

LOVE Northumberland awards 2013



Rewarding community achievement

2013 has seen the third year of a set of awards which aims to mark out projects, organisations and individuals which are enriching our wonderful county.

This year entries were invited for projects that would fit into one or more of the following categories:

- Best **new project** (projects that are less than one year old)
- Best **ongoing project** (projects where you can show year on year improvements)
- Best **'urban' project** (projects or work that happens in places where people live)
- Best **coast or countryside project** (projects that happen in more rural areas, where less people live)
- Best **young people's project** (where most of the participants are aged 12 -25)
- Best **children's project** (where most of the participants are aged 11 and under)

All entries were considered and a shortlist of applicants was invited along to, the Alnwick Garden on Wednesday July 10, to be presented with prizes presented by Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland. The awards were hosted by Carol Malia from BBC Look North.

Winning entries, received a £250 prize and runner-up projects a £100 prize, with the money to be spent on something that will benefit the project or work.



Main sponsor of the awards was the Banks Group and the Co-operative Community Fund in the North East also provided their support for the third year running. Blyth McDonalds staff sponsored one of the categories – through the local environmental initiatives they are undertaking in the town as part of their Planet Champions programme.

A new feature of the awards event this year was the presentation to the winners and runners-up in the Northumberland Schools Recycling Green Points Challenge – a new competition being run with schools by the council's waste management team.

Click on the links below to see the winners and runners up.

[Best new project](#)

Winner: Wylam Community Orchard Biodiversity Group - Wylam First School



The group have been together for just over one year and range between 8 to 75 years.

A wildflower meadow was created at Wylam First School and the main aim of this meadow is to benefit the community and wildlife.

They hold regular events to encourage people to visit the site, such as an open day and a popular Halloween Party. Their Blossom Picnic in April attracted 51% visitors and they give guided tours of the site at these events.

Runner up: Friends of Ridley Park



A group of volunteers ranging from 11 to 71 years old and work in partnership to bring volunteers, business and community groups together to improve Blyth's largest and oldest park whilst tackling disadvantage and anti-social behaviour.

They are currently working on bringing a derelict former bowls pavilion back into use as a community facility and have so far created a woodland planting area, a wildlife meadow, organised a winter family festival and supported a summer family day raising money to reinvest back into the park.

Highly commended: Tyne Rivers Trust - Haltwhistle River Watch Group, Haltwhistle Burn

This group of 25 volunteers are aged from 11 to 71 years and have only been running for five months.

They formed to protect and promote the local burn and have carried out practical tasks on the river bank, improving habitat and reducing pollution, and they also promote their work to the wider public and with the local schools.

Best urban project

Winner: Old Bakehouse Millennium Green Trust - Old Bakehouse Millennium Green, Morpeth



A team of 40 volunteers of local residents have created what was previously wasteland into the Millennium Green, a beautiful garden which provides a peaceful haven for people and wildlife.

The Trustees have raised funds to develop and maintain the garden but they are definitely a “hands-on” group, regularly putting on events to attract people to the Green and have encouraged schools and young people’s groups to get involved. Local St Robert’s School presents “Carols in the Green” at Christmas.

Runner up: Hexham-in-Bloom Voluntary Group



A group of 25 volunteers whose ages range from five to around 90.

A dedicated group of volunteers, who over the last five years have successfully raised money and attracted donations and been able to develop a significant reserve fund which will support their continued work including facilitating, co-ordinating and organising Hexham’s entry into Northumbria in Bloom.

The floral displays and overall appearance of the town is a huge benefit for residents and visitors.

Highly commended: Newbiggin-in-Bloom Association - Newbiggin Memorial Park and Quay Wall Planters

This small group of very dedicated people have taken on the task of planting and maintaining the Memorial Park in Newbiggin.

They have installed planters in the Town centre which has brought a profusion of colour to this popular area in the town and work hard to recruit new volunteers and have organised fundraising events with children from the Grace Darling School Campus who have been involved in garden schemes and fruit tree planting.

[Best coast or countryside project](#)

Winner: Friends of Holywell Dene



This is a group of 12 volunteers aged between 30 and 80 years who meet up weekly on a Tuesday morning.

