

Media Release - Nominations are in for the Bowland Award 2015

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Contact: If you would like to have further information on this media release, please call Jill Smith, Communications Manager on 07969 888823 or jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk

For immediate release

The search to find this year's worthy recipient(s) of the Bowland Award has gone one step further with a short list of 3 drawn up for consideration by delegates at Landscapes for Life Conference 2015 next week.

The Bowland Award, a hen harrier sculpture in bronze, is awarded annually for **the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

The short listed nominees are

- Bill Jenman on Behalf of Touching the Tide
- Matt Holden on behalf of River Stour Project Volunteers
- South Wiltshire Farmland Birds Project

Howard Davies, CEO of the National Association for AONBs, said: "The Award is one of our ways of acknowledging the tireless work of people who contribute to making the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty wonderful places to live and work in or visit. We are looking for a person or a group of people for whom sharing, learning and inspiring is a way of life".

He added: "The short-listed nominees will give a "final pitch" at Landscapes for Life Conference 2015 "Sharing, Learning, Inspiring" next week and we look forward to an exciting evening of voting.

Ends

**The National Association for
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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Editors notes:

Nominees for The Bowland Award 2015 are

1. Name of nominee

Bill Jenman on Behalf of Touching the Tide

Nominee contact details

bill.jenman@suffolk.gov.uk 01394 445225

Person/organisation nominating

Simon Amstutz, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership

Contact details of above

simon.amstutz@suffolk.gov.uk 07971 909649

Reason for nomination

Touching the Tide (TtT) is no ordinary Landscape Partnership Scheme and has been acknowledged by the Heritage Lottery Fund as unique due to its vision and delivery programme to engage the local community in the sometimes controversial subject of coastal change on the 'soft' Suffolk Coast.

TtT's strapline says it all: *Exploring our changing coast*. The dedicated team, supported by a knowledgeable Landscape Partnership Board have driven the scheme forward and engaged communities of many types, including residents, holiday makers and professionals. The individual projects are seemingly endless but limited to 22 across the disciplines including conservation, archaeology, education, training, geology, habitat creation and restoration, wildlife recording and access.

As a measure of success, numbers can often be manipulated but the 170 people that turned up to hear the results of a community archaeological dig, the 7,000 (and counting) that have watched a quirky but informative animated film about our coast, the number of avocet chicks fledged from a newly created RSPB wetland, the column in the local newspaper, the oversubscribed training courses, the 120 that applied to be the graduate trainee associated with the scheme, the more than 1,500 Twitter followers, the 100's of volunteer days, the school children learning about art, business and coastal gardens; all can be counted and reflect the success and reach of Touching the Tide.

The scheme was designed to facilitate a conversation about our changing Suffolk coast. It has not only achieved this but brought many individuals and organizations into the same room to identify common goals and work in partnership. But perhaps the greater legacy is the conversation it has stimulated between those that live on this fantastic ever changing coast and their appreciation and therefore future defence of its astounding wildlife and heritage.

2. Name of nominee

Matt Holden on behalf of River Stour Project Volunteers

Nominee contact details

Matt.Holden@suffolk.gov.uk 01394 445225

Person/organisation nominating

Simon Amstutz, Dedham Vale AONB

Contact details of above

simon.amstutz@suffolk.gov.uk 07971 909649

Reason for nomination

The 22 River Stour Project Volunteers have surveyed around 245km of the River Stour recording over 9,500 features and identifying opportunities for river enhancement projects that have subsequently been undertaken. The volunteer effort has contributed around 600 work days, the equivalent of 3 full time members of staff over one year.

Knowing what we have got is crucial to our understanding and ability to make improvements to the landscape and its wildlife. The River Stour Project Volunteers have given us that understanding undertaking surveys along the length of the river in sometimes pretty awful conditions, even in the warmer months the volunteers had to contend with vegetation such as nettles and hogweed-making the decision on whether to wear summer clothing or cover bare skin a real dilemma.

Volunteers, with the support of staff, have inputted this massive amount of data into a searchable database and management decisions have been able to prioritise work to get the most impact and value. Volunteers have been involved in this side too, undertaking projects to remove and control non native invasive plant species and the more eye catching river restoration projects.

The river restoration projects have included creation of backwaters, artificial berms and vegetated mattresses to deliver the aims of the Water Framework Directive. Although it is too soon to see the results from the monitoring it is obvious to any of those with a basic understanding of ecosystems that these projects will undoubtedly improve the quality of the river and the landscape it sits in.

The project co-ordinator is funded by the Environment Agency with addition support from Essex and Suffolk Water's Branch Out fund and the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project. It would not have been possible without the consent of over 170 landowners who gave their permission for the survey and the ones who have subsequently actively supported the restoration projects.

