

CPRE Norfolk Awards 2021



The countryside charity
Norfolk

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CPRE Norfolk Awards 2021



The CPRE Norfolk Awards were launched in 1979 to recognise significant achievements made by local people, public sector organisations, schools and businesses which result in thriving countryside, better buildings, positive impacts on the landscape and improvements in rural life across Norfolk. It is one of the longest running awards schemes in the county and over that time we have given awards to almost 500 projects.

There are four award categories:

- Countryside Champions
- Rural Living
- Digging Deep
- Good Lighting Design

This year, there were 27 entries and we were delighted with the quality and scope of the activities and schemes described.

It is clear that a great deal is going on at a local level to improve rural

life in Norfolk and we are pleased to showcase it through our Awards. Far from curtailing local action because of difficulties created by coronavirus, there has been a resurgence of interest in caring for and accessing the countryside. Across Norfolk we are seeing more people stepping up to the plate to do their bit to create opportunities for our wildlife and mitigate for climate change in the countryside. And we have observed how many parish councils have been prepared to lead the way to set up schemes that will improve the local environment and benefit local people. Despite the huge challenges faced by schools and their pupils, we were pleased to receive several worthy applications from schools.

I hope you enjoy finding out about all these incredible projects described in this booklet and online www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/awards-2021/ as much as we have.

Chris Dady

Chair of Trustees, CPRE Norfolk

This year's CPRE Norfolk Awards have been generously sponsored by Brunswick Investment Management Ltd, an independent financial planning and investment management firm based in Norfolk. Brunswick Investment Management Ltd aim to build long lasting, positive client relationships and offer advice in a number of areas including personal protection planning, capital investment, retirement planning and income tax and inheritance tax planning.

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Brunswick Investment Management Ltd strives to have a positive impact on society and is proud to sponsor the CPRE Norfolk Awards 2021.

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Countryside Champions

We have made awards in this category for projects that enhance and protect the Norfolk countryside and all that is within it through the vision and perseverance of local community groups and individuals.



HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Boughton Fen

The fen, which lies to the east of Downham Market in West Norfolk, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest about 16 hectares in size, with an important range of fen habitat species, including wildflowers, mature trees and coppice with many varieties of birds, including hen harriers, hobbies, buzzards, owls and even bitterns! - as well as mammals and insects. The fen has proved very popular in recent months, with many people enjoying walking through the mown paths to see a wide variety of wildlife.

The Boughton Fen management committee has a core of six members and is supported by a pool of about 24 volunteers and contractors who manage water levels on the fen to prevent it drying out; carry out a rotational programme of reed cutting and mowing; control scrub; and manage other conservation work as required.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Good public access maintained
- Impressive range of wildlife and birds.

West Beckham Old Allotments

West Beckham Old Allotments are close to Sheringham Park and were once allotment gardens but, after these were abandoned, were used as a field for growing daffodils.

The Felbeck Trust manages a number of sites for wildlife and has developed a specific habitat management plan for each site which summarises how the land will be restored for wildlife and how competing objectives such as specific requirements for rare breeding species can be managed alongside maintaining public access.

At West Beckham Old Allotments, work is underway to establish a wildflower meadow, create thick hedges to encourage turtle doves to nest, and a drinking pool and butterfly bank have been created.

All work at West Beckham Old Allotments is completed by local volunteers using (where possible) traditional tools and materials for which training is given. Over 1000 hours of work has been volunteered to date and the Trust advises and inspires other community groups to take on and manage similar sites.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Engages with others
- Advises other community groups
- Provides training for volunteers.



WINNER



Hellington and Rockland Community Reserve

The Hellington and Rockland Community Reserve Group is a community association which rents 2.6 hectares of land owned by the local church and manages it for wildlife. Members pay £20 per annum to support habitat management and to develop access within the site.

The association organises walks, runs events and workshops and encourages participation in volunteer working parties. Hedgerows have been planted, a wildflower meadow seeded, owl boxes installed, ditches improved and paths created around the perimeter, encouraging walks through the various habitats. The site has become a County Wildlife Site.

