

LOVE Northumberland Awards 2014

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The Duchess of Northumberland helped to celebrate the very best in community and voluntary environmental work across the county at 2014's LOVE Northumberland Awards.

The awards promote the work of the council and its many partner organisations, community groups and volunteers who all work towards preserving and enhancing the environment in the county.

Eleven groups, organisations or individuals were honoured with winner or runner-up awards at the event, across seven categories, and two schools also received awards in the Northumberland Schools Recycling Green Points Challenge.

Representatives of a number of highly commended entries also attended the uplifting event at The Alnwick Garden, which was supported by main sponsor the Banks Group and hosted by freelance TV presenter and journalist Kim Inglis.

Winning entries received a £250 prize and runners-up £100, with the money going towards their project or other work within the local community. Each highly commended finalist also received a small cash prize.

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

[The Northumberland Schools Recycling Green Points Challenge](#)

Marmax Products Ltd supported the schools recycling green points challenge – presenting a picnic bench to the winning school and a sturdy bench to the runner up – both made from recycled plastic milk bottles.

Winner: Josephine Butler Primary – Northumberland Church of England Academy, Ashington



Here are just some of the activities that the Academy completed for the challenge:

- A litter pick in the school grounds and also in the local area. The litter types found were compared and discussed and the areas were graded using the national Keep Britain Tidy litter grading guidance
- Groups learnt two recipes to promote using up leftovers and reducing food waste- bread and butter pudding and Greek Kofta using leftover roast lamb were made
- Designed posters to raise awareness about food waste, litter and recycling
- Completed a visual audit of recycling and rubbish bins around school, checking for contamination in recycling bins and to see if more could be recycled in some areas
- Josephine Butler Primary also chose to take part in the category- *share an innovative recycling idea*. The school's weekly 'Assessment For All' club found innovative ways of using recycled materials to develop their work. As this club has no budget they made and created watering cans from empty pop bottles.

Runner up: Collingwood School and Media Arts College, Morpeth



Here are some of the activities that Collingwood chose to do in the challenge:

- Produced a great newsletter about the Love Northumberland Campaign and Recycling
- Designed posters to raise awareness about composting, food waste and not dropping litter
- Completed a litter pick in their school grounds
- Ran a 'Ready Steady Cook' competition using foods that weren't going to be eaten at home as part of their food waste reduction messages
- One year group also designed a container to reduce the amount of packaging needed to carry a lunch.

[Best children's project](#)

Winner: The Broomley Bee Project, Stocksfield



The Broomley Bee Project in conjunction with Broomley First School focuses on enthusing and engaging children with the wonders of beekeeping and involves the children in understanding more about the problems facing the honeybee population.

Pupils and staff at the school with the support of local beekeepers visit the school's own beehives to check the bees encouraging them not to be afraid of bees and shows how essential pollinators are to the environment.

The pupils, along with staff and family members have also worked hard to create a beautiful bee garden in a neglected corner of the school grounds.

The project is entirely volunteer-led, and everyone involved gives their time freely. Local businesses and members of the community have supported the project and there have been many innovative ideas for raising funds, especially through school fairs. They even had a "create an ice-cream competition".

A 'Bee Festival' is being organised for this year to showcase the success of this project which will include local craftspeople, storytelling, young musicians and even waggle dancing.

Runner up: Morpeth All-Saints First School - School butterfly garden



The school applied for a grant from Dobbies Garden Centre and then the children entered a competition to design a butterfly garden. The grant was awarded and a winning design selected and this set in motion two trips to the garden centre.

In the Summer term parents, children and staff volunteered one weekend to implement the work within the school grounds creating the outline of the butterfly and filling it with top soil and the following weekend planting flowers that would attract the butterflies.

This is part of a wider school project where they have created raised beds and grow vegetables as well as flowers. Each year the beds are rotated to aid cultivation. They have also built a three bin composter which is in full use with the nursery children adding all their snack waste every week. This garden is an evolving project of ideas and experiences to enhance the children's learning.

Highly commended in this category was Mowbray First School, Stakeford, for litter picking at Cleasewell Hill Park.

