CIEEM

Awards 2024

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President's Introduction

This will be the third time, and the last time, I will attend the CIEEM Awards as President. It has been one of the major highlights of my role and a great pleasure and privilege to get together with the award winners, members, sponsors, and guests to celebrate the best of what we do and who we are in the ecology and environmental management professions.

I want to congratulate all shortlisted nominees. It is an achievement to even be in with a chance of winning a coveted CIEEM Award. I also want to thank all those that make the Awards possible – the entrants, the staff at CIEEM, the judges and the sponsors. I did a little bit of judging myself this year, and enjoyed it, but I know what it takes and that there are many people giving up their time to make the Awards what they are. Thank you!

What I see when I attend the Awards or when I see news and social media posts about them, is examples of exceptional projects and exceptional people and teams. But those people and those projects are the tip of an iceberg, representing as they do, what we all deliver as professional ecologists and environmental managers day in day out. So, when we see our colleague and peers receiving awards, we should feel good about what we are doing as well. We may not have won an award, or even entered, but we are part of a profession that has at its core the protection and recovery of nature for the benefit of everyone.

Amongst other things that mission drives innovation, passion, imagination, and hard work. The Awards are the occasion for us to celebrate not only the award winners, but everyone's contribution to what for me is the defining struggle of current generation – to reverse the decline of nature and to leave an environment that will support wildlife and support future generations to thrive and be happy.

However, we won't let what I have said above water down the achievements of the Awards winners and entrants. The Awards are about their success, and I thank them for making the rest of us feel good about what we are all doing to make a better world.

Richard Handley CEcol MCIEEM
CIEEM President

Richard Handley CEcol MCIEEM

Brief Summary of Awards

CIEEM Medal

The CIEEM Medal is the Chartered Institute's highest accolade and is awarded annually. Recipients of the Medal must have made an outstanding and/ or lifelong contribution, in relation to ecology and environmental management. The Medal is open to both CIEEM members and non-members.

In Practice Award

This award recognises the invaluable contribution to knowledge sharing that authors of feature articles in our members' bulletin, *In Practice*, make. The judges will be looking for the most influential and thought-provoking article of the year. All feature articles published in *In Practice* during 2023 were considered for this award, irrespective of whether the article was written by a CIEEM member or non-member.

Higher Education Programme of the Year Award

This award is a valuable opportunity for further education institutions, delivering a programme related to ecology or environmental management, to showcase their high standards of teaching and receive formal endorsement of their work in promoting employability and entrepreneurship within their programme(s). This is awarded for demonstrable evidence of the way students are prepared for their future careers in ecology and/or environmental management, particularly for examples of innovation and those that go above and beyond the national requirements.

Postgraduate Student Project Award

The Postgraduate Student Project Award recognises achievement in planning, undertaking and reporting a postgraduate project/dissertation in a relevant aspect of ecology or environmental management. It is awarded to one Masters degree project/ dissertation undertaken in the 2022/23 academic year, or equivalent if a different academic year system is used. The Postgraduate Student Project Award is open to CIEEM Student members, those who have upgraded to Qualifying level but were Student members whilst undertaking the submitted project as well as students on a CIEEM-accredited degree programme.

NGO Impact Award

This award recognises the achievement of NGOs in delivering a specified initiative, including campaigns and projects, that has had a major impact in benefitting nature and society. The initiatives can be local, national or international, sitebased or species-based, campaigning or awareness raising. It can involve, for example, effective local engagement, influencing local or national policy, mobilising public support or utilising innovative communication methods. NGOs of any size and based in any global location are eligible for this award. There is no requirement for there to have been any CIEEM member involvement in the initiative for it to be eligible.

Climate and Nature Action 2030 Award

This award seeks to recognise individuals or organisations who have had or are having the most impact in raising awareness, engaging others and/or leading action in relation to the climate emergency and/or the biodiversity crisis. The award is for an individual or initiative that can demonstrate impact. This may have been by influencing others through raising awareness of the issues and the need for action. Or it could have been an initiative that purposely addresses the issues and makes a difference. These can be at a local, national or international scale. The judges were particularly keen to recognise individuals or initiatives that highlight the inter-relationship between the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.

Promising Professional Award

This individual award recognises the exceptional achievements of a CIEEM member (Associate or Qualifying) during the early stages of their career. The winner will have demonstrated above-average competence and a strong commitment to their professional development. This can be demonstrated through their achievements, knowledge, skills, leadership, passion and commitment, and inspiration for others in the field of ecology and environmental management.

Member of the Year

This award recognises the consistently high commitment and achievement of a CIEEM member in their work to protect and enhance nature, support and help others in the profession and/ or contribute to the success of CIEEM. All membership grades are eligible.

Best Practice Awards

These flagship project-based awards recognise high standards of professionalism and ecological and environmental management practice by CIEEM members. There are six separate award categories:

1. Small-Scale Practical Nature Conservation
2. Large-Scale Practical Nature Conservation
3. Large-Scale Project Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancement
4. Innovation
5. Stakeholder Engagement
6. Knowledge Sharing

Projects must display high standards of professionalism including a sound evidence base to inform and support the project's aims and objectives; a well-conceived plan, staff schedule and budget, with appropriate risk assessment; and that the project has achieved (or is achieving) its objectives.

Consultancy of the Year Awards

This award recognises successful consultancies delivering high quality ecological services whilst being an exemplar employer and advocate for the profession. There are three award categories for different sized consultancies; over two thirds of each company's ecologists and environmental managers must be members of CIEEM. Criteria include delivery of high quality practical outcomes that benefit business and the economy; evidence of shared learning and good practice; commitment to undertaking CPD and/or supporting the professional development of staff; and promotion of the profession.

Tony Bradshaw Award

The Tony Bradshaw Award for Outstanding Best Practice recognises exceptional projects that set an overall impressively high standard. Category winners for each of the six Best Practice Awards are automatically entered. The Award is made at the judges' discretion and will not necessarily be presented each year.

2023 Awards

CIEEM Medal

Professor William J. Sutherland CBE MAE FRS

Professor Bill Sutherland is one of the world's leading conservation scientists. His research spans over 40 years, initially focussing on behavioural and population ecology whilst he was based at the universities of John Moores, Oxford, Liverpool and East Anglia. Bill showed how behaviour and population ecology could be linked through game theory models of the decisions individuals make, and that such models can then be used to predict the consequences of future states, such as agricultural change or climate change. This was summarised in his Oxford University Press monograph *From Individual Behaviour to Population Biology.*

Bill moved to Cambridge in 2006, to take up the prestigious Miriam Rothschild Chair of Conservation Biology, and much of his later career has been devoted to developing novel processes for integrating science and policy including horizon scanning and evidence-based conservation. With global collaboration he created the website Conservation Evidence. This reviews the evidence for the effectiveness of more than three thousand conservation actions, and provides a set of tools for making evidence-based decisions and embedding evidence into practice. This work is summarised in his most recently edited open-access book *Transforming Conservation: a Practical Guide to Evidence and Decision Making* (2023).

'Conservation Evidence' is bringing about transformational change in conservation through ensuring policy and practice are more efficient and effective. Within this enterprise, Bill and his team have worked with literally 1,100+ named practitioners, policy makers, funders and others to support fundamental strategic and cultural shifts towards more effective conservation action. Cambridge University recently identified his work with Conservation Evidence as having the greatest impact of any research in the entire university!

Bill regularly advises government and conservation organisations. He is at the forefront of predicting the impacts of environmental change and developing novel approaches for integrating science and policy, thereby having significant impact on global conservation efforts.

He leads 'horizon-scanning' exercises, which have a global reach, shaping environmental research and policy priorities. Periodically, he leads reviews of emerging global conservation concerns, receiving international media attention. His 15th annual horizon scan was published in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* in December 2023, identifying 15 issues including making food from air, light-free photosynthesis, earthworm declines, benchtop DNA printers and use of ecoacoustics to study soil.

He has authored or edited 16 books. The *Gratis book scheme* he established has given away more than 5,000 books to 137 countries outside Western Europe etc. Remarkably, his research outputs have been cited more than 69,000 times (averaging more than 4,500 citations per annum since 2020), and nine of his papers/books are 'citation classics', each cited more than one thousand times).

Until autumn 2023, he held the Miriam Rothschild Chair in Conservation Biology in the Department of Zoology at Cambridge, and is a Professorial Fellow in St Catharine's College, running its Biosecurity Research Initiative. He was integral to the establishment of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative. He now holds a director of research position in the Department of Zoology.

Bill has served on advisory committees for bodies including Natural England and The National Trust, was a trustee of Flora and Fauna International, and served as President of the British Ecological Society (2013-2015). He received Honorary Membership of the BES in 2019, which is the highest award the BES gives, recognising exceptional contributions at international level to the generation, communication and promotion of ecological knowledge and solutions.

Bill's research and leadership have been recognised through many awards, most recently as Commander of the British Empire in 2021 'For services to evidence-based conservation', Fellowship of the Royal Society (2023), and Membership of the Academia Europaea (2023). He was awarded The International Ecology Institute 2023 Prize in terrestrial ecology, and earlier was awarded the Scientific Medal of the Zoological Society London (1997), two Marsh awards (Ecology 2001, Conservation 2005), and the Distinguished Service Award of the Society for Conservation Biology (2013).

Bill is an exceptional ecologist and conservation scientist, an outstanding naturalist and teacher, and is widely acclaimed for his generous encouragement of students and early-career researchers.

He is an outstandingly deserving recipient of the CIEEM Medal.

Volunteer Achievement Awards

The Volunteer Achievement Awards, now in its second consecutive year, aim to shine a spotlight on the remarkable contributions made by volunteers, recognising their dedication and impact on the CIEEM community. Nominations were assessed by three judges each, including members of the Governing Board and Secretariat and nominations which scored over the minimum average score were successful. It is with great appreciation that the winners of the 2024 Volunteer Achievement Awards are as follows:

John Box CEcol CEnv FCIEEM (rtd)

John was nominated for the impactful contributions he continues to make for the benefit of the profession and CIEEM since stepping down as CIEEM President in 2015.

