

Awards Nominations 2024

Community Space of the Year

Beaulieu - Essex

Beaulieu offers a wide range of public open spaces and play areas for the community. The estates team is currently working on a community garden in partnership with Trust Links for the residents of Beaulieu, where residents and local school children can learn to grow and tend fruit and veg in raised beds. There will be areas for residents to forage for food and areas to socialise and create a community.

The Land Trust's engagement officer, Pip, runs various events with both Green Angels and with/for the residential and wider communities to provide educational opportunities and family events, bringing the Beaulieu community together.

The Estates Manager, Graham and Pip, offer resident surgeries three times a month, meeting face to face with residents and providing a personal and friendly touch as they work together to resolve and improve the estate.

Northumberlandia – Northumberland

Frances and her team at Northumberland Wildlife Trust have worked tirelessly throughout the year to run community-focused events, from Easter Trails, Mystical Autumn Stories, and Christmas craft events to 'Wild Wings' summer school holiday activities and Festive Snowflake Trails for families in the winter, to the ever-popular food and craft markets, and two well-attended Shakespearean theatre productions.

The team also celebrated Northumberland Day by welcoming Cramlington's Mayor onto the site, hosted the Teardrop Group again during October, an emotive event for baby loss awareness and the Bright Red Charity Glow Walk in December.

Overall, well over 6,000 people attended these large-scale events and 2,500 on the seasonal events. In addition to this, volunteers from the local community took part in 250 regular sessions and nearly 30 practical tasks.

Lastly, Northumberlandia even had a couple renew their vows on site this year, demonstrating just how important this site is to the local community.

Hassall Green Nature Reserve - Sandbach

Hassall Green Nature Reserve has become a hive of community activity during 2023/24, with the set-up and continuation of bi-weekly Wild Yoga workshops, monthly volunteering sessions, community drumming circles, community open days, bat walks and more.

The site also welcomed local school groups, community groups and charities to utilise the site for environmental activities and volunteering sessions. Through conducting the above activities and engaging the local community we have seen access to the site sore with over 792 interactions with the site from local individuals.

Additionally, during December of 2023 Hassall Green debuted “Sparkles in the Wild”. This community engagement event brought the local community together to build a variety of willow animal structures to create a trail around the site. These animals were illuminated, and everyone from the surrounding areas was invited to the winter wonderland of Hassall Green during the festive season. This magical event welcomed over 350 individuals to the site and encouraged young and old to see the wonders of nature, and the dedication of other regular volunteers and trainees.

Nature Space of the Year

Runfold Ridge – Surrey

In 2020, the Land Trust took on 12 hectares of former agricultural fields on a chalk ridge in Surrey. The Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership (BVCP), worked to resolve many new site teething problems and established an annual hay cut and collection, reducing soil fertility and enhancing this chalk grassland.

Rangers and volunteers have experimented with covering patches with locally sourced wild-flower-rich green hay to boost floral diversity. Butterfly Conservation volunteers have created bare soil patches, sowing kidney vetch seeds to provide nectar for the small blue butterfly, thereby extending its range. The site's first butterfly survey took place last year, and 21 different species of butterflies were found over 24 weeks.

To help improve the habitat, BVCP is converting a World War II pillbox into a bat roost by adding bat boxes and a bat-accessible door. A neighbouring community interest company called Hive Helpers has engaged young people by re-staking newly planted trees, helping with practical tasks, and surveying pollinators.

Buckler's Forest – Berkshire

Since taking on the site in March 2022, Bracknell Forest Council has focused on supporting biodiversity and creating habitats for new species. This has included reedbed management for the scarce blue-tailed dragonfly, allowing willow to establish as a food plant for the purple emperor, wildlife-friendly grass cuts, with 25% left to overwinter for food, and early nesting opportunities for woodlarks.

As well as this, new wildlife interpretation about ground nesting birds has been installed, bee banks were created on heathland to mine bees and grayling butterflies, 250m boundary hedge planted for habitat connectivity and volunteers and corporate groups engaged on habitat tasks including invasive species removal and tree planting, as well as so much more.

The biodiversity recorded on site now includes over 60 breeding bird species (16 amber and 10 red-listed), the nationally and regionally rare Odonata including Scarce blue-tailed and Small Red damselfly, rare butterflies including Purple Emperor, Grayling and Silver-studded blue, and an abundant reptiles and amphibians. Alongside this, a sighting of a rare Darwin wasp species, only ever recorded on the island of Portland previously, has been seen.

In recognition of the evolving land management that has produced an important site for Berkshire's wildlife, Buckler's Forest was designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in February 2024.

Fort Burgoyne - Dover

Known for its historic building, ecological survey work indicates it has equal value for ecology, including BAP habitat calcareous grassland supporting a wide range of orchids, including the early spider orchid. Six species of bats utilise the site for swarming and hibernation, while bird species include yellow hammer.

