



Elizabeth Curtis Riding Centre, Bromham

The 'Shelter Plus' programme carried out by the riding school for the disabled involved the planting of two stands of trees to provide shade in summer and shelter in winter for the school's ponies and assist drainage on the sloping paddock. A wide variety of native species have been set, using volunteer finance and labour.



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
BEDFORDSHIRE

LIVING COUNTRYSIDE AWARDS 2009

This CPRE Bedfordshire Awards scheme aims to recognise landowners, individuals and commercial users of the land who are making special efforts to preserve and enhance the visual appearance and biodiversity of Bedfordshire. Some of them receive little appreciation for their efforts to keep our landscape in good order for future generations. The Awards seek to redress this and celebrate their achievements. These are some of the best entries....

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

Odell Churchyard

The churchyard of All Saints' Church is being actively managed to encourage biodiversity and wildlife, whilst also being kept neat for local residents and visitors to the church. Community volunteers carry out most of the work, which is a careful blend of conservation and maintenance, guided by sound environmental principles. An 'adopt-a-grave' scheme means ancient graves are kept tidy, while other areas are left purely for wildflowers.



LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT



Stratton Park Balancing Pond, Biggleswade

The creation of a lake receiving drainage water from a nearby industrial estate, which has already become a magnet for wading birds. The project also required improvement to its surrounding habitat, and the planting of some 3500 native species of trees, largely financed by a local friends group and managed by a tenant farmer.



Luton Hoo Walled Garden

A 4.8 acre 18th century walled garden, neglected for many years, is being returned to productivity by a group of 130 enthusiastic volunteers. It features extensive flower and vegetable beds, with mature fruit trees. A series of magnificent glass houses await restoration, which has been carried out elsewhere in the garden with meticulous research and skilled craftsmanship. The project has great commercial potential and offers many opportunities for community involvement.

Harrold-Odell Country Park Community Orchard

The reclamation of a neglected piece of land close to, but separate from, the popular Harrold Odell Country Park, by park staff and the Friends of the Park. The land has been carefully cleared, ready for the planting of traditional British fruit species, whilst saving some specimen trees on the previously overgrown site.



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Yelnow Organic Farm, Odell

An authentic organic farm employing traditional methods of agriculture and livestock management in a commercially sustainable manner. It also exhibits many examples of habitat improvement in ponds, existing woodland and new plantations. In addition, traditional crafts such as the production of willow hurdles and turned wood are taught to young people on residential visits.



Stotfold Mill Meadows Nature Reserve

A stretch of meadows and river bank adjacent to Stotfold Mill which has been steadily improved by local volunteers and is self-financing. The work carried out includes new ponds, hedging, an osier bed and an otter holt. This well planned project features biodiversity, environmental protection and community access.



Henlow Walks and Booklet

The existing network of walks around Henlow has been expanded by the installation of a new footbridge across a brook. These walks are published in an informative and well presented booklet which was produced for residents and visitors. The new trails have been brought into use with assistance from local farmers and the Town Council, providing increased access to the local countryside for all.

The Little Green Pond, Caddington

The previously neglected village pond has been cleaned out and its surroundings improved by careful management of the existing trees and additional planting of native and decorative species. It has now become a pleasant village amenity, maintained with close support from local schools and provides a useful wetland habitat with information boards for visitors.



COUNTRYSIDE CRAFT



The Nude Ewe Conservation Wools Project

The project incorporates the keeping of heritage breeds of sheep on the Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve north of Luton and the processing of their fleeces into high quality knitting wools. It is an imaginative blend of land management, biodiversity, conservation and commercial interests and is self financing and sustainable.



Songs and Plovers, Barton Hill Farm

A demonstration farm on the chalk soils of the Chilterns where attention has been given to agricultural practices which encourage wildflowers and wildlife. Broad field margins and woodlands are designed to attract birds. The farm encourages visitors and a strong educational theme demonstrates that commercial farming and environmental protection can be compatible.

Bedfordshire Beekeepers Association

This long-established organisation has some 300 members in the county caring for bees which are so crucial to the preservation of rural landscapes and farming activities. It has a strong educational ethic, with training and membership open to all, and successfully combines tradition, commerce and sustainability.



LEISURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE LANDSCAPE

Wild Britain Hedgehog Play Trail, Renhold

The Hedgehog Play Trail at 'Wild Britain' is an educational adventure which brings out the importance of biodiversity and encourages respect for wildlife. The informative panels and entertaining features about Urchin the hedgehog are carefully blended into a variety of habitats on the route and enthuse youngsters about the countryside.



John O'Gaunt Golf Club Nest Boxes, Sutton

A project created by a groundsman at the golf club, who has a keen interest in encouraging birds to breed in the trees and other locations on the course. A wide variety of species are catered for, using suitably different designs of nesting box. Some 110 boxes have been built and installed to date. Fledgling birds are counted and ringed and careful records demonstrate that birth rates are steadily increasing.