John brings his wisdom, expert knowledge and passion to a number of roles including: Chairing the Action 2030 Working Group and Good Practice Guidance for Ecological Restoration Working Group, sitting on the Ecological Restoration and Habitat Creation SIG Committee, being a member of the Competency Framework Review Working Group, leading a Working Group looking at the development of an accreditation scheme for lead Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) authors and reviewers, and chairing several Professional Conduct hearings since 2018.

Notably John was the driving force behind the creation of the Action 2030 working group, wanting a group that challenges CIEEM to lead from the front on climate action; and the EcoWorks initiative, a scheme providing advice and support to members struggling with habitat management problems.

John was the first choice to lead the EcIA accreditation working group which, after 12 meetings is soon starting a pilot, thanks to John's leadership – the same calm and authoritative leadership he previously brought to chairing the Air Quality Impact Assessment guidance project after it ran into difficulty.

Ashleigh Kitchiner MCIEEM

Ashleigh was nominated for her ever-valuable contributions to and involvement with Member Networks, and STEM Ambassadors, in particular her work to inspire new ambassadors from within the CIEEM membership.

Ashleigh sits on the committees for both the Scottish Geographic Section and Marine and Coastal Special Interest Group – positions which she approaches with endless enthusiasm and ideas and often taking on additional responsibilities such as, most recently volunteering to be part of the 2024 Scotland conference planning group, a role which she has already launched herself into by developing the conference theme and contacting relevant experts.

In addition, Ashleigh is a passionate STEM and STEMette Ambassador. She is actively involved in the STEM Ambassador Working Group: a newly formed group to raise the profile of their work, develop new learning resources and help recruit more ambassadors to support the delivery of the Green Jobs for Nature campaign. Ashleigh has also written a blog and featured in webinars, always highlighting the growing need for environmental professionals to get involved to showcase their work and roles to inspire the next generation.

Nick Marchant MCIEEM

Nick was nominated for his proactive, engaged, and reliable approach to volunteering with the Irish Policy Group since its fruition.

Nick has been involved in the Irish policy group since early 2018 and has always been very active through being forthcoming on requests for input on consultations, as well as being proactive and suggesting areas for the Policy Group to focus on. By the end of 2019 Nick was nominated for the role of Chair. As Chair, Nick has been effective in moving actions along and achieving the aims of the group: he has been instrumental in identifying consultations to respond to, drafting responses for the group to comment on and following up directly with the group when needed.

Nick has also been instrumental in producing some key briefing documents to support CIEEM members during Covid, and more recently as part of a 'Biodiversity in Planning' subgroup which Nick helped set up. The Briefing document 'Biodiversity Enhancement in New Developments in Ireland' which was drafted by Nick launched at the end of 2023. Nick has subsequently participated in an online webinar on this topic and co-ordinated a panel discussion which took place at the Irish Conference in April.

Claire Smith CEcol CEnv MCIEEM

Claire was nominated for her invaluable and significant contributions to the Membership Admissions Committee and as a Membership Assessor over the past decade. Claire played a full part as a Membership Admissions Committee member in the development and implementation of entirely new application and assessment processes that coincided with the introduction of CIEEM's Competency Framework. Claire's primary concern has always been in developing and delivering systems and processes that are accessible and fair.

Alongside her service to the Membership Admissions Committee, Claire continues to play an active role as a diligent and reliable assessor of applications for membership. Claire remains one of our most reliable and busy assessors, having reviewed applications from literally hundreds of current and potential CIEEM members and carrying out interviews for dozens of potential CEcol and CEnv Registrants. Importantly, Claire is always willing to mentor new assessors and interviewers and has often agreed to have conversations with applicants that have been disappointed by the outcomes of their initial applications, providing invaluable guidance in order to help them understand the feedback provided to them and to succeed in a subsequent application.

Juli Titherington MCIEEM

Juli was nominated for the long-standing and strategic support she has given to the Scotland Member Network Committee.

Juli has been a member of the Scotland Member Network committee since 2016 and her enthusiasm grows year-on-year. She has been actively involved in the organisation of many Scotland Conferences throughout the years through the organising committee. In the 2023 Scotland Conference which focussed on 'Trees in a Sustainable Future', Juli was integral in reaching out to speakers using her extensive network across SNCBs and consultancies, promoting the conference to a wide audience as well as supporting the Ministers speech. Juli has also led on numerous Member Network events which have been well received and attended by members.

In Juli's present position as Environment Policy Advisor at Scottish Forestry and in her previous role at Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) she actively encourages staff to attend training courses and become members of CIEEM. She has also encouraged engagement in the Green Jobs for Nature website and spotting opportunities for cross sectoral engagement on Green Jobs.

Juli is the kind of person that makes things happen while others just talk about it.

Eirene Williams CEnv FCIEEM (rtd)

As one of the longest standing volunteers, and a Founding Member, Eirene has been heavily involved in various voluntary capacities from the infancy of IEEM and throughout the years of growth since; most notably as Vice-President of IEEM between 2005-2009, and sitting on the Professional Affairs Committee between 1991-2008 including 4 years as Chair.

Eirene was nominated for her dedicated and invaluable service particularly to the Shadow Registration Authority, and the Membership Admissions Committee over more than a decade. Both committees are fundamental to CIEEM's operations, and Eirene has always shown full commitment, absolute dedication, and a keen eye for detail.

The Shadow Registration Authority was established by CIEEM's Governing Board to identify eligibility criteria for the individual award of Chartered Ecologist, and appropriate assessment methods of competence to enable admittance to the Register. From 2012 Eirene served as a CIEEM representative on the Registration Authority of the Society for the Environment, bringing an important viewpoint as a Chartered Environmentalist to the deliberations of the subsequently established CIEEM RA, on which she served for a further 6 years.

Eirene also played a full part as a Membership Admissions Committee member in the development and implementation of entirely new application and assessment processes that coincided with the introduction of CIEEM's Competency Framework. Eirene's primary concern was always maintaining the set standards, and delivering systems and processes that were fair. Eirene continues to play an active role as a diligent and reliable assessor of membership and chartership applications.

Winner

Colin Scott MCIEEM and Suzanne Armstrong

Wallasea Island: Showing why and how to rewild the coast

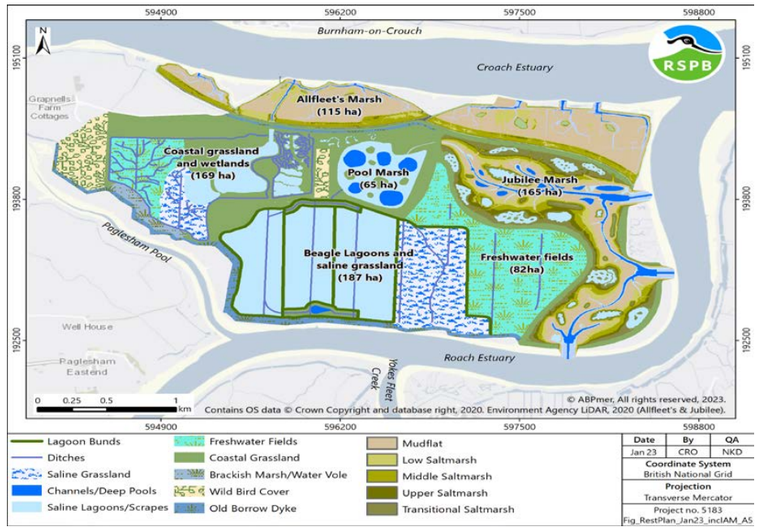
Published March 2023

This article described the completion of the largest and most ambitious coastal wetland restoration project in Europe on Wallasea Island, Essex. Nearly two decades of collaborative work by many partners and specialists had transformed this 800 ha flat expanse of, largely, poor quality agricultural land into a unique and biodiverse mix of islands, mudflats, saltmarshes, coastal grazing land and freshwater wetlands that are managed by the RSPB.

The authors focused on the distinctive and ambitious coastal adaptation techniques that were used at an unprecedented scale in order to create an exemplar of sustainable landscape-scale coastal habitat. Wallasea Island is the first, and so far only, UK coastal site on the Rewilding Europe network and demonstrates how coastal rewilding can be done.

The article went on to describe the manner and scale of this project's implementation, emphasising how it has achieved multiple long-term social, environmental and economic benefits for society. By creating habitats with benefits for amenity, health and community engagement as well as biodiversity, the changes will help to avoid major damage from a future unmanaged sea wall breach, promote sedimentation to accommodate future sea level rise and contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration. In particular, it is now a popular recreational site. It was not easily accessible or very safe for people previously, but now visitors can explore 15 km of trails running through the reserve, and can visit viewing shelters and platforms. Today, around 20,000 people visit Wallasea every year.

The authors also noted that the project is effectively a 'living library' of the many different sustainable coastal adaptation practices that are available for implementing and managing fresh, brackish and saline wetlands.



Highly Commended

Jordane Marsh, Monica Wood ACIEEM and Siân Rennie

Neurodivergence in the workplace: the strength of a team

Published September 2023

In this article the authors described their personal experience of neurodivergence and how, with the support and understanding of better-informed colleagues, they have been able to work more effectively and challenge stigma.

Following an overview of neurodivergent conditions, each of the authors share their own lived experience of being neurodivergent and the challenges it has presented in the workplace, most of which are geared towards the neurotypical. They describe the strategies they have developed to not only cope but, through researching and gaining better insight into the way their brain works, finding ways to work smarter. They all describe how their mental health improved once a diagnosis was made and they understood what they were experiencing.