The managing partner, White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, continues looking for new ways to improve the site's ecological value, including changing part of the site recreation ground to a meadow management regime in 2023-24.

Beaulieu - Essex

Beaulieu has large areas of open green space around the estate, including hedging and woodland copses, as well as stands of mature trees. Species recorded are great crested newts as well as palmate and common newts, slow worms, grass snakes and adders, common lizard, as well as kestrel, little and tawney owls, swifts, mistle thrush and common thrush, yellow hammers, skylarks, to name a few.

The outline for building Beaulieu was granted in May 2013 as a garden community to build on the success of the original Beaulieu Park, which started to be built in the late 1990s. Wildlife was given a lot of consideration when designing Beaulieu, with compensation habitat incorporated to compensate for the loss of habitat. This included new native woodlands, wildflower meadows, hedges, and bat and raptor boxes being installed by the developers. The mix of habitats has attracted a large amount of wildlife to call the estate home.

Silverdale Country Park - Staffordshire

Silverdale Country Park is a site rich in biodiversity; the ranger works hard to maintain and enhance this wherever possible. In the past year, management has been targeting the void area of the site to support species of conservation concern, like wading lapwings, which have seen the number of chicks double in the past year.

Over the past decade, thousands of trees have been planted to combat climate change and for biodiversity gains. The focus this past year has been to boost spring blossoms to extend the length of time blossoms are available. Alongside this, four new pools have been created to support the great crested newt population on site, seeing an impressive increase in numbers over the past five years from 4 to 78, and the survey is still to be completed.

Oliver Road Lagoons - Essex

Oliver Road Lagoons, managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust, is a unique brownfield site on the Thames Estuary where a power station once stood. The resulting landscape and substrate of pulverised fuel ash are now home to populations of nationally rare invertebrates, partly designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Essex Wildlife Trust manages the site by controlling the birch scrub to retain the flower-rich grassland and areas of bare ground beneficial for invertebrates. The team maintained 7 hectares of grassland last year through cut and collect, and controlled scrub, goats rue and sea buckthorn over 5 hectares.

The re-commissioned tidal sluice is now enabling greater inundation of the site, which is beneficial for the site's resident water voles and roosting wading birds, for which the SSSI is designated.

Carr Lodge - Doncaster

Since the early years when the site was grazed by up to 70 ponies, the transformation has been astonishing. Carr Lodge is now a wildlife-rich floodplain grassland, flanked by carr woodland and scrub and lightly grazed by cattle. Relentless wildlife recording by Jim Horsfall, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Reserves Team Leader, has seen the site become a designated Local Wildlife Site by Doncaster Council.

Amongst its huge list of invertebrates, a nationally scarce beetle, a near-threatened water beetle, and a nationally scarce hoverfly are each associated with the carefully managed habitats on site. The grassland supports breeding lapwing, snipe and redshank, whilst marsh harriers regularly hunt overhead.

This is all the more remarkable given Carr Lodge's highly urban nature. It is flanked on its south by the busy M18, on its east by the Doncaster spur road, and to the north by a large business park and ever-growing housing development.

Health Site of The Year

Hogmoor Inclosure - Hampshire

Through a combination of third-party providers, the local managing partner, Deadwater Valley Trust and stakeholders such as Whitehill & Bordon Community Trust, the health benefits of accessing this greenspace are being realised in the local Hampshire community.

In 2023, 50 moderate health activities engaged 296 people. These included Tots Rambles, Ready, Steady Mum's Walks, and both guided and sponsored walks, such as the "Walk for Peace" organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

123 vigorous health activities positively impacted over 18,000 people. These included a weekly park run for adults and juniors, boot camps, orienteering courses, school cross-country runs, and a brutal Halloween run.

Nine events across the year provided conservation tasks to support people with mental health-related issues and a recently launched series of nature-based therapeutic walks.

The Spinney - Hampshire

The Spinney is an unusual site in the Land Trust portfolio - it is a linear strip of shelterbelt woodland wrapping around Basingstoke & North Hampshire Hospital and adjacent housing. The woodland provides a shady walkway on hot sunny days and some protection from pollution from the busy roads outside it. Hospital visitors often walk through the woodland, and NHS staff use the site as an area to relax or take a walk. The circular nature of the site makes it popular with joggers and dog walkers, too.

Efforts to encourage people to use The Spinney as a place to exercise, learn and unwind include a brass rubbing trail and five downloadable walking trails. A successful trial public guided walk was conducted last autumn, leading to a new programme of regular guided walks this year, encouraging people to get active and use the space while learning about wildlife simultaneously.

Linmere - Houghton Regis

Linmere's outdoor spaces are designed to celebrate an active way of life. The school and the shops are accessible on foot, as are the walking trails from Linmere development to surrounding nature areas.

Linmere Park has a popular running track and pump track, which are great for many different activities, including children on scooters or adults on skateboards and bikes.

