographer to the Living Countryside Awards.

“It has been heart-warming to see that despite the challenge of the past 16 months, people across Bedfordshire have remained committed to promoting our countryside and sharing it with the community.”

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The countryside charity  
Bedfordshire