The openness and honesty of the authors is critical to the impact of this article. Crucially, they talk about some of the positives of neurodivergent conditions and how they can be of benefit in the workplace as they bring strengths and talents which can be immensely valuable. They also talk about the importance of a positive workplace culture around neurodiversity, especially to encourage and support colleagues who may be nervous about sharing their diagnosis, and emphasise that asking for reasonable adjustments (often quite minor) can be transformative.

Highly Commended

Lizzie Ashworth, Delphine Pouget CEcol CEnv MCIEEM, Simon Curson, Katherine Walsh ACIEEM and Graham Irving

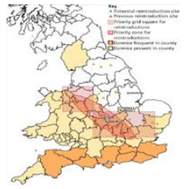
Species Conservation translocations in England: perspectives from Natural England

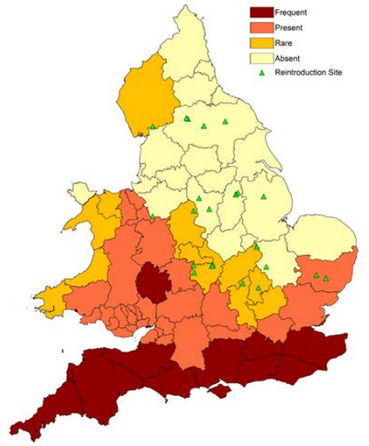
Published March 2023

Through illustrated case studies, this article described three reintroduction and conservation translocation projects Natural England has either led on or contributed to.

The authors point out that, when part of a wider programme of habitat improvement or creation, reintroductions and translocations can provide the catalyst for public support and engagement. Conservation translocations are an excellent tool when well-planned and implemented and they may also offer a vital option to ensure our ecosystems are more resilient to climate change. But the authors also point out that, although there are significant risks associated with conservation translocations, there are ways to reduce those risks to improve chances of success.

Three case studies were discussed: the wart-biter cricket, the hazel dormouse and the Eurasian curlew. The authors reviewed the specific recovery programmes that led to successful expansion of these species, noting the critical role that partnership working played in the positive outcomes achieved. They also reflected on the need for successful planning and the importance of stakeholder engagement at an early stage, including where conflicts or negative opinions are likely to be encountered. Finally, they emphasised the importance of ensuring that proposed schemes align with *Reintroductions and other conservation translocations: code and guidance for England* (Defra 2021) and relevant IUCN guidelines.





Current Dormouse Distribution in UK and reintroduction sites

All reintroduction sites between 1993-2022 shown (some of these are considered to have been unsuccessful)

people's trust for endangered species

Winner

MSc Ecological Survey Skills with Placement – University of Reading

The MSc Ecological Survey Skills with Placement programme at the University of Reading stands out for the curriculum's strong focus on employability, providing students with practical skills highly sought after by ecological consultancies and related sectors.

The programme's structure is designed to offer a blend of academic learning and hands-on field training, culminating in a 6-month paid industry placement. This combination ensures that students gain both theoretical knowledge and practical experience, aligning with CIEEM's emphasis on linking theory to practice in ecology and environmental management.

Developed in collaboration with industry partners, the programme was launched in response to the challenges outlined in CIEEM's report "Closing the Gap: Rebuilding ecological skills in the 21st Century." Since its inception in 2011, the programme has produced over 200 graduates well-prepared for careers in ecological, conservation, and consultancy sectors, with ongoing growth expected through continued partnerships with ecological consultancies.

Students enrolled in the programme benefit from a curriculum that prioritises professional and practical skills relevant to the commercial industry. They receive comprehensive training in various aspects of ecological consultancy, including wildlife legislation, development planning, ecological impact assessment, and biodiversity assessment. Moreover, students acquire proficiency in conducting botanical, animal, and habitat surveys using the latest industry guidance and analytical techniques, as well as presenting their findings to industry standards.

The programme's unique structure enables graduates to seamlessly transition into ecological consultancy roles upon completion. Exceptional graduate outcomes, demonstrated by the government's Graduate Outcomes surveys, indicate that 100% of graduates are employed within 15 months of completing the programme. Additionally, surveys conducted internally show that placement providers often offer permanent positions to placement students, reflecting the program's quality and the value it brings to consultancy partners.

Furthermore, students appreciate studying at a university that prioritises sustainability, as evidenced by the University of Reading's ranking in the People & Planet University league table. The university's commitment to teaching sustainable principles aligns with the values of students, empowering them to address environmental challenges proactively.

In summary, the MSc Ecological Survey Skills with Placement programme at the University of Reading offers students a comprehensive skill set and practical experience essential for success in ecological consultancy and related fields. Its recognition as the CIEEM Higher Education Programme of the Year is well-deserved, highlighting its significant contributions to the field of ecology and environmental management.

Highly Commended

BSc (Hons) Ecology and Conservation – Anglia Ruskin University

The BSc (Hons) Ecology & Conservation degree at ARU's Cambridge campus is justly proud of its employability-focused curriculum and practical approach to learning. The programme, delivered by the Faculty of Science and Engineering's School of Life Sciences, emphasises the development of transferable skills alongside technical and scientific knowledge, preparing students for careers in the ecological sector.

Fieldwork plays a crucial role in the programme, allowing students to develop practical skills and knowledge. "Live Briefs" with external partners enrich outdoor fieldwork experiences, while modules cover topics such as GIS, species identification, and habitat classification. Additionally, students engage in co-curricular activities and develop electronic portfolios of CPD evidence to enhance their employability.

Modules are delivered by staff with subject specialisations, often featuring guest speakers from the environmental and animal sectors. The programme's blend of theoretical and practical modules aims to embed graduate skills, with an emphasis on field and practical skills across local, national, and international settings.

Staff actively engage in curriculum design and assessment planning, with the "Live Brief" model allowing industry partners to present real-world tasks to students. Student-led research projects contribute to the programme's applied focus.

The Applied Ecology Research Group (AERG) conducts world-class research to address global ecological challenges, offering opportunities for staff development and student involvement. Regular biology research seminars provide further enrichment for students.

The programme fosters strong connections with alumni, who return to share career insights and support current students. Additionally, internships, live briefs, volunteering opportunities, and employability talks are integrated into the student experience to facilitate entry into the ecological sector.

Overall, the BSc (Hons) Ecology & Conservation degree at ARU offers a high quality, comprehensive and practical education, preparing students for successful careers in ecology and environmental management.

Winner

Christopher Birks

Birkbeck, University of London

Changes in the nutrient flux of a wastewater-impacted reach of river when subjected to combined sewer overflow discharges

Combined sewer overflow discharges (CSODs) represent a known contributor of pollutants to UK rivers; however, their influence on fluvial nutrient concentrations is less well studied. Following a comprehensive literature review, Christopher's research identified a lack of studies on the impact of CSODs on fluvial nutrient concentrations.

The project drew on the established methodologies of peer-reviewed work in using the publicly-available data on UK river water chemistry. By combining this data with that obtained from Thames Water by environmental information requests, Christopher sought to identify study sites that would allow both CSOD nutrient inputs to be compared to those in treated effluent discharges (STWDs) and to measure the comparative downstream flux of these inputs. While the project was unable to identify such ideal sites, it set a clear methodology by which the research questions would be addressed.

The project was able to demonstrate (with limitations) that CSODs could be the driver behind significant reductions in fluvial nutrient concentrations (40.25% phosphorus; 38.65% nitrogen). When projected onto an identified STWD-impacted fluvial nutrient flux at an additional study site, these findings produced nutrient fluxes of -5.16 mg-N/L (46.78%) and 0.011 mg-P/L (14.29%). These represented 243% increases in fluvial nitrogen flux and 86% decreases in fluvial phosphorus flux when compared to STWD-impacted conditions. Critically, these outputs shifted the phosphate concentrations at the additional study site to within those determined 'good' by the Water Framework Directive, and to within 0.17 mg-N/L of nitrate limits for avoiding freshwater eutrophication.

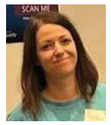
Given the importance of nutrient availability in determining the stable states riverine environments, this project was able to make a strong case for developing a greater understanding of CSOD-derived nutrient inputs.

Highly Commended

Carys Peotto

University of South Wales

Can't see the roost for the trees: Using camera traps to improve survey outcomes for tree-roosting bats.



Using a comprehensive dataset of camera trap footage from BATS Research and Training Services (provided by Jim Mullholland MCIEEM), this project demonstrated standard camera traps can be effectively deployed to: i) detect bats; ii) confirm roost-use; iii) derive survey period reference points for practitioners; and iv) provide additional insights into bat behaviour, activity and inference of roost characterisation.

The project included an extensive literature review and the processing of large amounts of data. Photographic detections were collected from 14 known bat roosts over 11 months, to a total of 169,455 photos. The statistical approaches used were appropriately complex, allowing the derivation of extremely useful and important data. Generalised Additive Models (GAMs) were used to explore the influence of environmental variables on bat activity. Detections were used in an iterative, repeated-samples approach to simulate surveys across multiple days and compare detection probabilities to those derived from survey effort prescribed by standard guidance.

Finally, thresholds defining the probability of detecting bat presence (50% and 80%) were derived across all species, for each species independently, for each potential roost feature, and for different seasons. This analysis illustrated the potential inefficacy of visit-based surveys on determining bat presence in tree roosts. Analysis of non-bat species sharing roost features was also included, highlighting co-occurrence and potential conflicts with species such as grey squirrels and novel footage of stoats detected on cameras 16-18m up oak trees.

Commended

Liam James

Sheffield Hallam University

How did the Crab and Lobster Mass Mortality Event of 2021 – 2022 Impact Predators of Crustaceans in Yorkshire and the Northeast?

Following a literature review to establish the dietary preferences and adaptations for the study species the report goes on to outline how a number of hypotheses were addressed.

The data is mainly analysis of interview responses, presented in the form of charts, and the results from the great egg case hunt. The latter is from two regions: the impacted area and a region south of this, and from two time periods: before the pollution event and after it. The data is then analysed to address one of the hypotheses: that the study species migrated south to find alternative sources of prey. Limitations in this data are also identified, such as the impact of COVID-19 on beach combing for citizen science purposes.