The site has recently been awarded with a 'Very Good' Modeshift accreditation. This is great achievement for the master developer LIH and the whole Linmere team.

To help parents with young children get out, get active and meet new friends, Marlen, Estates and Community Officer for the Land Trust at Linmere, organises monthly buggy walks. Meeting at the Farmstead courtyard, the Buggy walks are a great opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and look after your well-being.

Every Saturday morning, "ParkPlay" comes to Linmere and leads a two-hour-long play session of fun and games for everyone who wants to move. The Summer Picnic event in Linmere Park started in 2023 encourages the community to come together and take part in sport activities and fun.

To promote cycling across the community, LIH partnered with Cycle4Life and Central Bedfordshire Council to hold a Cycle Festival in the park. Visitors could get some advice from a trained BMX lecturer, try riding the smoothie bike, or get inspired by UK and European BMX champion Matti.

Education Site of The Year

Wellesley Woodlands - Hampshire

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have been building links with the army, local schools, nurseries, museums and an outdoor education centre to connect children with nature.

They successfully bid for a new nature intern who had the opportunity to develop their conservation skills in a full-time role for one year. Following this experience, they gained a paid position in the sustainability sector.

Regular forest school sessions at Wellesley encourage children to form a community and learn about themselves through play and skill development. Beaver groups also often visit to learn more about wildlife.

Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership has provided training for three students in using machinery and hand tools, along with other local and corporate volunteers, and five student filmmakers gained creative skills through the use of the woods.

42 people participated throughout the year in Green Angels' free training courses, which included beekeeping sessions, hedge laying, willow weaving, and pond creation.

Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park - London

With an on-site classroom and a team of dedicated staff who are passionate about the site, the ecology park provides a rare opportunity for children and students of all ages to study a wide range of wetland species in London.

Last year The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), hosted 42 school visits for almost 1,000 school students from Early Years Foundation up to A-level. They also hosted 12 Adult skills/training events for 78 students, including four work placements with local schools/colleges. TCV also put on 31 informal educational events throughout the year, attracting an audience of 1,420 individuals and offering the opportunity to get involved in pond dipping, minibeast hunting, birdwatching and art sessions. They also organised two large events, with a Go Quackers summer open day in July and Spring Fayre in May, attracting an audience of 430 people.

Fort Burgoyne - Dover

Last year, Fort Burgoyne in Dover, managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, ran 11 events catering for 268 individuals from primary and pre-school. They also ran two sessions for 60 children from local RAF and Scout groups.

The White Cliffs Countryside Partnership created an Outdoor Learning programme for schools up to KS2 within the Dover district. The programme includes full days and half days on topics like Magnificent Mammals and Bridge Building.

The site hosted four emergency services training days, with 140 people attending each day, and one college student attending two tasks as part of their degree. This is in addition to 21 informal education events such as bat walks, history tours, Green Gang sessions and guided walks, which attracted 347 participants. Four Green Angel training sessions also took place, including bumblebee ID, bats, beekeeping, and habitat management.

Hogmore Inclosure - Hampshire

Deadwater Valley Trust run a regular Junior Rangers group which connects young people with nature through regular sessions throughout the year and help them to attain the John Muir Award. The team have also created nature backpacks, which can be given out to local schools or community groups to help children engage with their environment.

A brass rubbing trail around the site provides a creative way to encourage young people to explore Hogmoor and learn about wildlife and history. The rangers also offer Duke of Edinburgh volunteering opportunities to a local Special Educational Needs school and provide students studying countryside management with practical hands-on experience.

An increasing number of schools and community groups are also visiting Hogmoor Inclosure, both self-guided and with informative support from the Community Ranger. A new wild observatory has been installed to help visitors learn more about the birds, plants, and animals they can spot.

Site Delivering Best Economic Activity

Silverdale Country Park – Staffordshire

The site supports the Midlands Coppicing Cooperative to create diverse areas of alder and hazel coppice, demonstrating a circular economy and sustainability by growing and harvesting alder and hazel stems to use onsite as hedge laying, rather than paying for tantalised stakes imported from Scandinavia.

During 2023/24, £11,230 was spent on local contractors and supplies to lay 60 tonnes of stone to create new surfaced paths for accessibility, improve emergency vehicle access, and create new seasonal pools with scrapes to aid waders and amphibians.

The profile of the park has also been boosted by appearing on BBC The One Show in October 2023 with photos of our volunteers working on Silverdale Country Park shown on national TV, as well as in the RHS Magazine through being involved in Newcastle under Lyme's Britain in Bloom bid, securing the outright National Britain in Bloom winner's award.

Beaulieu – Essex

The contractor at Beaulieu, Plant Style, currently has an apprentice that work at the site and are looking to expand their apprenticeships scheme across the company.

Through the two Green Angels course that have been run at Beaulieu so far in November December over four weeks, Green Angels were able to partner with Essex Wildlife Trust.