[Best Young People's project](#)

Winner: Whistle Art Stop, Haltwhistle - Whistle Art Stop "Klarty Klub"



The Klarty Klub formed 9 months ago after a school project was held at the Whistle Art Stop where the young people learned about rivers and specifically about the Haltwhistle Burn. As a result they formed this group. They meet on Saturday afternoons and Tuesday evenings and the children are all aged between 12 and 21. They have turned part of the yard into their own garden where they have planted vegetables and flowers and have designed a bug hotel and surrounding planted area.

They moved tons of top soil and filled up old bath tubs, and recycled vessels to plant up with flowers that are needed to support bees.

Through the project the group have learned to recycle objects and turn them into beautiful containers. They have increased their knowledge of wildlife and how to grow vegetables and

other plants and have gained an insight into how to make an area attractive while also helping to sustain insect life and the environment.

Previously an eyesore in the town, this transformed derelict yard has now become quite a tourist attraction.

The children are currently studying for a Bronze Level Arts Award.

Runner up: Natural Ability - Allendale



Natural Ability based in the Allen Valley provides community supported living, bespoke education, outreach for children with disabilities and opportunities for people with learning disabilities to train and work in a rural environment.

They were formed 4 years ago by a group of local people who realised the benefits to health and well-being that being outdoors could bring and believe passionately that everyone can play a valued role in their community.

“Day Farmers” learn rural skills such as stone walling, fencing and good animal care. They are also involved in creating habitats for animals and birds and have helped maintain a nature trail, put up bird and bat boxes and squirrel feeders.

The success of Natural Ability has been due to the support they have been given by the community, having no property of their own, they use facilities donated by local people and community groups. In return the trainees help maintain local facilities, help the elderly by clearing up leaves and snow and have been involved in village tidy up days.

They produce a quarterly Newsletter and publish articles in local and regional newspapers.

Highly commended in this category was Cowpen Quay Community Association for the Buffalo Youth Project for children with additional needs.

Best Urban Project

Winner: Wellbank Green Improvement Scheme, Corbridge



This group have been together for three years and have dedicated their time to improving the village green so that locals and visitors could enjoy the area.

Corbridge Parish Council were involved in setting up a working group with representatives from the Council, the Village Trust, Heritage Trails and the local residents to prepare a scheme that would make the area more attractive and after taking on board the comments from everyone they set about creating a better footpath along the riverside and installing seating.

Tree stumps obstructing a free car park were removed providing additional parking spaces, the surface restored and a turning bay installed. Part of the green has been levelled by the addition of top soil and re-seeded. New fencing has been erected and there are plans to plant five new trees. Great care has been taken to keep the area as natural as possible and wild flowers are now growing in areas which were once bare.

The community now has a mud free path alongside the River Tyne suitable for buggies and wheelchairs with scenic views and discreet litter bins as well as grassed areas to play or picnic on thus benefitting all ages of villagers and visitors alike.

Runner up: Friends of Beacon Lane, Cramlington - Beacon Lane Environment Team



This project has been running for 18 months and the Friends meet up twice a week. They have worked hard to improve the health of residents on their estate by challenging food poverty, and getting people active to make their estate one to be proud of.

With their community growing scheme they have created raised beds, tended crops and cultivated areas around the estate. The fruit and vegetables grown are for everybody to enjoy.

With funding and support they placed large oak barrel planters filled with fruit bushes and strawberry plants along the main pathway to create “an edible walk to school”. Children volunteered to become “Tree Rangers”.

During the school holidays they have held community events, involving planting activities, building insect homes and bird boxes both for residents’ homes and the nearby park. The children get involved in watering the vegetable plots during the summer.

The community have benefited in many ways from this project, having fun, getting exercise, eating healthy and enjoying the outdoors!

Highly commended in this category was Pride in Amble for Amble Town Square improvements.

Best Coast or Countryside Project

Winner: Spittal Improvement Trust - Berwick-upon-Tweed - Spittal Beach Cleans



Spittal Improvement Trust initially started beach cleaning in 2005 in conjunction with the annual national “Beach Watch” scheme organised by the Marine Conservation Society.

Following this they decided to hold their own beach cleaning activities on a quarterly basis, while continuing to tie in with other joint initiatives such as Northumbria in Bloom.