The wider impacts of these findings are discussed in context of the local economy and the impact to livelihoods, as well as providing greater context to the impact of the pollution event on the whole ecosystem, not just the crab and lobster populations.

Commended

Samuel Bosio

Trinity College, Dublin

Land Ownership and Social Values Influence Native Woodland Management in Co. Wicklow, Ireland

This dissertation examined the status of native woodland in Ireland, using Wicklow as a case study. After another comprehensive literature review, containing some well analysed sources, Samuel tackles some sensitive subject areas, reflecting that nature restoration can be a sensitive subject in Ireland. He collected both quantitative and qualitive data using a multi-disciplinary approach.

His report shows that all land ownership types investigated managed some native woodland sites with high biodiversity and a favourable habitat structure. However, private woodlands were more biodiverse and had higher tree size diversity on average than woodlands with native species managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which were more structurally and biodiverse than those by forestry companies. The report went on to show that while the ecological component is usually the main driver of conservation and restoration activities, the social component is often overlooked, which results in poor outcomes over time, as has been the case in Wicklow.

Winner

Nature Champions – Scottish Environment LINK

The Scottish Environment LINK's 'Nature Champions' initiative celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2023, aiming to engage Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) in championing Scotland's threatened species and habitats. Each MSP selects one or two species or habitats to champion throughout a parliamentary session, often focusing on those within their constituency or region.

A previous CIEEM award winner in 2016, the initiative has gained significant further traction since then and 176 MSPs have previously or are now participating. They have:

- Lodged 115 Parliamentary Motions in support of their species or habitats.
- Asked 108 Parliamentary Questions about their species or habitats.
- Highlighted their species or habitats in 18 Parliamentary Debates.
- Taken part in hundreds of site visits – 26 Nature Champions attended site visits in 2023 alone.

The initiative's success was itself commemorated with a Parliamentary Motion and a public exhibition, underscoring its influence on political engagement with conservation efforts. The Nature Champions 10th anniversary exhibition, featuring interactive displays showcasing Scotland's biodiversity and attended by numerous MSPs, provided a platform for raising public awareness and fostering appreciation for Scotland's natural heritage.

The engagement primarily involves Scottish Environment LINK members working closely with MSPs, providing briefings, organising site visits, and facilitating various activities. Regular communications, including newsletters and social media updates, keep stakeholders informed about ongoing efforts.

Emphasising bipartisan support, the initiative aims to involve MSPs from all political backgrounds, reinforcing the importance of environmental conservation as a shared priority. Adaptability has been crucial for the initiative's sustained relevance, demonstrated through innovative approaches like the MSP Nature Champion of the Year award and group site visits.

Overall, the Nature Champions initiative has successfully engaged MSPs across party lines, promoting active involvement in environmental conservation. Through continuous adaptation and creative approaches, it continues to make significant strides in raising political awareness of the value of Scotland's natural environment. Furthermore, it has inspired similar programmes in other parliamentary bodies (notably Wales and England) and local authorities.

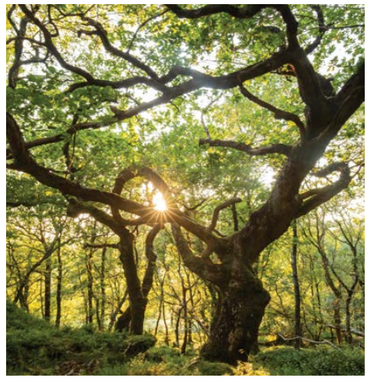
Highly Commended

Atlantic Rainforest Restoration – The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts are leading a groundbreaking effort to restore temperate rainforests across the British Isles, an incredibly rare habitat covering just 1% of the UK's land. With a £38.9 million investment, including a significant donation from Aviva, this 100-year programme aims to recreate rainforests on eligible sites along the Atlantic coastline. By reconnecting fragmented sites and creating new rainforests, the initiative seeks to combat climate change and biodiversity loss, with an estimated 222,000 tonnes of carbon sequestered by 2050.

Involving diverse stakeholders, including local communities, environmental organisations, and businesses, has ensured broad expertise and support for the initiative. Each individual Wildlife Trust engages stakeholders transparently, addressing concerns and seeking input. Projects in Devon, North Wales, and the Isle of Man exemplify this approach, integrating tree planting with agroforestry, community engagement, and low-impact grazing.

Recreating temperate rainforests is an exciting and bold initiative, combining grassroots efforts, ecological restoration, climate mitigation, and delivery of ecosystem services. It offers educational opportunities and economic benefits while demonstrating adaptive management strategies for environmental restoration. This multidisciplinary approach fosters biodiversity conservation and public appreciation for nature, making strides toward a sustainable future.



Commended

Philanthropic Lending – The Wildlife Trusts

The Wildlife Trusts have acquired 19 new sites for rewilding, covering 3,671 acres, with philanthropic loans totalling £25 million. These loans provide crucial cash flow to seize land purchase opportunities, addressing the gap in funding for environmental charities. This approach complements traditional grants and donations, allowing for swift responses to land acquisitions.

Philanthropic loans, pioneered by Julia Davies of We Have The Power, offer favourable terms like low or no interest and flexible repayments, reducing financial risks for charities. These loans facilitate land purchases or initial restoration efforts, ensuring that nature recovery initiatives can proceed promptly.

Stakeholder engagement is integral to the land acquisition process, fostering collaboration and ensuring the success and sustainability of nature reserve initiatives. The Wildlife Trusts actively engage local communities, adjacent landowners, and the broader public to understand concerns, raise awareness, and garner support for nature reserve projects. Transparent communication channels and feedback mechanisms allow stakeholders to contribute and stay informed throughout the process.

Philanthropic loans represent a new approach to philanthropy, providing impact investment without the expectation of financial returns. Wealthy individuals and charitable trusts can use this approach to support charitable and community projects without eroding their capital but knowing that their money is working for good.

Winner

Dr Bruce Lascelles CEnv MCIEEM

Dr Bruce Lascelles has dedicated his career to highlighting the often overlooked yet vital role of soil in biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Over his three decades in the field, he has become a prominent figure in advocating for soil's importance at local, national and international levels. Through extensive training courses and presentations, Bruce has shared his knowledge with environmental professionals, emphasising the critical link between soil health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

His involvement with organisations like CIEEM, CIRIA, Cranfield University, and others has allowed him to contribute to the development of guidance and policies aimed at addressing climate and biodiversity crises. As the current chair of the CIRIA Soil Community of Practice, Bruce has played a key role in producing guidance for the construction industry, ensuring that soil considerations are integrated into development projects. He is also a founding member of the Technical Advisory Group supporting Defra in the update to the Construction Code of Practice for the sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites and is leading on the development of guidance around soils and habitat creation, restoration and translocation as part of the CIEEM Ecological Restoration and Habitat Creation Special Interest Group.

During his presidency at the British Society of Soil Science (BSSS), Bruce focused on fostering collaboration between the soil community and other stakeholders, particularly ecologists. He aimed to broaden the understanding of natural and social capital and increase the visibility of scientific outputs related to soil health. Through initiatives like science and guidance notes, Bruce sought to engage audiences across different sectors and age groups, including the education sector.

Bruce's impact extends beyond organisational involvement. He actively participates in conferences, panels, and podcasts to share his expertise. For instance, he spoke at the AquaConSoils conference, participated in panel discussions at Cambridge University, and contributed to podcasts such as the CIEEM Nature in a Nutshell podcast. Additionally, Bruce supported the development of the Soil Charter, which was showcased at the World Congress of Soil Science, further highlighting the importance of soil management.

Bruce's commitment to promoting soil awareness extends to public outreach activities. He helped to deliver the World Congress of Soil Science, featuring scientific content alongside public engagement events such as soil and art displays and workshops. Through these initiatives, over 7,000 children and families engaged with soil-related activities, highlighting the importance of soil education and awareness.

Furthermore, Bruce actively reports from COP meetings, providing insights into discussions related to climate and biodiversity crises. He utilises platforms like LinkedIn to share reflections and insights gained from these meetings, contributing to broader discussions on environmental issues.

In addition to his advocacy work, Bruce has established and leads a consultancy team in Arcadis focused on sustainable land management. With a growing team of experts, Bruce ensures that soil considerations are integrated throughout project phases, from design to implementation and monitoring. His collaborative approach has led to successful project deliveries, even in highly sensitive habitats and designated landscapes.

Bruce's multimedia projects, including helping to develop YouTube videos and short films like "#Grounded," which emphasise the critical role of soils in carbon sequestration, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation. These projects, along with his presentations and blogs, underscore the importance of integrating soil considerations into nature-based solutions for addressing environmental challenges.

Bruce's contributions have been invaluable in promoting soil awareness within the ecological and environmental profession. His dedication to developing innovative techniques and best practice guidance has helped advance soil management efforts, ultimately contributing to broader goals of biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

Highly Commended

Cllr Elizabeth Grey, Wirral Council

Cllr Elizabeth Grey has been a dedicated public servant in Wirral Council since May 2018, demonstrating exceptional commitment to addressing climate and nature emergencies. As Chair of the Wirral Council Environment, Climate Emergency, and Transport Committee, Liz has spearheaded numerous initiatives to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Since 2018, Liz has emphasised the interconnectedness of climate and nature emergencies within Wirral Council's policies. Notably, she advocated for the inclusion of nature alongside climate in the council's climate emergency policy statement, highlighting the importance of nature-based solutions and recovery efforts.

Liz actively supports grassroots environmental groups like the Wirral Environment Network (WEN) and participates in events such as the Wirral Climate Festival to raise awareness of climate change and sustainability. She also engages with schools and community groups, educating young people and promoting sustainable living practices.