The site also has Chelmsford City Council's Play in the Park initiative, which is aimed at children aged 3-12 to help get them active. Activities include football skills, circus skills, bouncy castle and parkour. There is ice cream van and/or a mobile coffee truck in attendance for user to purchase refreshments.

A number of groups use the area including running groups and clubs and the Heart and Sole Walking Group (Chelmsford city council initiative), which meets at the community centre every Friday for a circular walk-through Beaulieu.

There are also a number of businesses which are based on the estate, but run independently of the Land Trust.

Northumberlandia – Northumberland

Close to the A1, Northumberlandia acts as a gateway to northern England and Scotland for tourism and so receives a high proportion of first-time visitors. Combined with nearby visitor attractions, increased dwell time in the Cramlington area, in turn, increases tourism spending locally.

The café staff work hard to encourage more visitors throughout the year, dressing the cafe each season, especially at Christmas, when children are asked to write special messages and decorate the Christmas tree. Staff also try to theme food offerings with the seasons and arrange special promotions, including encouraging people to come to the site with their four-legged friends!

The café employs several people from the local community, and the site strives to use small, locally-based contractors, many of them family-run businesses.

The ever-growing adjacent Bellway housing development benefits in sales due to the close proximity of what is a popular attraction for walking, especially dog walking on and around the landform.

Hogmoor Inclosure - Hampshire

Hogmoor Inclosure has a popular café and a community space for hire called The Beehive run by Whitehill & Bordon Community Trust. Many clubs and classes meet here, from yoga, and reading fairies, to Singing for the Mind and Sing & Sign for babies. A monthly craft fayre also attracts a host of local independent vendors.

The café provides refreshments for both visitors, local groups and for regular events such as park run and evening bat walks. The Trust has also encouraged apprenticeships within its staffing team.

The site has seen a wide variety of events throughout the year, like the Celebration of Military Heritage Day and Secrets of the Heath, which engages with local businesses including Hogmoor Distillery and other catering providers alongside World War II singers, outdoor cinema companies and Punch and Judy entertainers.

Deadwater Valley Trust, which manages the greenspace, recently hired a long-term volunteer and student to work in a full-time ranger position.

Most Inclusive Site of the Year

Linmere - Houghton Regis

Linmere has outdoor spaces and a community hall that are accessible to everyone, hosting a variety of activities for different age groups and interests. From "Phonics with Robot Reg" sessions for young children to adult hatha yoga classes and dog training sessions, there is something for everyone.

The Land Trust plays an important role in organising activities which are open to all that bring the community together. One of the most anticipated events is the Summer Picnic,

which invites residents from Linmere and neighbouring communities to enjoy an outdoor lunch with friends and families. Attendees can also try climbing the heights of the mobile climbing wall or listen to enchanting stories from a storyteller.

For parents with young children, the monthly buggy walks are a wonderful way to stay active and socialise. Starting at the Farmstead courtyard, these walks offer parents a chance to connect with others and to stay active.

Walking trails from Linmere to surrounding natural areas are open to everyone, encouraging residents to explore the nature around. Marlen the Estates and Community Officer for Linmere, also organises several craft shop sessions during the year where anyone can drop in and find their inner artist.

Marleigh – Cambridge

The Land Trust took on the role of estate manager of Marleigh in 2022. In Autumn 2022, the Hangar Building became available for use, transforming community development opportunities as the estate's population grew.

Working alongside other organisations, the Trust appointed Estates and Facilities Officer and has helped to facilitate the development of a weekly market on site together with a weekly site walk. In addition to this, a movie night in Jubilee Square and a range of cultural festivals have been celebrated. An English conversation group meets in the foyer of the Hangar Building to support individuals who do not speak English as a first language, while the foyer space itself is used as a drop-in by the community. With the opening of a café next door to the community hall has added to the opportunities for community networking.

The hall is used for various activities, including yoga, dance classes, health sessions, children's parties and sports activities. There will be lots more to come, with sports pitches and allotments coming in the next two years.

Greenwich Ecology Park - London

Greenwich Ecology Park, managed by The Conservation Volunteers, offers a range of opportunities for community groups, including schools and volunteers, and also provides access to greenspace for the community in an urban location.

With an area of just 2 hectares last year, this small site offered 25 activity sessions, attracting people from a diverse cross-section of the community. This included two environment art therapy sessions run by Queer Circle, and wellbeing walks with mindfulness activities in March, Royal Borough of Greenwich Dementia Reference Group and Dementia Action Group meetings on site. The site also saw two special educational needs class visits, a visit from the Linnaean Society Wave Project and a visit from Metro Charity LGBTQ+ group of 11 to 25-year-olds.

Port Sunlight River Park – Wirral

Following Covid, the park struggled to regain the volunteer numbers and community involvement that had been present before. The Conservation Volunteers were appointed as the new managing partner in January 2022, and there is now a varied range of community interaction.