Members of the community in Spittal are now active on virtually a daily basis carrying out local beach cleaning in response to tidal debris that is deposited on the beach, as well as litter left by careless visitors following picnics and drinking sessions. Broken glass, sharp tin cans, BBQ wire grills and dirty nappies, are all in a day’s work for this dedicated group of volunteers.

Their beach cleaning activities benefit not only the local environment, but also give the community a sense of 'ownership' which in turns helps to raise the community spirit.

Groups that have helped SIT in the clean-ups have included the local Cub and Scout Group, Girl Guides and Jus-Rol.

They are currently working with a local artist on a project entitled "Debris" which is derived from the rubbish that is washed up on the local beaches. The debris will be made into artistic pieces during workshops which will take place in local schools and community centres and will then be exhibited with the aims of raising awareness of environmental issues that affect the coastal landscape.

Runner up: Northumberland Wildlife Trust - Northumberlandia, near Cramlington



Northumberlandia is a stunning human landform sculpture of a reclining lady and the unique centrepiece of a community park. She is made of 1.5 million tonnes of rock, clay and soil, is 100 feet high and a quarter of a mile long.

Set in 46 acres, there are four miles of footpaths on and around the landform.

The park is also managed with wildlife in mind and the extensive grasslands are home to high populations of small mammals which in turn attract kestrels to feed on them, they also host numerous species of wildflowers and butterflies.

The parks ponds are important habitats for amphibians, damselflies and developing emergent vegetation.

A dedicated team of volunteers assist with safety checks, litter picks and site maintenance tasks as well as engaging with visitors, and keeping the park looking spotless.

The site has stimulated the growth of local business with increasing numbers of tourists to the area.

In partnership with Northumberland Sport the park has hosted successful sports events, in particular, the landform provides a unique opportunity to raise awareness of and funds for research into breast cancer.

Entrance to Northumberlandia is free of charge and the park is open to all.

Highly commended in this category was Blyth to Seaton Sluice Links Conservation Group for their dunes re-instatement project.

Best New Project

Winner: Groundwork North East - Pegswood Community Woods



Friends of Pegswood Community Woods has been developed through local people coming together with the aim of raising awareness and improving a green space which represents the heritage of an ex-coal mine and the native and rare wildlife of this Northumbrian village.

The volunteers have been caring for the local wildlife on the site, one feeds and monitors Red Squirrels, while two others monitor the rare and declining woodland birds along with rare wildflowers including magnificent orchids.

The conservation volunteers have been managing wetland habitats, wildflower meadow cutting and coppicing to improve the habitat, thinning the woodland and creating glades for birds. They have also been hedge laying to improve nesting habitats and path work to help local people access the woods and enjoy the beauty on their doorstep.

The volunteers have also organised and run a number of free community events including woodland trails, campfire cooking, green woodwork, cooking and selling refreshments.

The group now has its own committee and have successfully applied for funding to hold a Heritage event to celebrate the traditions of the past including coal-mining and pit band music. This will take place in September and it involves the whole community including school children and local ex-miners stories.

Runner up: Shilbottle Village Forum - Shilbottle War Memorial



Shilbottle is a caring community that has worked hard to regenerate a former mining village. The Forum has taken the lead on raising funds for a new Community Hall, a Memorial Garden, Village Galas, arranging outings for the elderly and generally working tirelessly for the older community.

They raise money through various fundraising events, baking, producing calendars, cards and organising coffee mornings.

They also produce a local Newsletter – “The Pant” three times a year free to every household.

In 1917 the village had a temporary war memorial which disappeared and no records could be found. For many years villagers had wanted a focal point and place to remember their loved ones and so a new memorial garden was created. The whole community along with the Parish Council and Cllr Trevor Thorne have joined together to create not just a memorial but also a whole project, booklet, displays, parades etc.

It is accessible to all - 24 hours a day, for young and old. Future events will centre around the garden with volunteers keeping the garden planted and maintained to a high standard.

They are hoping to involve more young people in their future plans.

The Forum is as vibrant and active as it was at its inception in 1997.

Highly commended in this category was Bedlington in Bloom.

Individual Award