



LIVING COUNTRYSIDE AWARDS 2018

Our awards celebrate and promote the people and projects that are making a positive impact in our county. We are delighted to support projects which bring health, enjoyment and environmental benefits to our communities now and in the future.

It is our pleasure to have the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Helen Nellis and the Deputy Mayor of Luton, Cllr Mark Rivers attending as guests for our awards evening.



Promoting and protecting the countryside
and green spaces of Bedfordshire

YOUNG PEOPLE

Recognising projects by or for young people which encourage engagement with the natural world.



LOCAL FOOD AND DRINK

Recognising excellence in local produce and in production methods that are environmentally sensitive.



Bedford Modern Junior School Eco Club

Bedford Modern's Eco Club have been busy planting 3 trees every year in their school orchard, making bird boxes and bird feeders as well as hedgehog houses; using recycled materials as much as possible.

They have completed litter surveys of the school and planted 161 tomato plants, nurturing the seeds and then selling on the young plants to generate money for the eco club.

Pupils have also grown their own sunflowers using newspaper plant pots at school, with a competition to grow the tallest sunflower.



Shelton Lower School – Forest School

Forest school provides an opportunity for children of all age ranges at the school to explore and experience the natural world in all seasons and weathers. This environment encourages children to grow in confidence.

Typical tasks include: den building, whittling, making bows and arrows, fire lighting, nature walks and safe use of tools such as knives. The use of quiet spots allows children to find their own spaces and observe small changes in the natural world around them. Scrapbooks are used to keep a photographic record of the activities.



Young Falconers – Wilstead

The Young Falconers' Club is aimed at children between 6-16 years old. Many go on to be young leaders and inspire the next generation. The young people learn handling and bird care skills as well as building up an impressive knowledge about the birds themselves. The wider programme looks at other environmental and conservation issues – the young people choose charities to support and help them through fundraising and practical activities. There is a summer camp every year. Young people on the scheme grow in confidence and understanding.



Bevistan Dairy

Looking to diversify, Bevistan Dairy began producing sheep's milk, cheese (smoked and unsmoked) and yoghurt in 2015. All the products are produced on their farm in Carlton. Using sheep's milk is still a relatively new idea so they are tapping into a new market, using the fact that it is lactose free as a strong selling point. Bevistan Dairy has been inventive and practical in their development of the products and processes. They have developed a strong brand image which makes the link to the farm very clear. Their products are sold in local shops, farmers' markets, restaurants and direct to the public.



Companions Real Bread (CRB) not for profit bakery

Companions' Bakery belongs to the Real Bread Campaign, which works to improve the state of the nation's bread. The bakery was set up with a mission to support ex-offenders to resettle effectively into our local communities and not re-offend, by making 'honest bread', teaching skills that will provide a way into the jobs' market.

The bread is described as 'Real' because it is made using just organic flour, salt, sourdough 'yeast' and water (nothing hidden). The flour is sourced from Stotfold Mill in Bedfordshire and also from further afield. The enterprise has grown in popularity through word of mouth and social media and is a not for profit enterprise promoting health and wellbeing.



Mrs Middleton's Salad Dressings

Mrs Middleton's have collaborated with Phil Fanning of Paris House restaurant in Woburn to produce two salad dressings, using their award-winning rapeseed oil.

The first is a Classic Vinaigrette which combines simple ingredients to create a smooth and tangy dressing; the second is inspired by Whizz and Phil's love of Japanese food and this Asian Dressing brings a zingy and fresh twist of flavours to your plate.

Phil was welcomed to the farm to see what is grown and to discuss how it links in with the ingredients that he uses. This is so important to both parties as they both believe it is crucial that people know where their food comes from.

This is a strong working relationship between two local and successful food-based companies.



Greensand Trust – Young Rangers

A group of Youth Rangers completed a six month conservation programme at Houghton Hall Park in Houghton Regis. Inspiring and encouraging young people to learn new skills, gain valuable work experience while having fun and making a difference to the park. The varied work included coppicing, surveying, building and erecting bird boxes, clearing vegetation and promoting the park and its new facilities. Each young volunteer attained a discovery level John Muir Award in recognition of their work.



The Vale Academy

The Vale Academy believes that outside learning enables children to take measured risks and grow in confidence and self-esteem.

The Vale Academy has embedded outdoor learning across the whole curriculum – from science to literacy and much more. Different learning zones have been created within the grounds. The first was the bug hotel, set within the mini-beast zone. The hotel was made with 100% recycled materials found around the academy. There is a forest school area where practical and creative skills can be developed, an area for growing fruit and vegetables, a school gardening club. The school has run family tree planting sessions on site to involve the wider community. PHSE and wellbeing are well integrated to help children flourish and grow in confidence.