The Friends group is once again very active in promoting and supporting the park. They aim to increase community enjoyment and involvement, identify improvements and solutions, contribute to site management and maintenance, identify education and health opportunities, and raise awareness in the local community. In addition, Community Payback is active on the park, with weekly sessions that carry out vegetation control and keep paths clear.

The site also has corporate volunteers from Unilever and Tranmere Rovers, who have brought some young volunteers to work and feel the benefits of the site. Autism Together also runs the on-site kiosk and has a steady base of customers from the local regulars and walking groups.

Most Improved Space

Canvey Wick - Essex

Canvey Wick, which is partly SSSI, is managed by the RSPB on the Essex stretch of the Thames estuary. Over the past two years, the area they manage has increased from 17 hectares to 100 hectares. The site has been developed from an oil refinery, leaving a legacy of hazardous infrastructure, and its remote location is a challenge for management. Despite this, RSPB has begun to deliver the management plan to improve the site for the benefit of its unique wildlife. This has involved scrub management to create bare ground over 16 hectares and maintain ditches on site. This work helps to create a mosaic of more open habitats, encouraging the spread of flower-rich grassland and associated invertebrates.

Volunteering with the RSPB and the partnership with Buglife has also supported engagement with the diverse local community at Canvey. Walk the Wick every Wednesday has attracted 137 participants. Other themed seasonal events aimed at families, including a Big Bug Hunt and Estuary Festival art & wellbeing walks, attracted 270 participants. Volunteering through regular work parties has attracted 12 regular volunteers who have each contributed an average of 32 volunteer days.

Bookhurst Wood - Surrey

Bookhurst Wood is an ancient woodland adjacent to a housing estate built on an old clay tileworks in Surrey. Managed by the Friends of the Hurtwood with additional support from Brimstones Partnership, it only has a small annual budget.

Due to this financial limitation, activity until recently was mostly health and safety work, but recent improvements include a waymarked circular trail with wildlife interpretation plaques, new infrastructure around the pond with the creation of a viewing platform, and a successful application for a Woodland Improvement Grant, which has allowed conservation coppicing to restart after many decades.

The coppicing regime will benefit the woodland's populations of English bluebell and wood anemone, and it is possible that white admiral butterfly may be able to colonise the site's honeysuckle-clad glades as the coppice programme progresses.

Additionally, work has begun to support the site's veteran oak trees by giving them space through 'halo-releasing'.

The Old Brickworks - Cannock

The Old Brickworks has improved across the site, starting with pond restoration works. One new pond/wetland area was created, a new pond has been expanded in size, and an established pond benefitted from vegetation removal by up to 35% to create open standing water. Two of the ponds also removed encroaching tree cover to decrease shading and leaf litter. Management of the grassland restoration areas has continued, and woodland management has undertaken to reinstate glades lost due to woodland and scrub encroachment.

The local community is taking more ownership of the site, with regular litter picking taking place. Visitor numbers have increased, with users reporting that their perception of safety has increased due to the site being well maintained, clean, and litter-free. The ranger has also strived to provide a varied user experience, from creating quiet, tranquil spaces to more active areas.

Many public and private sessions have taken place to engage and educate local people about the site and local wildlife.

Pleasley Pit - Derbyshire

In 2023, Scheduled Ancient Monument Pleasley Pit, was awarded a Biffa Award Grant through the Partnership Grants Scheme under the Built Environment theme in 2023.

The grant allowed for new interpretations and oral histories to be created throughout the site to showcase and tell the site's social history. Vital restoration works have also been done on the South Hempstead building and the iconic pit chimney to preserve and restore them for future generations to enjoy and learn from for many years to come.

Volunteer of the Year

Mike Little – Friends of Knowle Haven

Mike Little is an exceptional ambassador for the Land Trust. Tirelessly working to support the community, Mike goes above and beyond to ensure the Land Trust's charitable aims are not only met but exceeded.

Mike's unwavering commitment to the cause is palpable. He selflessly invests his time and energy championing the importance of preserving our natural landscapes. With a deep-rooted understanding of the intrinsic connection between nature and well-being, Mike is not only a steward of the land but a beacon of inspiration, eager to share his experiences with others.

In every endeavour, Mike's enthusiasm shines through. His genuine passion for fostering a healthier environment for people and wildlife alike is commendable.

Mike's dedication, hard work, and genuine care for the community make him an exemplary candidate for Volunteer of the Year. Though this won't be his first nomination for the award, it's clear his passion hasn't faded since his first involvement in 2016. He continues to leave an undeniable mark on the Land Trust and the hearts of those he serves.

Ethna Cooke – London Wildlife Trust

Ethna set up, through her own initiative, two butterfly transects following the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS), after taking advice from them on how to set them up. Later in the year, she registered the transects with the UKBMS and trained other volunteers on how to do it so work could carry on when she was not there, which also added to the learning and interest of other volunteers. Ethna did this through her own initiative with no support from London Wildlife Trust. It's a real addition to the monitoring that already takes place on the site.