The group has recently taken on new projects such as installing an otter holt, constructed a boardwalk to by-pass a natural spring, constructed a new stile and built a bridge over a deep gully.

They organise open events ranging from family fun-days and guides walks to coffee mornings for people of all ages. Local schools have planted trees and they recently organised a tree planting session with the local brownies.

Runner up: Lowick-in-Bloom - Way marked walk



The team of over 20 volunteers have been working together for the past five years.

The way marked walk is their latest project which will provide a physical link between the village and the community orchard in which they want to encourage the community and visitors to explore the local environment and learn more about the natural and historical heritage of the area.

Highly commended: Morpeth & District Red Squirrels

This group of volunteers was set up to protect and preserve native red squirrels in the local area.

Residents in outlying villages have recently become involved and the group have supported staff at Woodhorn to conserve their colony of reds and well as liaising with staff at Wallington to protect their red squirrels.

The Remembering Flodden Project - The Smallest Visitor Centre in the World

Group of volunteers have worked together since 2003 to promote the site of the Battle of Flodden as a heritage and tourist attraction.

The group came up with an inspirational idea to celebrate the 500th Anniversary and came up with an idea to convert a redundant phone box in the centre of Branxton. For the princely sum of £1.00 it was bought from BT and with the help of local volunteers, the phone box was stripped out, re-painted, re-glazed and a display was put inside. This includes a map which shows the route taken to the field of conflict, there is also a short audio description on a push button and there is still space for leaflets and tourist information.

[The individual award](#)

Winner: Friends of Gallagher Park in memory of George Webster



George Webster was asked to be the chairman of the group when it began in 2008. He had always been community minded and strived to make the environment a better place for the residents of Bedlington. Sadly, George is no longer with us.

During George's time working on this project, the park achieved QEII Fields status and won the coveted national Most Loved Field award, bringing with it a trophy and a £500 cash prize.

The same week partners of the project found out that they had been successful in a bid for £24,970 from SITA Trust's QEII Fields Fund, funding that will allow the development of mountain bike trails and the installation of new park furniture.

[Best business project](#)

Winner: Whistle Art Stop Smartz Club, Haltwhistle



A community interest group based in Haltwhistle with a group of 55 volunteers ranging from five to 80 years started this project in 2012 to regenerate a run-down derelict yard into an art garden.

The project brings together the local community who are creating an area for public use that is full of interesting and colourful recycled objects, particularly as planters.

The Smartz Club has over 40 children who attend and they have all contributed to a sense of pride in breathing new life into this yard.

[Best young people's project](#)

Winner: Cowpen Quay Community Association - Buffalo Junior Wardens – Ridley Park Project Blyth



The Junior Wardens has been running for about nine years and meet up once a week.

They adopted a plot in Ridley Park in Blyth and sourced the funding for a wild woodland area in the park which has now been planted up. They got funding to replant and re-design the rose garden and provide some picnic benches.

Their main reason for carrying out this work was to encourage other young people using the park to become involved.

Best children's project

Winner: Belsay First School Biodiversity Project



The whole school was involved in this project, including help from staff and parents.

The pupils have worked hard to create a meadow area which has been cut and raked and will be extended this year.

They have planted a 50m hedge to act as a habitat and wildlife corridor, planted buddleia bushes to attract the butterflies and bees, propagated shrubs, planted bulbs for pollen sources, situated a hedgehog house, created an insect hotel out of builders' pallets and installed two feeding stations for the birds during the winter and a vegetable garden which they manage organically.

Runner up: Alnwick South First School - 'Get Alnwick Buzzing'



This group of young children are representatives from Years 1 to 4 who designed a project to raise awareness of the changing insect populations in Northumberland in particular the decline of the honey bee.

The whole school attend a "Bee Happy Week" at The Alnwick Garden and they also worked with Northumberland Wildlife Trust to design and create an area within the school grounds for a "bee border" and raised beds containing butterfly friendly plants.

They actively encourage members of the community to become involved and recruit new volunteers and as a way of saying thank you to them, allow them to use several of their raised allotment beds.