During lockdown, the value of the reserve became apparent, with an increase in the number of people visiting for daily outdoor exercise and helping with their wellbeing and mental health.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Innovative community involvement
- Good Facebook page
- Paths for exploring.

HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Chet Valley B-Line

The Chet Valley B-Line is a wildflower-rich pathway for insects in south Norfolk which connects pollinator habitats. The B-Line runs for 17km, is 4km wide, and is centred on the River Chet in south Norfolk running from Poringland to Hardley.

The project is very ambitious and involves many players and partners, encompassing parish councils, churches, local residents, local farmers, wildlife charities and government agencies who all take action to manage local sites for the benefit of pollinators (plants to provide nectar, food for caterpillars, monitoring of insect populations). The Bergh Apton Conservation Trust is a keystone nature site within the B-Line project area. The concept of B-Lines was devised by the charity Buglife as a national network of insect 'motorways' to promote insect mobility.

Pollinators face threats from a combination of habitat fragmentation, agricultural intensification and climate change. Loss of pollinators is a conservation disaster and has huge economic consequences for global agriculture.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Encompasses urban areas
- Source of inspiration and knowledge for other pollinator projects
- Involvement of children.



Countryside Champions Youth Award

A special Countryside Champions category recognising young people.



Save the Bees

The Save the Bees project at Coltishall Primary School is in its second year. The project has created a habitat for wildlife and increased biodiversity on the school grounds, enhanced the landscape the children spend time in, and fostered a sense of care and guardianship for nature in the children.

The main focus for their CPRE Norfolk Award application was a 40 metre by two metre wildflower bed which has been created from scratch with the help of a conservation volunteer. A watering schedule organised by the children ensured that the wildflower seeds quickly established to create a permanent outdoor feature which, as well as providing habitat for a variety of pollinators such as bees and hoverflies, provides inspiration for writing and art work. The school applies a Forest School philosophy very well across the curriculum, with time scheduled outside whatever the weather in areas such as the woodland kitchen, whittling circle or climbing trees or making a den.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- A school that embraces outdoor learning
- Inspires young hearts and minds
- Translates love of wildflowers and bees beyond school and into children's homes and gardens.

Digging Deep

We make awards in this category for businesses, local authorities and parish councils for initiatives that enhance Norfolk's countryside and make local communities enjoyable places to live.



Marty's Marsh

Marty's Marsh is a four-acre site to the south of Blofield. It includes lowland pasture and a conservation water meadow, which is cut three times a year to manage the wetland flora, whilst the north of the site is drier and wooded. The boundaries of the land, which was purchased by Blofield Parish Council in 2019, have remained unchanged since at least 1840 and the site has been used in past times to graze cattle and sheep and, more recently, a horse called Marty.

The Friends of Marty's Marsh volunteer group, which is about 30 strong, manages the site by clearing scrub, maintaining footpaths and hedgerow planting and coordinates with other local conservation groups. There is good permissive access throughout the site which connects with the wider Public Rights of Way network.

There are cleared areas at points to access the watercourse and shaded areas for picnics, and plans are afoot to connect the site via a bridge to a local green space managed by Brundall Parish Council. The site is open to the public every day of the year and has become an important place for many local people who walk there regularly.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Engages with other local groups
- Good links with the wider Public Rights of Way network.

HIGHLY
COMMEDED

Kett's Heights

Kett's Heights is in Thorpe Hamlet to the east of Norwich and is where Robert Kett laid siege with a force of more than 10,000 to the City in 1549. With one of the most spectacular views across the City and the ruins of St Michael's Chapel, it is a place with many historical stories to tell as well as being a sanctuary of peace and tranquillity. An area of grass with open views of Norwich is a small natural amphitheatre and has been used (pre-Covid restrictions) for performances with up to 200 attendees.

Since 2015 the Friends of Kett's Heights have been working to make the site more attractive and accessible by improving the biodiversity, maintaining the hard-landscaping and keeping the grounds clear and free from litter.