Andrew Eaton – TCV - Countess of Chester Country Park

Always there waiting with a smile and a brew, Andrew's dedication to joining the team on every project they undertake in the park is astounding. He is always smiling and laughing, such a delight to have as a volunteer, always ready to jump in and help on any task, whether on land or in water.

Always first to the Ranger Hut in the morning and at lunch time, and while waiting for everyone to arrive, he will be watering the community allotment and have the kettle on ready for people's tea or coffee, never forgetting what they have (only has to be told once).

We are lost when he is on holiday, as no one else knows what everyone has!

Gabby Shields - Derbyshire Wildlife Trust – Avenue Country Park

Gabby has been a member of the Avenue volunteer group for over three years and, throughout that time, has gone above and beyond as an ambassador for the reserves and the community.

Alongside employment, Gabby routinely participates in the practical management of the reserves, eagerly assists with unforeseen tasks, and helps deliver and supervise educational and engagement sessions and events. Above this, Gabby has established regular community litter picks, overseen sight security, and helped promote the reserves as our regular media representative.

Gabby's efforts and passion have helped educate, engage and inspire other community members to respect and look after our vital green spaces for all.

Evan Pidgeon - TCV - South Yorkshire

Evan is on an internship within the TCV from Harrison College, and works with the team twice a week. Evan is such a great member of the team who is always keen to get on with the work and learn new skills. He has attended a range of Green Gym sessions and helped out on a range of site maintenance tasks.

Seeing Evan develop in his confidence and skills has been a great privilege, he is always so polite and friendly. Seeing Evan develop from when he first started has been amazing and the team are all really proud of him.

Dave Allen – Hogmoor Inclosure

Dave is known as Super Dave in the office! He volunteers for everything from work parties and river fly surveys to seasonal events and local fates and fayres.

Whether he's using loppers, donning his waders, or hanging pumpkin fairy lights, Dave is always the first to offer his assistance. Dave is amazing, and the team can never thank him enough.

Connor Grundy - Northumberlandia

Connor has arrived at Northumberlandia with a smile two days a week for the past nine years, knowing that his work as Reserve Warden supports a charity and makes a difference for families visiting for the day, but most of all for wildlife.

Connor loves animals and is diligent about filling bird feeders to keep his feathered friends stocked up, and has made a bird box which now has owls nesting in it which is fantastic. Connor was crucial to a recent newt rescue from a blocked drain, where he really showed his care and compassion for wildlife in a place that means so much to him.

His dedication has safeguarded the site during storm damage, and his practical skills gained through volunteering have inspired him to start his lawn-care business. Connor's contribution goes beyond simply 'helping'. He feels that he belongs at the site, and the team can always see him going the extra mile as standard.

Barry Hampton – TCV - Davy Downs

Barry has been a volunteer at Davy Down since early 2023. In that short amount of time, he has consistently shown up for the weekly volunteering, where he stays on task and helps with new volunteers. He will also volunteer on Fridays to do whatever he can around the site to help, from helping organise the tool store to litter picking or any additional jobs that need doing.

He cares deeply about Davy Down, doing whatever he can to help increase interest in the site and volunteer numbers, such as advertising locally in community spaces. He has been a big help in growing this site and providing the volunteers and staff with local knowledge that they otherwise would not have. Barry is a pleasure to have as a volunteer.

Patrick Mannion - White Cliffs Countryside Partnership – Fort Burgoyne

Patrick has been a long-serving, steadfast volunteer with Fort Burgoyne and has been a huge help in its development. He regularly attends volunteer tasks with a positive attitude and is ready to get stuck in whatever is planned, from scrub clearing to cleaning out gutters, even in the most inclement weather. More recently, he has been vital in helping new volunteers feel welcome and part of the team by either helping them use the tools or recounting the history of the Fort itself.

For the events and school visits, Patrick is happy to help with whatever role is required. It could be manning the gates, being a back marker for groups, providing information to visitors

and answering their questions, checking people haven't wandered where they shouldn't or helping with craft activities.

It doesn't matter what the weather is, Patrick will be there! His knowledge of the site's history and the wildlife means that we know any visitors are in excellent hands, and his enthusiasm for the site is infectious. This has also led to him helping the site recruit new volunteers, including his family!

Ranger of the Year

Jon Steward - Dawlish Countryside Park

Arriving first every day from furthest away on his trusty motorbike he is a person that has always gone the extra mile. Unfailingly cheerful and positive with a 'can do' attitude, he is an absolute pleasure to work with. He is a consummate all-rounder. Quietly competent with chainsaws and tractors, he is equally at home quietly teaching volunteers survey skills or children bushcraft.