Black Cat Farm Shop

The Black Cat Farm Shop specialises in foods grown and produced locally. Over 80% of the produce is grown or produced in Bedfordshire.

Also on site is a kitchen area where jams, chutneys and pickles are made using local produce for sale in the shop.

Produce is labelled up showing where it is grown so shoppers can make an informed choice as to the foods that they buy. The shop stocks fresh milk from a local dairy and acts as a drop off point for local newspapers which are no longer delivered to the nearby villages.



Morgan Pell Meats

Beef and lamb are all home grown on grassland around North Bedfordshire often using parkland grazing attached to some of our great historic houses notably Turvey and Melchbourne. Around their home base in Wilden they grow grass in a predominantly arable area, and are proud of their meadows and biodiversity; all fields being surrounded by vibrant hedges.

From a mobile shop they sell their own and other local meat under the strap line of "Grown in Bedfordshire". Morgan Pell Meats also sell from a farm side layby every Friday as well as at farmers markets. In addition to their own meat they have added pork from a neighbour, free range chickens from Cardington, local eggs, honey, milk and cream from Carlton and bacon from Woburn Country Foods.



Wooden Hill Coffee Company

Wooden Hill Coffee Company started in 2015. The idea was to have a coffee company that is local, for local business and can in some way benefit the environment. The beans are roasted in Leighton Buzzard and sold to local cafes and in local shops.

Wooden Hill uses only Fairtrade coffee and uses compostable bags to preserve the coffee, which are then delivered in reusable wooden crates. Retail bags of coffee, available in local farm shops and delis have paper labels on them which are embedded with wild flower seeds. People can plant the compostable bags, with the used coffee grounds and see wild flowers grow, encouraging bees and butterflies.

A tree is planted for every 100kgs of coffee sold which demonstrates this company's commitment to the environment.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Recognising projects which use the local environment to promote mental and physical health.



Dunstable Men in Sheds

Sheds are about meeting like-minded people and having someone to share your worries with. They are about having fun, sharing skills and knowledge with like-minded people and gaining a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. As a by-product of all of that they reduce isolation and feelings of loneliness, they allow men to deal with mental health challenges more easily and remain independent, they rebuild communities and in many cases, they save men's lives. Dunstable Men in Sheds work on projects which give something back to the community – bird boxes for schools, kits for dementia groups, raised beds for community gardens. They use donated tools and recycled materials and the sawdust produced is given to allotments for composting.



Penrose Roots

Penrose Roots was set up to offer support for over 400 vulnerable individuals in Luton.

The area had previously been an allotment site many years ago and had sat empty and overgrown for many years.

It is now open 2 days per week with 15 community volunteers, many of whom suffer with mental health, physical health or learning disabilities. Everyone is made to feel welcome, to enjoy gardening or just to be closer to nature.

The project now includes Roots to Success which is based at Stockwood Park. Volunteers grow flowers and sell them in Stockwood to raise an income for Penrose Roots helping them with the next step into employment.



Mile Road Allotments

With over 300 plots, Mile Road allotments aims are to protect, promote and preserve the statutory allotment site at Mile Road, Bedford. This is a diverse community with members from a variety of different cultures, backgrounds and ages. The allotments are open to the public each year in May for an Annual Plant sale, National allotment week in August and members' annual show and open day in September enabling the local community to access the site and learn about food growing, gardening and recycling. Skills and knowledge are shared for the benefit of the community. In addition there are a number of members' events held throughout the year.



Walk for Health

Walk 4 Health Bedfordshire (W4H) is a project managed by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, and has been co-ordinating health walks throughout Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough for 15 years, and there are currently 38 distinct walk programmes, most of which take place weekly.

The wide range of benefits that these walks provide includes helping people physical and mental wellbeing along with social interaction.

The walks usually last around an hour. At the end of the walks leaders encourage walkers to socialise.

In 2017 W4H ran well over 1,300 health walks with a total of approximately 30,000 'people walks'.

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SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE

Recognising enterprises that bring benefits to the local economy, environment and community.



The Barn, Cardington

The Barn Cardington is a community café, shop, deli, butchery and bakery on the site of the old Summerhill Farm Shop in Cardington run by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) in partnership with gourmet butcher Woburn Country Foods, it opened in November 2017.

The aims of the Barn are to support local producers and suppliers, and thereby the wider rural economy. Give the local community access to high quality produce. Provide a friendly local community hub and to provide convenient employment and volunteering opportunities for local people.