In addition to her advocacy work, Liz has facilitated significant developments in biodiversity and environmental management within Wirral Council. She successfully arranged biodiversity training for council officers, leading to the creation of an ecologist role within the Environment Team. Under her leadership, Wirral's Tree, Hedgerow, and Woodland Strategy has secured over £600,000 for woodland creation projects, with over 45,000 trees planted to date.

Liz's initiatives have also led to budgetary savings and reduced herbicide use across Wirral. She championed sustainable weed control measures, resulting in the phase-out of glyphosate use in all public spaces. Furthermore, her efforts have contributed to the preservation and natural development of Hoylake Beach, with a scientific study commissioned for long-term beach management.

Wirral Council's biodiversity impact ranks second best in the UK, largely attributed to Liz's tireless advocacy and policy development. Her establishment of the Wirral Carbon Neutral Business Award and collaboration with organisations like Friends of the Earth further highlight her dedication to tackling climate and nature emergencies.

Liz's work has had a demonstrably positive impact on Wirral's communities, policies, and environmental practices. Her commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship continues to inspire positive change across the borough.

Winner

Dr Stephanie Bradbeer

Steph is highly regarded for her expertise in invasion science, evident through her academic achievements and publications. At Yorkshire Water (YW), she excels in regulatory projects related to biosecurity and invasive non-native species (INNS). She actively collaborates with partners to maximise outcomes, such as industry-level partnerships with universities. Steph's communication skills shine in various settings, from technical conferences to community events.

Steph has been a driving force behind various invasion science partnerships, e.g. the Check Clean Dry Campaign, the DEFRA Biocontrol Advisory Group and England Invasive Crayfish Group. Her involvement has been actively requested by wider groups such as the North York Moors National Park Authority to support on INNS issues, for example developing training and awareness materials to respond to the outbreak of signal crayfish on the River Esk. Within YW, Steph has developed training materials and protocols for staff, gaining support from leadership and delivering impactful training sessions. She engages with regional groups to enhance standards in INNS management and responds to community needs. Active on social media, Steph also coordinates forums and assists other companies with INNS issues.

Steph's role at YW includes significant project delivery overseen by the Environment Agency (EA). She fosters collaboration opportunities with local EA staff, supervises sponsored PhD students, and engages with forums to coordinate strategic action on INNS. Her passion for biosecurity drives her work, inspiring colleagues and stakeholders alike.

Steph's proactive approach is evident in problem-solving and decision-making situations. During the 2022 drought, she collaborated effectively to mitigate INNS transfer risks during water transfers. She continuously challenges biosecurity science, conducting trials and investigations to drive evidence-based investment.

Despite her unconventional career path, Steph's dedication at YW has led to significant advancements in INNS management. Her willingness to contribute beyond her job scope is notable, evidenced by her involvement in national campaigns like the INNS mapper project. Steph's leadership in this project showcases her ability to drive innovation and collaboration for greater impact.

Steph's early career is not that of a typical CIEEM member. She gained her role at YW and through passion and persistence, helped the organisation achieve a step-change in how they think about and respond to INNS. What makes Steph stand out, is her desire to not just do her job well, but to make a wider difference, always stepping up to volunteer for and actively participate in national campaigns and projects, raising awareness and advancing science.

Winner

William Haigh

Will demonstrates exceptional performance in his ecological consultancy role with Mott MacDonald despite only having just over two years of experience. His keen interest in botany and invertebrates drives him to continually expand his skills through formal and informal CPD. He actively shares his knowledge with colleagues through internal webinars and workshops.

As a survey lead for invertebrates and a competent botanist, Will consistently delivers high-quality reports and advice. He effectively communicates complex ecological concepts to clients and colleagues, receiving excellent feedback for his work. Will's proactive approach extends to setting up internal groups for invertebrate identification and engaging with colleagues across the company to provide advice.

Will has applied his skills to a range of schemes, taking the lead on providing advice on habitat creation and BNG design schemes as well as providing advice to colleagues and clients, resulting in excellent feedback. Will's enthusiasm for ecology is infectious and he is adept at communicating his passion with colleagues, clients, and the community. Will is a fast learner and immediately understands the goal of schemes he works on. He has produced complex, bespoke reporting for a range of schemes to provide recommendations that work to provide the best outcomes for both the client and the environment. Will delivers work on time and to a high standard and always receives great feedback from project managers and clients. He is keen to hear feedback, takes it on and learns quickly.

Will's innovative approaches to project work, such as biophilic design, highlight his ability to develop creative solutions that benefit both clients and the environment. His extensive research and specialist knowledge inform his design decisions and recommendations, resulting in tailored solutions suited to the locality of each project. He is a sought-after individual for project work and is never light of work due to his specialist knowledge. He has taken over leadership of several projects and is trusted by senior colleagues and clients to do a great job and actively contributes to the team both inside and outside of work.

Outside of work, Will volunteers with local groups, demonstrating his commitment to biodiversity conservation. He leads volunteer groups to enhance biodiversity in his local areas and campaigns for better habitat management.

His enthusiasm, dedication, and ability to exceed expectations make him an invaluable member of the MottMac team.

Highly Commended

Dafydd James

Dafydd is a highly skilled ecologist with expertise in herpetology and raptors, excelling in reptile, amphibian, and bird surveys, as well as technical reviewing. He consistently exceeds expectations, leading large-scale infrastructure projects and client development. Dafydd's commitment to learning is evident through his participation in webinars and volunteer work with conservation groups.

He is an exceptional communicator, delivering both internal and external presentations and training sessions, and producing detailed reports for Arcadis' clients like National Grid. Dafydd demonstrates strong leadership qualities, managing teams and mentoring junior staff effectively. He has led projects for the National Grid, Thames Water, and other clients, showcasing his problem-solving abilities and decision-making skills and he confidently liaises with statutory nature conservation bodies to resolve difficult issues.

Dafydd's proactive approach has earned him the trust of the National Grid, resulting in direct awards of substantial work for 2024. He is recognised for his technical expertise, commercial acumen, and commitment to high standards.

Additionally, Dafydd is actively involved in voluntary work such as undertaking GCN surveys with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Group and as a Toad Patrol Manager with Froglife and educational outreach, demonstrating his passion for conservation and inspiring the next generation of ecologists.

Highly Commended

Laura Whitehead

Laura's exceptional communication skills and attention to detail have made her invaluable in client liaison and multidisciplinary projects on behalf of her employer, AtkinsRéalis. Laura's ability to produce complex deliverables and lead projects, such as the Bewl Water Treatment Works project, showcases her leadership and coordination abilities.

She went above and beyond during internal training, achieving 100% in her species identification assessment and winning awards for best practice assessment and outstanding collaboration.

She excels in project management, seeking mentorship to enhance her skills and successfully coordinating multiple framework projects. Laura's technical expertise and coordination skills were crucial in delivering high profile projects such as the MoD Wellesley Road project and the post-development BNG assessment for the Hounslow West Underground Station redevelopment.

Laura's contributions extend beyond project work; she actively participates in working groups to improve collaboration between Landscape Architects and Ecologists on BNG projects. Her outstanding performance has earned her numerous internal #WOW awards and praise from colleagues and clients alike.

As a GIS expert, Laura has also played a pivotal role in teaching colleagues to use QGIS. Additionally, Laura generously volunteers for organisations like the Surrey Botanical Society and Surrey Dormouse Group, further building her skills while contributing to conservation efforts outside of work.

Highly Commended

Shah Nawaz Jalil

Shah brings extensive knowledge and experience from academia and field-based conservation projects in India, holding a PhD from the Wildlife Institute of India. His core skills encompass ecological data collection and analysis, statistical and spatial modelling, scientific/technical writing, and effective communication with stakeholders. Proficient in software like R, AutoCAD, and QGIS, Shah is adept at delivering tasks across various projects.

Shah's advanced presentation and writing skills are evident from his extensive publication record and presentations at international conferences. He has also reviewed papers for prestigious journals and served as a lead speaker and trainer in capacity-building workshops.

Within the Arcadis ecology team, Shah is recognised as a vital member, excelling in learning new skills and taking ownership of project deliverables. He has previously led field teams and conservation projects in India, demonstrating strong leadership and organisational abilities.

Whilst valued as a highly competent ecologist, Shah's contributions extend beyond technical tasks to team activities and events. He is committed to continuous professional development, attending numerous courses and webinars to upskill himself. He is relied upon by clients and colleagues in the UK and India for his fresh perspective and problem-solving abilities. His proactive approach, coupled with his commitment to learning and development, underscores his potential as a professional ecologist.

Member of the Year Award

Award sponsored by WILDCARE Nationwide Ecology Supplies

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Winner

Tom Butterworth CEcol MCIEEM

Tom has over 27 years' experience working for wildlife in academia, civil society, government, and consultancy. His roles have included managing protected sites, developing biodiversity policies, and spearheading initiatives like the UK's Nature Positive campaign.

Tom has led biodiversity and natural capital work across many high-profile projects, particularly in the energy, road, and rail sectors. This includes working on major schemes such as HS2 as well as innovative projects and initiatives such as developing a nature positive approach for a UK airport, a nature recovery strategy for The Crown Estate, and Transport for London's biodiversity baseline and natural capital account. He works closely with policy and best practice, particularly in the development of the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policy in England. His foundational knowledge of BNG is evident across multiple resources, publications and training material including the BSI "Little book of Biodiversity Net Gain" with co-authors Julia Baker and Jo Treweek.

In fact, Tom is probably best known for his leadership in the development and implementation of BNG. With his previous experience of working at Natural England providing useful knowledge and understanding of policy development, he was instrumental in driving forward early development. Tom has shown great commitment to ensuring that the BNG tools and metrics that are now encompassed within England's legal framework, are practical to apply by end-users and scientifically robust.