His infectious enthusiasm, charm and tact make him a safe pair of hands in any situation and a brilliant ambassador for his beloved Dawlish Countryside Park Teinbridge District Council and the Land Trust. His colleagues tease him about being a rangers answer to James Bond. He's far too unassuming to accept this compliment - but in our view Nobody Does it Better!

Lauren Baker - Fort Burgoyne

As the lead ranger for developing and delivering education and community events at Fort Burgoyne, Lauren has sought to maximise every opportunity she can to engage people with the site.

Whilst only working 0.5FTE, Lauren has developed an education programme working across the national curriculum to ensure the full range of opportunities at the Fort for learning are offered. In addition to the ecology of the site, bridges and structures and art all form part of the diverse programme. Her work in 2023 also planned and delivered a Wildlife Fun Day.

Rebekah Vickers – Elba Park

There are few sites more perfectly managed than Elba Park, and this is very much down to Rebekah. Her unassuming nature hides her abilities across every element of the park management, be it through nurturing its enthusiastic volunteers, delivering quality school activities or working with local contractors to ensure the site always looks amazing.

Becky constantly surprises by bringing new initiatives through securing locally sourced funding. This year saw funding from Sunderland Council to deliver sessions in the school holidays where 290 children received a snack and drink to help combat holiday hunger. The park is loved by its 120,000 users and Becky is well known to a great many of them, she is always ahead of the game in dealing with anything that arises, she is always on budget, the

first with her quarterly reporting and annual reports and rightly proud of her Green Flag Award winning park.

Eric Joinson – PSRP

Eric fits in at Port Sunlight River Park with ease, always working hard and happy to help. He works hard coordinating a variety of tasks on site including schools, volunteers groups and other visitors to the site, sometimes in challenging circumstances, always welcoming and helpful.

Dora Pichor- TCV

Dora is an exceptional Ranger who spearheads the "Tool Store Skills Workshop," imparting invaluable knowledge on workshop safety and furniture crafting, including benches, picnic tables, lecterns, bird/bat boxes, firewood storage, and more.

After each session, participants shower Dora with compliments, expressing how the workshops have transformed their lives, making them more self-sufficient and capable individuals.

Tom Marshall - TCV South Yorkshire

Tom Marshall is a great ranger; he is always hard-working and comes up with ideas like the orchard at Kiveton Community Woodland. Tom has led this project from the initial ideas to the completion, and it has now become a focal point for the site. The orchard has hosted many events, including apple days, wassail events, and Green Angel courses. The volunteer group that Tom runs keep the area looking amazing.

Tom should be very proud of all the hard work he has put into creating such a beautiful area on-site for the community to enjoy.

Best Community/Friends of Group

Friends of Countess of Chester Country Park

The Friends of Countess of Chester Country Park not only show unbelievable dedication and commitment to volunteering with TCV to look after the park but also running their own projects, including drawing in additional funding. The projects are too numerous to mention but include the installation of a brand-new art trail, health walks, looking after the 'Friendly Bench', The Fallen for the Fallen trail and helping run TCV Green Gyms and Forest Fun sessions, as well as countless hours helping to maintain the park.

Friends of Port Sunlight River Park

Friends of Port Sunlight River Park have been the driving force for the park and are really well-appreciated. They are a dedicated group that has helped with a variety of things at PSRP, including regular heritage walks and supporting the ranger with general site

maintenance, as well as visits from students, corporate volunteering, and applying for funding for the site.

The Avenue Volunteers

As a relatively new site, The Avenue Volunteer Group has been growing and establishing from a group of three individuals to a strong 20 regular members who assist with all aspects of site management. From practical maintenance, security, surveys and site/livestock wardening, to assisting with engagement activities and overseeing regular community litter picks.

The group's commitment has not ended there; their passion has helped produce hand-crafted unique interpretation trails around the reserve and established good ambassadors for the sites, promoting the work that we do, the importance of the site for nature, wildlife and the community, as well as why our greenspaces should be used respectfully.

Kiveton Wellbeing Group

This group was formed originally from a Green Angels course a few years ago. It was so successful as the ladies formed such a great group and friendships. The group is now run once a month with Hannah from Kindful and Wild. Every month, the ladies all turn up and learn new skills, enjoy being out in the woodland and enjoy conversations. The group has formed a strong bond that they now meet up on their own outside of the group. It is always such a positive and supportive group.

Fort Burgoyne Volunteer Group

The volunteer group at Fort Burgoyne have been a huge asset to the continued improvement and success of Fort Burgoyne and is happy and able to contribute to a variety of tasks across the site, including habitat management for wildlife conservation, the restoration of the sites heritage and supporting events and education programming.

As ambassadors for the site, they are always happy to promote the site to other groups and visitors. They are very supportive of new volunteers and welcome them to the site with open arms. The group are adaptive and aren't afraid to roll their sleeves up to help with some of the less glamorous jobs: activities of note recently includes moving 80 plus rotten 8ft by 4ft plywood boards into a skip to help get the site ready for an upcoming Green Flag inspection.