Chris Dodson Thatching

Chris is passionate about his craft and keeping the skills involved in thatching alive. He uses traditional Bedfordshire thatching styles that are sympathetic to other properties in the village – in this case Old Warden – and he works within guidelines from Historic England. Old thatching materials are recycled. New straw comes from Bedfordshire and is harvested by the Ouse Valley Vintage Tractor Group.

Striving to meet the best possible standards, combining traditional thatching with a modern eye for longevity to ensure that customers get true value for money.

BIODIVERSITY & LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT

Recognising initiatives that have enhanced the landscape and biodiversity of an area



Chute Farm

In 2015 the National Trust reviewed the use of its land holdings at Dunstable & Whipsnade Downs, identifying that there was considerable formal recreation pressure on the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), isolated areas of woodland and areas of low quality arable land.

Over 2,200 trees and shrub were planted to link the fragmented woodland, native species including Oak, Field Maple, Spindle, Dogwood and Crab Apple were planted.

Over 130 different insects and 64 plant species were recorded after the first full season.

At the start of the third season Skylarks are nesting in the fields and butterflies such as Green Hairstreak are regularly found. 5km running routes have been created and the area is now used more widely, including family activities for National Meadows Day.

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BIODIVERSITY & LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT



Colmworth Country Park

Colmworth Country Park was purchased on behalf of the village in 2008. It had been used as arable land until that time. Trees were planted, a pond created and wildflower meadows sown.

The wildflower meadow has been seeded with Yellow Rattle to parasitise the grass and encourage wild flowers. The meadow is now remarkably diverse.

The pond was enlarged and a bridge installed, it looks open and light, with a diverse range of marginal plants. Birds can be admired from a bird hide.

Bird boxes, owl boxes and bug hotels were created which have proved very successful and a barn owl raised chicks in one of the boxes in 2017.



Friends of Bedford Cemetery

Bedford Cemetery has been described as "one of the most historic, scenic and peaceful places ever to be in." It has been argued that the combination of the Cemetery and the Park represents one of the finest urban treescapes in Britain. Overall, it comprises 55 acres of beautiful, unspoilt green landscape that is open for everyone to enjoy, just a short distance from the town centre.

The Friends of Bedford Cemetery help save it from becoming an overgrown jungle, with vandalism and misuse. A dedicated group of volunteers work hard tending the cemetery and orchard as well as organising walks around the site.



Houghton Hall Park

Houghton Hall Park has undergone a substantial transformation thanks to funding from Heritage Lottery Funding and Big Lottery under the 'Parks for People' scheme. Located in the urban heart of Houghton Regis, there is approximately 42 acres of parkland and woodland, providing outdoor space for local community group, schools and families. The kitchen and formal gardens have been restored to reflect the park's heritage. Fruit and vegetables in the kitchen garden for use in the café and for community events such as Halloween pumpkin carving.



Bletsoe Lady Smockers

Bletsoe's Lady Smockers (so called after the first wild flower found in the field) set up to develop and manage a long term plan for Bletsoe playing field for the entire village to enjoy while maximizing habitat for bees, butterflies, birds, wildflowers and other wildlife.

A dedicated group, the Smockers organise community and educational events as well as undertaking other work such as drainage, pond clearance and tree felling, all supported by the Wildlife Trust.



Sharnbrook Castle Close

This wildlife and heritage site provides a haven of peace and quiet in a busy village. There are a variety of habitats including woodland, grassland and a wetter meadow. The site is managed by a group of active volunteers who clear undergrowth, manage trees, repair bird boxes and undertake regular plant and wildlife surveys.

A stag beetle colony has recently been discovered and a boardwalk with information boards added. Also included in the site is a Scheduled Monument comprising a circular moat and island.



Tiddenfoot Water Park

Over the last few years, the Friends of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park (volunteers) have created the Foragers Way, planted new hedges and 'laid' existing hedges. This latter was completed under expert supervision and used traditional methods, including 'pleaching' and 'gapping up'.

They have also reclaimed a 'lost' footpath after 25 years of neglect, begun the protection of lowland acid grassland by erecting hurdles and installed a 'Sand Martin refuge' and a bird hide. Encouraging and engaging with local groups, the Friends of Tiddenfoot provide a wealth of opportunity for people to relax, learn and enjoy this waterside park. A quiz has been developed for Brownies and Rainbows which is also offered to local schools.



Waypost Wood

The Forest of Marston Vale, a charity, set up over 20 years ago to regenerate the local area by planting trees has created a new community woodland in Cranfield.