Beyond project work, Tom is not just an exceptional technical lead for biodiversity, the future of ecology and sustainability more widely, he is also an advocate of how to work well. As a people leader, he leads with an inclusive, supportive and passionate mentality. His belief, vision and confidence of approach is a distinctive trait that results in others working hard to achieve their own goals and to have impact on biodiversity themselves. The support he provides to others, facilitating their progression and giving them the opportunity to shine, has led to many, especially women, taking on leadership roles for nature as a result.

Tom's commitment to biodiversity extends to his involvement in technical advisory roles and leadership positions in organisations like the UK Business and Biodiversity Forum. He is a prolific author, contributing to trade journals and peer-reviewed literature, particularly focusing on nature-positive approaches and BNG.

He is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of conservationists, providing support to PhD and MSc students. Under his leadership and encouragement, a significant number of WSP's ecologists have become members of CIEEM.

Until recently as Head of Ecology at WSP, Tom has played a crucial role in developing training programmes to enhance ecological expertise, particularly in BNG assessments. Tom has now joined Arup as Regional Nature Lead for the UK, India, Middle-East and Africa.

In summary, Tom's vast experience, technical expertise, and passion for biodiversity conservation make him a key figure in the field. His leadership and advocacy efforts have significantly contributed to advancing ecology and environmental management practices across our profession.

Commended

Mike Trewby MCIEEM

Mike's passion for wildlife conservation stems from his upbringing in Zambia, where he developed a deep love for the bush and its birdlife. This early exposure to environmental challenges sparked his commitment to conservation.

Over the years, Mike has made significant contributions to protecting biodiversity, including fieldwork in Namibia and research at universities in the UK and New Zealand. His work has been published in prestigious journals, showcasing his expertise in ornithology.

Despite his accomplishments, Mike remains modest and approachable, always willing to share his knowledge and mentor younger ecologists. He continues to be a focal member of the ornithological community in Ireland, particularly known for his work with chough populations. Mike's involvement in impact assessments for onshore wind farms demonstrates his dedication to applying science and integrity in ecological assessments. He actively encourages others to join professional organisations like CIEEM and organises training sessions to promote best practices in ecological assessment.

Mike's commitment to conservation and his supportive approach to mentoring have earned him respect and admiration from colleagues and collaborators alike.

Highly Commended

Luke Gorman CEcol FCIEEM

Luke's journey in biodiversity conservation began at the age of eight with a makeshift 'nature garden' in his backyard, evolving into his current role as Professional Head of Ecology for AtkinsRéalis, leading over 150 ecologists. Luke has devoted his life to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and he has encouraged, enthused, and empowered many others to do the same.

Luke achieved Chartership in 2014 and was one of the first Chartered Ecologists; he subsequently achieved CIEEM Fellowship in 2020. Luke uses his knowledge, experience and influence to promote and advance ecology as an applied discipline and is at the forefront of work to protect and enhance the natural environment. He is passionate about challenging the status quo, collaborating widely to develop game-changing survey and mitigation techniques, and expanding technical ability to ensure outstanding biodiversity outcomes.

Luke freely shares his knowledge, experiences, and advancements within and beyond the ecological community through publications, webinars, podcasts, broadcasts and social media.

Luke is the innovation lead for AtkinsRéalis ecologists and frequently works on innovative ecological survey and mitigation methods. Examples include developing and trialling conservation detection dogs (in collaboration with Natural England, Paws for Conservation, Wagtail UK and K9 Conservation); developing and trialling new methods of environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling from water and soil (in collaboration with NatureMetrics); trialling the use of drones for habitat surveys, bat surveys, otter surveys and eDNA sampling (in collaboration with Helicam Ltd); and developing, trialling the use of artificial intelligence software for analysis of bioacoustics (in collaboration with WilderSensing Ltd).

Luke is also a member of Natural England's GCN Licensing Expert Panel and has led or acted as a guest speaker/subject matter expert regarding GCN District Level Licensing (DLL). He has had six articles and one guidance document published relating to GCN licensing, helping to share and advance industry knowledge with regard to innovative GCN licensing.

Highly Commended

Laura Holmes CEcol MCIEEM

Laura has over a decade of consultancy experience and previously served as the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Manager for Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Whilst with the Trust Laura produced the annual biodiversity report, maintained the project website, liaised with local groups and assisted on ecological surveys. Laura has demonstrated dedication to the ecological profession throughout her career and is passionate about bat conservation, volunteering for her local bat groups and undertaking national and international research

Laura regularly works on complex, large-scale projects across the UK from the south coast to Scotland, using non-standard, innovative yet repeatable methods. She regularly champions advances in technology such as infra-red and thermal imaging. Laura holds various survey licences and regularly works with rare bat species, such as Bechstein's, greater horseshoe and barbastelle, contributing to monitoring and mitigation effectiveness. She was one of the first consultants to achieve Level 3 Bat Earned Recognition (BER) accreditation and is a BER Assessor for Natural England.

As National Bat Lead for Tetra Tech, Laura sets high standards and mentors colleagues, promoting technical excellence through training and research projects. She encourages trainees to get involved in research projects and develop their experience with both rare species and advanced survey techniques to reach their full potential on their journey to secure survey licences. She is actively involved in bat conservation efforts, volunteering with bat groups, and coordinating bat care networks. Laura's professional and voluntary work has contributed to the progression of bat conservation both nationally and internationally, including scientific research and publication on bat ecology and mitigation. She shares her expertise through articles and promotes raising standards within the ecological community. Laura's commitment and enthusiasm continue to inspire and support others in the field of ecology.

Winner

Coed Elai Business Park

Welsh Government / Arcadis Consulting (UK) Ltd

The transformation of Coed Elai, a former colliery site in South Wales, from a derelict area into Parc Coed Elai Business Park with a focus on biodiversity enhancement and community benefit is an excellent example of the benefits for people and nature.

After its closure in 1986, remediation works were completed in 2001, including the creation of a wildlife wetland area and planting woodland blocks. However, minimal management was undertaken until the outline planning permission was due for renewal in 2020.

The updated design for the site aimed to increase biodiversity in alignment with Welsh government legislation focusing on environmental improvements and the wellbeing of future generations. This involved adjusting the layout to incorporate more brownfield habitats and transitional zones, as well as redesigning a multi-use games area into open brownfield and grassland for wildlife and recreational use.

A 25-year Landscape and Habitat Management Plan (LHMP) was developed and implemented, departing from traditional business park maintenance to active management for nature conservation. Actions included managing invasive species, creating additional brownfield and grassland areas, installing wildlife boxes, and reinstating wetlands and ponds.

Regular monitoring and management are ongoing, with quarterly visits and annual habitat assessments. The ambition is for Parc Coed Elai to serve as an exemplar of how former industrial sites can be actively managed for business, biodiversity, and community benefit, aligning with Welsh government goals.

The design amendments focused on retaining and enhancing priority habitats and ecosystems while allowing for viable development. The LHMP has three key objectives: developing public open space, maintaining active habitat management, and enhancing biodiversity.

The site is part of a wider network of green spaces aimed at maintaining landscape connectivity and reducing fragmentation impacts. Monitoring shows positive results, such as developing woodland structure, establishing new plant species, and supporting biodiversity.

The Welsh government, as the client, is committed to delivering net benefit for biodiversity and ensuring adherence to ecological principles. They provide ecological information to developers and enforce lease conditions related to the LHMP.

Overall, the project demonstrates how former industrial land can be transformed into a sustainable business park that benefits biodiversity, the community, and aligns with governmental goals. Access to open space is provided for business users and local residents, with connectivity to the wider public rights-of-way network. Interpretative boards will explain the site's ecology and cultural heritage in both English and Welsh, serving as a roadmap for future sustainable development projects.

Highly Commended

Landscape-scale Wetland Habitat Improvements at RSPB Titchwell Marsh

RSK Habitat Management

RSPB Titchwell Marsh, renowned for its unique inland saltwater and freshwater habitats, is a vital sanctuary for some of the UK's most endangered wetland species. However, habitat degradation and water management issues had led to declining populations of key species such as bitterns, bearded tits, and avocets. Recognising the urgent need for intervention, the RSPB initiated the 'Life on the Edge' project to restore and enhance the freshwater marsh and reedbeds, aiming to bolster breeding bird populations and fortify the reserve against coastal erosion and rising waters.

RSK Habitat Management was enlisted to implement landscape-scale wetland improvements, focusing on improving 29 hectares of freshwater marsh and reedbed and creating new islands for breeding and wintering birds, including spoonbills – a first for the UK. Despite short-term disturbance from machinery, efforts were made to minimise disruption during the August to November 2021 works period.

The results of the project were remarkable, with the breeding season of 2022 seeing a resurgence in avocet numbers, reaching a record-breaking 97 nesting pairs, alongside sightings of breeding bitterns and common terns. The following year, 11 pairs of bearded tits were recorded, the highest count since 2017, and significant spoonbill activity was observed.

The project tackled issues in both the freshwater marsh and reedbeds, creating new nesting islands, installing anti-predator measures, and restoring water flow through the reedbeds to enhance habitat connectivity for water voles and fish passage. Specifically designed water control structures now allow for dynamic management of water levels, crucial for supporting breeding and overwintering bird populations.

Moreover, the project prioritised sustainability, aiming to enhance the reserve's resilience to climate change impacts and reduce mammalian predation risks to breeding birds. By utilising material from within the freshwater marsh and avoiding imported resources, the project minimised its environmental footprint.

Overall, the 'Life on the Edge' project at RSPB Titchwell Marsh exemplifies the successful restoration and conservation efforts required to safeguard critical habitats and species populations in the face of environmental challenges.

Highly Commended

Cairngorms Northern Damselfly Project

Cairngorms National Park Authority/ British Dragonfly Society

The Cairngorms National Park Authority, in collaboration with the British Dragonfly Society, initiated and funded a project aimed at conserving the northern damselfly, a species classified as "Endangered" in the UK. With only 52 breeding sites primarily in northern Scotland, the species faces threats from habitat loss, particularly in terms of available ponds. The project focused on restoring 10 existing ponds and creating 10 new ones, ultimately achieving 12 restorations and 11 new ponds between 2022 and early 2023. Local contractors and experts were engaged for the project, and landowners' consent was obtained for pond locations across various tenures.