The last word should go to recognising the work of the Project Officer, Matt Holden, who has gone beyond the what could be reasonably be expected of a staff member to engage volunteers and persuade some sceptical landowners to deliver a remarkably successful project.

3. Name of nominee

South Wiltshire Farmland Birds Project

Nominee contact details

Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership,
Shears Building, Stone Lane Industrial Estate, Wimborne, Dorset. BH21 5PZ

Person/organisation nominating

Cranborne Chase AONB and Wessex Water

Contact details of above

as above

Reason for nomination

We would like to nominate our project because we believe that it exemplifies the strengths of the landscape approach as delivered by AONBs. We are very proud of its success and we want to celebrate the achievements of our Project Officer Tracy Adams.

In July 2009, Tracy Adams was appointed to the post of South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Adviser and joined our team. The post was part of the South West Farmland Bird Initiative (SWFBI). Originally, this Natural England led initiative consisted of three projects targeting the Cotswolds, North Wessex Downs and South Wiltshire, each hosted and part-funded by a different organisation. Original funding came from Defra and Natural England, matched by our own project funds. In 2010, £50,000 of additional funding was secured from Wessex Water's Biodiversity Partners Programme for five years to replace the AONB contribution. Further funding of £60,000 has been secured from the Wessex Water Corfe Mullen to Salisbury Pipeline Project to replace the Natural England funding that was withdrawn. The project is now wholly funded by the private sector with in-kind support from the AONB. It is an example of a successful move from exchequer to private sector funding and its future is secured through to 2017.

The project aims to reverse the decline in numbers of six critically endangered farmland bird species associated with arable land by working with farmers to provide habitat for nesting, insect food and winter seed food. The key to the success of the project has been continuous free advice to existing HLS agreement holders to ensure that bird options deliver for the species on each particular farm whilst also being tailored to suit the way in which that farm is managed. Stewardship options for birds such as growing specialist seed mixtures, or growing cereal crops with reduced chemical input, can be more difficult to manage than more popular hedgerow and grass buffer strip options; so it was critical to success that Tracy is able to provide agronomic advice on weed control, pest control, crop establishment and cultivation as well as farmland ecology.

It was imperative that the AONB, through Tracy, developed excellent relationships with the farming community. In this, Tracy's knowledge of both farming practice and ecology, as well as her diplomacy and obvious enthusiasm, has made her the "go to" person for this type of advice in our area and way beyond. She has provided 1-2-1 advice to 132 farmers across an area of 22,000 hectares, creating 1,000 hectares of new farmland bird habitat. The package of HLS options, developed by Natural England, have proven efficacy and ensure that the HLS agreements managed by Tracy have the maximum possible impact on local bird populations as well as other species such as brown hare, harvest mouse and rare arable plants such as cornflower and corn marigold. The success of this work has not gone unnoticed: 16 published articles, 5 radio interviews, 2 appearances on national TV and a presence on YouTube and Twitter are all testament to the interest and recognition it has generated.

The South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project is an exemplar of how AONB partnerships can create the golden thread that joins landscape scale context with practical action on the ground. It demonstrates the critical importance of relationships between organisations and between people and the need for ceaseless effort in maintaining and building those relationships. It also provides an example of how our project work can be valuable to partners in the private sector who are willing to invest in ensuring that our important work carries on into the future.

- The **National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB)** was formed in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its membership is largely composed of AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards, representatives from local authorities whose boundaries include AONBs and individuals who are concerned to improve AONB management and funding arrangements. For further information about the NAAONB visit www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-the-association.html
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), along with National Parks, are considered to be the most special landscapes in the country and belong to an international Protected Landscape Family. There are 38 AONBs in England and Wales, and a further eight in Northern Ireland. For further information about the AONB Family visit www.landscapesforlife.org.uk**
- **Landscapes for Life Conferences** provide an opportunity for the AONB Family and those interested in protection our precious landscapes to join together and address issues of current concern. See www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/l4l-conference.html

- ***Your AONB information***

- The Bowland Award, a hen harrier bronze, is awarded annually for **the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

Previous recipients have been:

- 1999 - Professor Gerald Smart
- 2000 - The Rt. Hon The Lord Renton of Mount Harry
- 2002 - Ray Woolmore
- 2004 - Richard Butler
- 2005 - The Rt Hon Alun Michael MP
- 2006 - The Countryside Agency
- 2007 - Professor Adrian Phillips CBE
- 2008 - Simon Hooton
- 2009 - Mike Taylor OBE
- 2010 - Butterfly Conservation
- 2011 - The Gower Society
- 2012 - Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project
- 2013 - Chilterns Chalk Stream Project