Between 2017 and 2018, a 17-acre site was planted with the help of the local community. Over 10,000 native broadleaved trees have been planted, with around 2000 people attending planting days.

The woodland will be a fantastic resource for local people to enjoy – it's free for everybody to visit, and an accessible footpath has been created to enable walking or cycling around the site. Around 20% will be left as open space to allow community activities such as bug hunts to take place.

GREENING URBAN SPACES

Recognising initiatives which seek to enhance our urban spaces.



Colmworth Gardening Club

The Colmworth Triangle at the junction between Church Road and Church Lane was looking overgrown and unsightly. A dedicated group of volunteers in the form of Colmworth Gardening Club started a project to renovate it in 2012. Paths were laid and bulbs planted. Next beds were planted and a tree bench added. The pine tree now takes centre stage adorned with Christmas lights which become a popular annual gathering each December.

The Triangle has become a delightful, attractive garden at the centre of the village. It is well used and much loved.



Edible High Town

A local community organisation whose goal it is to transform unused green spaces across High Town, Luton into attractive and delicious edible plots. So far two large raised beds have been created, one small one and a number of others are cleared ready for planting. Local people are encouraged to pick the fruit and vegetables whenever they wish.

Weekly gardening sessions are open for anyone to come along and help. In addition, monthly community gardening days are held where locals get together to dig over unused plots and put in herbs, fruit and veg. These days are usually followed by a social get together.



Incredible Edibles

With the help of Central Bedfordshire and Dunstable Town Council and local businesses, a team of 8 volunteers have turned a disused area on the junction of Katherine Drive and Duncombe Drive Dunstable into a thriving community garden.

Growing a variety of vegetables, fruit and herbs, the garden also provides a seating area with a water feature. Rain water is harvested from a flat roof over a shop and with 8 wicker raised beds. There are monthly work sessions where the local community is invited to come and help maintain the garden, harvest the food and enjoy the camaraderie that this social gathering creates.



Queens Park Community Orchard

Queen's Park community Orchard (QPCO) is a legacy of Faith Woodlands Communities (FWC). The former project aimed to help people from all backgrounds to enjoy and learn more about nature and the countryside. It emphasises the positive benefits of shared engagement with the community's own orchard, to enhance the well-being and cohesion of all who live and work within this diverse community. By providing self-support from within the community itself, QPCO tackles many social challenges at grassroots' level, such as social deprivation, prejudice, racism, cultural ignorance and isolation. Many residents were unaware of the potential for traditional cheap healthy and fresh home grown UK produce because of very different dietary and culinary experiences.

Events are organised around the orchard with the local schools linking nature and Religious Education. Summer events are also held at the orchard.



Regent Street/ Miles Avenue Community Garden

A small garden located between two residential streets, originally earmarked for possible further residential development. In 2014 a group of local residents approached the council with a proposal to make it a permanent wildlife friendly community garden. A local primary school are now involved and a small but enthusiastic team of local residents is working hard to develop the site.



Lewsey Park

Lewsey Park is a QE II Playing Field Site and the Luton Borough Council Parks Service is working towards achieving a Green Flag Award at the site by 2020. Central to this are projects to increase biodiversity at the site through developing the community woodland and improvements to the river.

Since 2015, The Conservation Volunteers in association with Bedford Borough Council have been planting native tree species with local volunteers including the TCV Weekday Conservation Team, Princes Trust, Rotary Club and Signposts Luton.

So far 4895 trees have been planted here of a mix of native species suitable for the area

Future plans are to continue with planting, and work to control soft vegetation around saplings to provide best conditions for their growth.



Groundwork East

Groundwork East run a number of projects across Luton and Bedfordshire. Entered this year were schemes aimed at helping people develop landscaping and gardening skills; an inter schools growing competition and a Junior River Warden scheme monitoring pollution in the River Lea. Also entered was Community Connections, a community health hub in Luton run in conjunction with the Red Cross to support refugees. Residents can learn about the benefits of growing and eating their own fruit and vegetables.

Groundwork East have entered a number of projects under various categories.

ABOUT US

Campaign to Protect Rural England is a national charity that exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

We have 60,000 supporters, a branch in every county, eight regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in London. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning.

Our Patron is Her Majesty the Queen. Our President is Emma Bridgewater.

Bedfordshire Matters is the biannual magazine of Bedfordshire's CPRE branch. CPRE Bedfordshire is a local independent charity who works to protect and promote the countryside and urban green spaces of Bedfordshire.



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