Restoration involved clearing excess vegetation, felling shade trees, and enlarging and deepening ponds through excavation. New ponds were constructed near existing sites to encourage migration. Monitoring conducted in the summer of 2023 revealed northern damselfly presence and breeding in many restored and new ponds, along with diverse Odonata species. The project provided 23 functional pond sites, expanding the known habitat for the northern damselfly by at least 10% and enhancing the overall habitat network.

The project's success suggests the northern damselfly may act as a pioneer species, and further study is proposed, potentially through a PhD programme. The healthy pond ecosystem contributes to abundant invertebrate life and strengthens freshwater networks in areas where still water is scarce. The project was welcomed by farmers for its role in regenerative farming practices and received landowner consents to encourage new habitat creation.

Despite initially budgeting for 20 ponds, the project exceeded expectations by delivering an additional three ponds. Competitive procurement processes ensured value for public funds, and early monitoring results indicate high success rates, with around half of the ponds hosting northern damselflies and 80% showing breeding activity. Further pond creation is planned to reinforce the project's success and expand the habitat network.

Winner

Hafren Dyfrdwy

RSPB Cymru/Severn Trent Water

The Lake Vyrnwy estate, owned by Hafren Dyfrdwy, encompasses vast upland, farmland, and forest areas surrounding a Victorian-era reservoir. With a vision for sustainable water and land management, Hafren Dyfrdwy collaborated with the RSPB to restore degraded blanket bog ecosystems. Their peatland restoration programme aligns with global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and promote ecosystem resilience.

The partnership aims to restore blanket bog to a state where it sustains high water tables, sequesters carbon, and supports breeding populations of upland species. While hydrological changes and bird responses may take decades to manifest fully, early signs indicate a wetter landscape and increased biodiversity.

The restoration efforts focus on over 1500 hectares of degraded blanket bog across six upland blocks. Restoration plans have been developed and implemented, with almost 1000 hectares already restored through drain blocking and erosion control measures. The ultimate goal is to achieve naturally functioning ecosystems characterised by Sphagnum-dominated blanket bog, supporting diverse plant and bird species.

Beyond carbon emissions reduction and habitat restoration, the project prioritises ecosystem health and resilience against climate change and other stochastic events. Restoration efforts are guided by principles outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, ensuring long-term sustainability and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals.

The partnership engages in advocacy and awareness initiatives to highlight the importance of peatland restoration in addressing climate and nature emergencies. Through partnerships, policy influence, and educational programs, they aim to mobilise support from major land managers, government officials, farmers, and local communities. Initiatives like the ‘bog in a box’, community updates, and volunteer work parties further involve and educate local stakeholders.

The Lake Vyrnwy peatland restoration project represents a holistic approach to environmental conservation, blending scientific expertise, community engagement, and policy advocacy to restore and sustain vital ecosystems for future generations.

Highly Commended

Wildlife Ways

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

The Wildlife Ways programme in Solihull, building upon the success of the Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements Project, aimed to enhance habitat creation and ecological improvement across urban areas. With funding from various sources including the European Regional Development Fund and the National Productivity Investment Fund, the programme spanned from 2018 to early 2023 and comprised four key projects focusing on highways, landscapes, sustainable travel, and small habitats grants.

The overarching goal was to enhance green connections and biodiversity in parks, green spaces, and highway verges, aligning with the Lawton Review principles of ‘more, bigger, better, and connected’ habitats. By improving connectivity between existing green spaces and carrying out habitat enhancements, the programme aimed to reduce fragmentation and isolation.

Key achievements include the creation of over 73 hectares of improved wildlife habitat, including woodland management, enhancement of species-poor grasslands, restoration of waterways, and green corridor improvements along highway verges. The Small Habitats Grants project allocated funds for various conservation efforts across different regions, significantly surpassing its initial target by enhancing over 181 hectares of land.

The programme used standardised methodologies for ecological monitoring, including baseline surveys and regular assessments to track progress and inform management plans. Positive results have been observed, such as increased biodiversity indicators in road verges and the restoration of Kinghurst Brook, demonstrating improved habitat quality.

The independent Summative Assessment recognised the programme’s exemplary survey and monitoring efforts, highlighting well-written management plans and the rationale behind restoration works. In total, over 250 hectares of habitat were enhanced, contributing to increased ecosystem resilience and climate change mitigation.

Winner | Tony Bradshaw Best Practice Award Winner (see page 4)

Lower Otter Restoration Project

Environment Agency/Clinton Devon Estates

The Flood defences around the Exe Estuary protect almost 3000 properties. Maintenance and construction of flood defences, coupled with rising sea levels, lead to the gradual loss of intertidal habitats. This loss occurs as the intertidal zone gets "squeezed" between the rising low tide mark and human-made barriers like flood defences. To address this ecological challenge, the Lower Otter Restoration Project was launched with a budget of £27 million and focusing on Budleigh Salterton. This project aimed to provide compensatory habitat for the losses experienced in the adjacent Otter Estuary and enhance community and ecosystem resilience against rising sea levels.

Led by a partnership between the Environment Agency and Clinton Devon Estates, the project collaborated closely with designers from Jacobs and contractors from Kier. The project's design and execution followed an iterative approach, prioritising the mitigation hierarchy.

Construction spanned nearly 30 months, concluding in December 2023, and involved extensive infrastructural adjustments to mitigate flood risks and restore natural hydrological processes. Notable interventions included relocating infrastructure out of floodplains, enhancing flood-resilience of existing structures, and breaching the estuary's tidal embankment to re-establish connections between the floodplain and the sea.

While the project incurred losses of low-grade semi-improved grassland, hedgerows, and woodland, these were mitigated by creating compensatory salt marsh and mudflat habitats, fostering a more resilient ecosystem. Additional mitigations included freshwater habitat creation, rare plant species translocation, and strengthening of existing hedgerows. Ongoing monitoring ensures the effectiveness of these mitigation efforts, encompassing protected species such as dormice and beavers, as well as habitat assessments.

The project's unique scope, executed within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and near a populous town, underscores its significance. Stakeholder engagement was pivotal, ensuring diverse perspectives were considered in design decisions, thus minimising impacts on site biodiversity. Moreover, the project serves as a blueprint for climate change adaptation, demonstrating innovative approaches to reducing carbon footprint and enhancing ecosystem resilience.

Beyond compensatory habitat creation, the project prioritised river restoration, opening up Budleigh Brook for eel and fish passage, thereby revitalising freshwater ecosystems. Landscape enhancements, such as removing overhead power cables and creating footpaths and bird viewing areas, improve public access and appreciation of the site. The project's commitment to environmental stewardship is evident in its extensive broadleaf woodland expansion, hedgerow planting, and landfill remediation efforts.

By employing low-carbon construction materials and engaging local suppliers, the project exemplifies resource efficiency and community involvement. Its socio-economic benefits, including enhanced recreational opportunities, improved physical health, water quality, and carbon sequestration, underscore its holistic approach to environmental management.

In conclusion, the Lower Otter Restoration Project stands as a testament to the efficacy of large-scale habitat restoration in mitigating the adverse impacts of flood defences while bolstering ecosystem resilience and providing socio-economic benefits to local communities. Through meticulous planning, stakeholder engagement, and innovative mitigation strategies, the project sets a precedent for excellence in sustainable coastal management and climate change adaptation initiatives.

Highly Commended

Luston Wetlands, Herefordshire

Herefordshire Council

The Luston Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW) serves as a pioneering model for Herefordshire Council's ambitious nature-based mitigation wetland project, aiming to address ecological enhancements at the local level and mitigate water pollution at a catchment scale. Designed to combat phosphate pollution in the River Lugg sub-catchment, contributing to the River Wye SAC, the Luston ICW operates as the pilot site within this larger initiative. By implementing integrated constructed wetlands, the project seeks to manage point source phosphate pollution from wastewater treatment, offering a blueprint solution applicable internationally for achieving nutrient neutrality requirements under the Habitats Regulations and combatting water pollution.

Constructed as a free water surface wetland, Luston ICW uses a clay liner substrate to treat water flowing over its surface. The design incorporates three shallow open ponds with additional features to ensure an extended residence time of water, covering a 3.46-hectare site. Construction began in August 2022 and was completed by June 2023, following feasibility studies initiated in 2020 and a planning application submitted in September 2021.

With the capacity to remove an estimated 310 kg of phosphate annually, Luston ICW undergoes continuous monitoring to ensure sustained nutrient reductions over its projected 80-year lifespan. The site has already witnessed increased biodiversity due to habitat diversification, attracting new species. Additionally, the project contributes to broader environmental strategies, being included in Herefordshire's Nature Recovery strategy and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

The Luston ICW serves as a catalyst for residential development in Herefordshire, unlocking housing projects previously on hold due to nutrient neutrality requirements. By trading phosphate credits, the project fosters economic and social benefits, including construction, employment opportunities, affordable housing, and new infrastructure development. These credits are reinvested in the project and ongoing site maintenance, ensuring sustainable funding.

Overall, Luston ICW stands as a pioneering initiative that not only addresses water pollution challenges but also demonstrates the potential of nature-based solutions to promote environmental sustainability and facilitate socio-economic development.

Winner

Innovative radio tracking: an approach to remote data collection

Jacobs

Radio-tracking bats has long been a vital method for understanding their behaviour and habitat use, crucial for conservation efforts and mitigating human impacts. However, traditional radio-tracking methods are labour-intensive, often involving long nights of fieldwork, which come with inherent safety risks and limitations to data collection.