The Friends hold weekly practical sessions when volunteers work in small groups to plant shrubs, bulbs and herbs with some assistance from the Norwich Fringe and The Conservation Volunteers. An Executive Committee makes all the major decisions, and the group has recently become a registered charity. The charity has 137 subscribing members and a pool of 30 volunteers who undertake the maintenance and development work at the site, supported by Norwich City Council. The site is open at all times.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Regular newsletter for members
- Open air theatre.



Thetford Conservation Group

Thetford Conservation Group's activities began in October 2019, providing two sessions each week of volunteer nature conservation work, improving habitats for people and wildlife within the town of Thetford.

In the last year, the volunteers of Thetford Conservation Group contributed a total of 1,237 hours (176 days) of work on local green spaces, which is equivalent to employing a full-time member of staff for over 33 weeks. The group includes a wide variety of volunteers and was started by Thetford Town Council's Countryside and Planning Officer, with the aim of providing opportunities for regular gentle healthy outdoor exercise, but with a purpose: to improve green spaces around the town of Thetford for wildlife and people, so as to allow local residents to enjoy contact with nature on their doorsteps.

Volunteers have worked to improve 15 different sites across the town,

including Barnhamcross Common (a Brecks heathland Site of Special Scientific Interest), two woodlands, five riverside areas, the town cemetery and six neighbourhood green spaces. Practical work includes activities such as gorse removal, hedgerow planting and aftercare, improving paths, and fencing.

The group's Facebook posts get hundreds of views and interactions making them amongst the highest of any on the Town Council's newsfeed.

All the sites are free for everyone to access at any time during daylight hours.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Excellent model for other town councils to adopt
- Organised work programme
- Range and scale of tasks undertaken by volunteer group
- Facebook group.





Woodton Community Wood

Woodton Community Wood site is a 3.5-acre site in the centre of the parish which was purchased by the Parish Council from South Norfolk Council. Since purchase, a management committee has worked to bring what was an overgrown inaccessible area into a community facility.

Link paths have been laid so the area connects very well to the village, village hall and play area. New housing will adjoin the wood, and a path has already been laid within the wood to connect with the development site.

A forest school visits weekly during term time and a teaching area has been provided for this purpose, including displays and fixed timber benches for pupils.

Events are also held in the woods around Easter and Christmas, and usage has been high in the pandemic.

The scheme is cared for and managed by volunteers.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Access for all
- Education area with benches.

HIGHLY
COMMEDED

Stations as Havens

Greater Anglia has been working with a small army of Station Adoption Volunteers to make railway stations across Norfolk more environmentally friendly and contribute to railway corridor biodiversity.

60 volunteers have adopted local stations in Norfolk to help improve biodiversity on station platforms through the use of planting schemes to provide food for pollinating insects, installing bird boxes and insect homes, establish wild areas, composting and water conservation. Seven Station Adopters in Norfolk have joined a new initiative set up by Greater Anglia to spread best practice further amongst Adopters and provide advice for the rail company itself.

Recent surveys indicate that the scheme is working well, with a variety of wildlife now benefitting including birds, butterflies, bees, slow worms and bats. The company is now working on an accreditation scheme with Norfolk Wildlife Trust to recognise stations that are committed to biodiversity and has additionally pledged all station gardens to the WildEast movement to help them reach the target of giving 20% of East Anglia back to nature by 2050.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Good monitoring of wildlife
- Sharing best practice amongst Station Adopters
- Pledge to WildEast.

HIGHLY
COMMEDED



Rural Living

We have made awards in this category for projects which improve the sustainability of rural life, making rural living more environmentally-friendly and economically and socially viable.



East Harling Community Garden

East Harling Community Garden was created by local volunteers from an unused and unloved green parcel of land purchased by the parish council following various fund-raising initiatives and resident donations. The garden is well situated next to a public footpath and borders a large field, allotments and a children's playground. Following clearing, the space was designed by two lead volunteers, both experienced gardeners, and includes plant beds, a bug hotel, bird boxes and a hedgehog house, and uses materials and seeds donated by local residents and businesses.

Widened paths provide access for all and the garden has proved popular with residents who have been able to get involved directly, socialise and watch wildlife. In a short time, the garden has become a centre of biodiversity and a source of passion and pride for those who have worked on it.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Informal space for people to visit, plant, relax, socialise and wildlife watch
- Central village location.

HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Wild with Nature

Manor Farm near Attleborough is a 300-hectare farm which, until recently, was managed intensively to grow irrigated vegetables, maize, cereals and sugar beet.

Owners Andrew and Rebecca Thornton were keen to farm more sustainably, improve soil health and farmland biodiversity, and reduce water abstraction. They applied for a mid-tier Countryside Stewardship scheme which entailed them turning away from intensive arable farming to create 100 hectares of grass and native wildflowers, five hectares of wild bird seed mix, 24 hectares of cultivated fallow, 19 hectares of grassland buffer strips and 50 hectares of permanent pasture.

As a result, the farm now looks more like it did when it was farmed by Andy's grandfather in the 1950s with wildflower meadows flourishing with maximum benefit for pollinators.

Diversification to create an off-grid Wild with Nature glamping business has been welcomed by the parish and enables guests to enjoy the beauty of their natural surroundings and reconnect with each other and with nature.

Welcome hampers use local produce and guests are encouraged to buy from local shops, highlighting circular economy benefits to the project. Ultimately, there are plans to enable a wider community, including school groups to visit the site for outdoor recreation and to learn about the countryside.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Large-scale biodiversity improvements
- Local job creation; sustainable tourism
- Support for the local economy.

WINNER



Chair's Award



Wild Ken Hill

The Wild Ken Hill estate is an ambitious re-wilding project in coastal west Norfolk that has become a household name through hosting this year's BBC Springwatch team. The project aims to grow healthy food, aid nature recovery, fight climate change and bring vibrancy to the nearby communities. The project also seeks to inspire: the hope is that by telling the Wild Ken story, others are encouraged to take similar action to have a positive impact on the protection and enhancement of the Norfolk countryside.

At Wild Ken Hill, 400 hectares has been allowed to rewild to aid nature recovery, boost biodiversity and mitigate climate change. Habitat restoration uses ponies, cattle and pigs to manage the landscape, care for soils is achieved through non disturbance, trees regenerate, and beavers are used accelerate nature recovery.

Regenerative farming methods demonstrate progressive ways to grow healthy food which includes no till, double cropping, zero insecticides, maximum field margins, cover crops and minimum fertiliser.

Traditional conservation techniques create great habitat for rare species such as curlew and lapwing which thrive where water levels have been raised on the freshwater marshes.

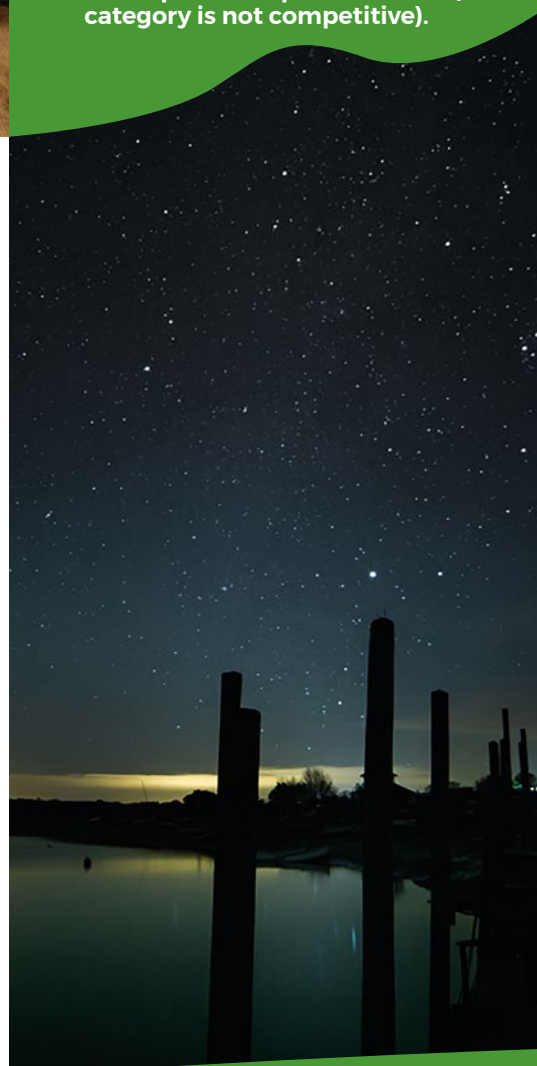
School visits, guided tours, hosting UEA masters students and a forest school all bring local people into touch with the project. With 8,000 plus followers on social media, Wild Ken Hill's approach is catching on!