Friends of Weetslade Country Park

Members of this group have been supporting conservation work at Weetslade for nearly 20 years and have achieved so much in that time. Their dedication to weekly tasks to improve the site for wildlife and the visitor experience is inspiring and makes me work harder to honour what they put into it.

The group never run out of enthusiasm, whether simply litter picking or getting stuck in with big projects such as saltmarsh habitat restoration and steps access construction. The abundance of wildlife at Weetslade has significantly increased due to the conservation actions of this group, and they have the joy of being the first to record new bird species attracted to the site, all because of the group's own efforts. Without their help, Weetslade

wouldn't be the way it is now. Biodiversity would be years behind, and wildlife would not have thrived.

Site of the Year

Beaulieu - Essex

Beaulieu is a vast and ever-expanding site incorporating both amenity, ecological and conservation areas, for wildlife and the community to benefit from. The site is a haven for wildlife with a variety of species recorded, including great crested newts and a wide variety of birds like kestrel and little and tawney owls.

The site has seen various community events, including Green Angels courses, which are very popular with the residents and wider community. Pip, the Engagement Officer at Beaulieu, also runs a variety of events providing education opportunities and family activities, bringing the Beaulieu community together. Also working in partnership with Chelmsford City Council's Play in the Park initiative and with the local community on the annual Christmas event. Alongside this, there are running groups and clubs and the Heart and Sole Walking Group (Chelmsford City Council initiative), that use the site as part of their wellbeing routines.

The Estates Manager, Graham and Pip, offer resident surgeries three times a month, meeting face to face with residents and providing a personal and friendly touch as they work together to resolve and improve the estate.

It has received Green Flag Accreditation for the last two years and is currently awaiting results for 24/25 application.

Knowle Haven

Knowle Haven is a vibrant, community-led nature site that thrives on the enthusiasm and dedication of local volunteers.

The Friends of Knowle Haven successfully facilitate a variety of activities, including photography and art sessions, mental health walks, and forest schools. The site is bustling with life, enhanced by the local beekeepers' impressive apiary. Dedicated to promoting wellbeing and preserving nature, Knowle Haven is a testament to what a committed community can achieve. Its blend of nature, creativity, and wellness makes it a fantastic destination, showcasing the power of community spirit and environmental stewardship.

New Lubbesthorpe

New Lubbesthorpe is a thriving site with community engagement at the heart of our work. The Land Trust have partnered with Lubbesthorpe Alive – a local community events group – to deliver community engagement across the development.

The estates team have worked together to host the Lubbfest festival, which is held each summer and has a fantastic turnout. The team have also begun a newly formed bat walk group which saw 48 residents attend the first walk. The areas currently managed offer

fantastic biodiversity & ecological benefits to the local community, and we are excited to see the site continue to grow and develop.

Elba Park - Sunderland

Elba Park is immaculately managed. Extensive, floristically rich grasslands contrast with smaller areas of neat amenity grassland, creating the perfect recreation space for the many hundred daily visitors, set within a wildlife-rich landscape.

For wildlife, maturing woodland blocks are becoming important havens for nesting birds, while the recently enhanced lake and reedbed, along with the riparian habitats, support a rich diversity of birds and invertebrates and even showed signs of use by otters in a recent survey.

For people, the site is kept litter-free and the notice boards refreshed. Portland Academy's visit and weekly attendance show the importance of education, whilst community events are popular. These focus on family activities during the school holidays, which benefitted from support from Sunderland City Council, allowing all the children to receive a snack and drink to help combat holiday hunger.

On top of this, a total of 67 volunteering sessions were held during the year. All in all, a brilliant site.

Kiveton Community Woodland -

Kiveton has been a hive of activity in 2023/24, with the addition of new on-site interpretation to engage visitors with the site's history and wildlife and new entrance points to enhance its accessibility.

The newly planted community orchard project has been developing well throughout the year, with the Apple Day event, which saw apples being pulped, juiced, and made into 'lazy apple pies' (toasted apple sandwiches) over the campfire, and the Green Man Wassail event, which saw the community come together to bless the trees to encourage new growth and fruit.

The Green Angel courses at Kiveton, such as Adult Forest School, Wild Wellbeing, Hedge-Laying and Countryside Skills, and Dry-Stone Bench Creation, have been very successful. There has also been various other events and community engagement, including bat walks, dawn chorus walks, monthly wellbeing events, and bi-weekly Green Gym sessions with a consistent volunteer group to name a few.

The site has seen bird groups, corporate groups and volunteers, weekly running groups and has been working with the local school, who visit the site frequently for engagement sessions.

Habitat areas have been developed and enhanced throughout the year by volunteers and TCV, which has also included new ponds being created with Wildscapes. The team also have links with Kiveton Development Trust and Chesterfield Canals.