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Large-scale biodiversity project of national importance
- Excellent educational and communication links
- Blueprint for helping mitigate climate change.

Good Lighting

Awards made in the category recognise good lighting design, where light pollution impacts are kept to a minimum in the rural countryside. All entrants demonstrating best practice receive recognition, and their innovative and appropriate lighting designs are held up as exemplar schemes. (This category is not competitive).



Hempnall surgery lighting

Millgates Surgery in Hempnall is a busy doctor's surgery in the village. The management team have made a positive contribution to reduce light pollution by switching on outdoor lighting only for periods when the surgery is open, or when lights are needed to assist those working out of hours.

These simple steps help protect the dark sky and rural dark landscape of Norfolk, features of the county that are very highly regarded by locals and visitors alike.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Application of simple steps to reduce light pollution.



New Swaffham street-lighting policy

Swaffham Town Council began work on a Street Lighting Policy in 2019 to set out how it would provide and maintain parish lighting on footpaths and open spaces, reducing light pollution and wasted energy associated with street lighting. Whilst there is no legal obligation for the Council to provide parish lighting, it provides and maintains parish lighting where an identified need exists based on a set of criteria contained in the Policy. The Council is committed to the use of energy efficient LED lamps and encourages lighting of residential dwellings and businesses to be environmentally efficient, sympathetic in design and limited where adjacent to the countryside.

The Town Council successfully negotiated a reduced lighting scheme on a later phase of the Swan's Nest housing development in Swaffham, the developer agreeing to reduce the numbers of lights and using energy saving fittings. The same developer is now aware that any lighting on the next site adjacent to the countryside should have no lighting or, if necessary, then it should be minimal and fully dimmable, and timer controlled.

This policy has also been applied to two further developments north and south of Norwich Road in Swaffham, making engagement with the developers much simpler.

The CPRE standard lighting is now used for all relevant planning comments.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Exemplar lighting policy for town councils
- Dark Skies clause within Swaffham Neighbourhood Plan.



Self-dimming platform lights

Over the last few years, Greater Anglia has been replacing its traditional lights at all stations with more efficient LED bulbs to help reduce costs and energy consumption.

As part of this project, all railway stations in Norfolk (with the exception of isolated Berney Arms which does not have an electricity supply and therefore has no lighting) have been installed with LED lighting on the platforms, which automatically dims when the stations are empty.

Column lighting on the platforms are all fitted with passive infra-red sensors which allow them to detect passengers on the platforms. When no movement is detected after 10-15 minutes, the platform lighting will automatically dim.

The lights dim to 10% of their full brightness but may also be reduced to just 5% for specific circumstances (for example to reduce nuisance lighting). This intelligent lighting system is helping Greater Anglia cut down on its energy usage (helping to contribute to an overall reduction in CO2 emissions of 11% from 2019 to 2020) and also helps to minimise light pollution in the countryside, while at the same time

still providing all-important light when it is needed for passengers boarding or alighting in the dark.

CPRE Norfolk likes:

- Use of self-dimming lights technology to reduce light pollution.



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Becoming a member is the best way to support a beautiful, thriving countryside for all. We put your money to good use, collaborating with communities and holding government to account for positive change and a sustainable countryside.

Membership costs from £36 annually (for individuals) which can be paid in monthly subscriptions of just £3.

You can join as an individual, a household or as an organisation, such as a parish council.

Your membership covers membership of both CPRE Norfolk and our national charity, meaning you will receive regular issues of our magazine Countryside Voices, our monthly e-newsletter as well as our own newsletter, Norfolk Voice. You will also receive discounted entry to around 200 houses and gardens.

Find out more and apply at

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Registered charity number: 210706