During the construction of HS2 Phase One in the Colne Valley, there was a need for monitoring bats under an organisational license. In response, Jacobs, working for ALIGN, introduced a groundbreaking approach: a remotely accessed and automated radio-tracking logger system. This system aimed to monitor the movement and roosting behaviour of radio-tagged bats within the licence area, spanning several years. HS2's commitment to long-term monitoring and innovation supported this initiative.

The logger system consists of six loggers strategically deployed throughout the licence area, each equipped with four directional aerials, collectively covering approximately 800 hectares. These loggers continuously record tag frequency, direction, and signal strength whenever a tagged bat comes within range. The data collected is extensive, allowing for location data to be gathered every 15 seconds from multiple bats simultaneously. This detailed information provides insights into bat movements, roosting behaviour, and interactions between individuals.

Before implementation, the methodology was carefully assessed, discussed, and agreed upon with stakeholders, including Natural England and The Wildlife Trust. This ensured that the methodology was scientifically robust and cost-effective. Specialised apps were used to match up bearings between loggers, resulting in high-resolution maps illustrating how bats use the landscape.

Compared to traditional radio-tracking techniques, which typically yield several hundred triangulated points over the lifetime of a radio-tag, this innovative

system collects tens of thousands of data points. Notably, the costs of installing the system and analysing the data are lower than conventional methods, with significant safety benefits stemming from reduced night work on construction sites.

The benefits of this system extend beyond conservation; it has powerful commercial applications as well. Real-time feedback on construction impacts on bats allows for agile responses in implementing mitigation measures such as adjusting lighting and noise levels. Moreover, the system can detect real-time changes in population movements in response to construction activities, offering valuable insights for commercial purposes.

This approach enhances safety by reducing the need for extensive night-time fieldwork and associated journeys, thus mitigating risks for field teams and reducing the project's carbon footprint. One of the main benefits to the system is the reduction in time for people collecting the radio-tracking data in the field. Over 500 hours of night-time field work were avoided as well as the associated journeys. By using the logger systems, it was possible to remove the majority of the night-time manual radio-tracking effort. This saves a significant number of car journeys as traditional methods are labour intensive and require multiple journeys made by three teams through the night to obtain the data which can be obtained remotely with the logger system, removing the need for this. As well as reducing the carbon footprint of undertaking this work, this approach reduced the pressure on field surveyors during the traditionally busy time of year resulting in less risk of fatigue making it sustainable in terms of both environment and resources.

The successful implementation was only possible with HS2's commitment to

monitoring and supporting innovation, and collaborative working between ecology, environment and construction managers. The agreed approach is replicable between monitoring years and contractors ensuring the project objectives and data collection can be sustained going forward. The cost savings per monitoring session also enable this to be an approach that is sustainable and used in the long-term.

The high-resolution data provided by this system enables more robust conclusions and greater understanding of landscape use by bats. It can inform impact assessments, guide mitigation measures, and enhance monitoring efforts. Manufactured by Plecotus Solutions, the loggers are commercially available and continuously improved, making them accessible for various projects and species.

In conclusion, the remotely accessed and automated radio-tracking logger system represents a significant advancement in bat monitoring and conservation efforts. Its scalability, cost-effectiveness, and safety benefits make it a valuable tool for both conservation and commercial projects. By providing detailed insights into bat behaviour and habitat use, this innovative system contributes to informed decision-making and sustainable development practices.

Highly Commended

Revolutionising technology-enabled remote biodiversity monitoring along the railway network

Network Rail

The collaboration between Network Rail (NR) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) has initiated a groundbreaking project to revolutionise biodiversity monitoring along railway lines. Using innovative technologies such as smart trail cameras, acoustic sensors and AI-enabled machine learning, the project aims to overcome challenges like limited access and scientific understanding of Network Rail's role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

Starting in February 2022, the project is trialling novel approaches to standard technologies to monitor wildlife presence and distribution across railway sites in Southern England. Off-the-shelf sensors are being adapted for various uses, including acoustic technology for small terrestrial mammals and cost-efficient dormouse monitoring in nest boxes.

Methods incorporating cameras and acoustic sensors alongside machine learning algorithms seek to improve species detection and identification. Data analysis methods, including convolutional neural networks, are used to assess biodiversity levels, species richness, distribution, and activity patterns. Google's support addresses data storage challenges, enhancing project efficiency.

The project also engages the public through ZSL's citizen science platform, Instant Wild, where images from networked camera traps are analysed via AI-driven computer vision and expert identification.

Comparing biodiversity differences between lineside and non-lineside sites provides insights into management practices and ecosystem function. The project's findings are expected to inform future monitoring and research activities, setting a remarkable standard in biodiversity monitoring.

The project's innovative approach, using existing research combined with advanced

technologies in a constrained environment, can raise industry standards. By sharing knowledge and findings through various channels, the project aims to foster best practices and contribute to biodiversity monitoring worldwide.

Furthermore, the project's commitment to sustainability is evident in its use of solar-powered devices, reducing environmental impact and ensuring consistent data collection. This cost-effective and time-efficient approach highlights the vital role of ecologists and environmental managers in shaping a more sustainable future.

Commended

Witches Oak Raw Water Abstraction and Wetlands

Mott MacDonald

The Witches Oak project combines Mott MacDonald Bentley's (MMB) civil engineering expertise with Nature Based Solutions (NBS) to revitalise an 80-hectare site containing gravel pit lakes near Derby, adjacent to the river Trent. Originally a sand and gravel quarry, the site was acquired by Severn Trent Water (STW) over 20 years ago for water storage, but poor water quality led to cessation of abstraction. Managed by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, the site aims to become a wildlife hotspot through habitat enhancement, prioritising ecology and environmental management.

MMB is upgrading and recommissioning existing infrastructure to secure water supplies and increase climate resilience. This includes installing 30 floating wetlands as a low-carbon, nature-based water treatment solution to improve river water quality. Specially selected wetland designs and plant species mimic self-sustaining riparian wetlands, resilient to fluctuations in water level and quality, assisting conventional water treatment by removing organics, nitrate, and ammonia.

Constructed using durable materials, the floating wetlands provide rich and diverse habitats above and below the water surface. A trial of three wetlands launched in 2022 tested their durability through harsh conditions, with the remaining 27 installed in 2023. Upgrading the raw water inlet from the river Trent began in 2023, aiming for completion by 2024.

The floating reed beds provide preliminary water treatment by using naturally occurring biological processes to contain and treat pollutants. Root mass facilitates microbial communities that remove pollutants, including organics, nitrate, ammonia, and trace metals. Additionally, they show promise in removing emerging

pollutants such as PFAS, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and microplastics. This treatment allows blending of raw water into the supply, reducing the need for additional chemical treatment.

Monitoring and data collection are crucial to assess the wetlands' performance, with a planned PhD study and sensor installation by STW. The collected evidence will be shared with the water industry to promote future application of NBS for clean water treatment.

Winner

Bringing Beavers back to the Cairngorms National Park

Cairngorms National Park Authority, with support from Beaver Trust, NatureScot, RSPB Scotland, Argaty Red Kites and National Farmers Union Scotland

The Cairngorms National Park Authority embarked on a significant journey in June 2022, deciding to spearhead the reintroduction of beavers. After obtaining a five-year license from NatureScot in December 2023, they translocated the first two pairs of beavers into the Spey catchment, marking a significant milestone in biodiversity and climate change action.

The journey began in 2017 when the Cairngorms Beaver Group was formed to explore the implications of reintroducing beavers. With Scottish Government policy shifting towards active translocation into suitable catchments, the Spey catchment, covering a large portion of the UK's largest National Park, emerged as a prime candidate. Given that the Park Authority does not own land, collaboration with local landowners and communities was vital. Leveraging their strong relationships built over two decades of various initiatives, they engaged stakeholders extensively.

Stakeholder engagement was crucial considering the diverse opinions surrounding beaver reintroduction. Through a sustained period of learning and information gathering, involving discussions with experts and community members, they sought to address concerns and garner support. Collaborating with various organisations like the Beaver Trust and RSPB Scotland, they conducted widespread engagement activities, including drop-in events, farm visits, and specialist group meetings, ensuring transparency and inclusivity.

The consultation process took place between March and September 2023, involving multiple stakeholders and sectors. The Cairngorms Beaver Group played a pivotal role in guiding this process, ensuring that concerns were addressed and voices heard. Their efforts included commissioned studies on habitat suitability and extensive stakeholder consultations, both within and outside the National Park boundary.

Various engagement methods were employed to ensure accessibility and effectiveness, including social media, videos, and targeted events catering to different sectors. On-farm visits provided farmers with insights into potential implications and mitigation options, fostering constructive dialogue. Transparency remained a cornerstone, with all documents related to the translocation licence application made available online.

Efforts were made to address concerns related to fisheries, farming, and impacts on other species. Collaborating closely with the Spey Fishery Board, data sharing, monitoring schemes, and scientific reviews helped alleviate concerns about potential impacts on salmon populations. Similarly, consultations with farmers led to initiatives like flood bank condition surveys and repair funds to mitigate potential damages.

Concerns about impacts on other species, such as aspen and freshwater pearl mussel, were also addressed through engagement with experts and the development of monitoring and mitigation plans. Aspen conservation actions and surveys near release sites underscored their commitment to mitigating ecological impacts comprehensively.

In summary, the Cairngorms National Park Authority's journey towards beaver reintroduction exemplifies a collaborative and inclusive approach to biodiversity conservation. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, transparency, and proactive mitigation strategies, they aim to pave the way for effective reintroductions while addressing concerns and fostering community support.

Highly Commended

Bats in Churches

Natural England, Bat Conservation Trust, Church of England, Churches Conservation Trust, Historic England

The Bats in Churches (BiC) project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, operated from 2019 to 2023 with a focus on mitigating conflicts between bats and human activities in churches. It aimed to address issues such as damage to heritage items and the burden of cleaning on church communities.

The project undertook major works in over 30 sites across England to test a new licensing approach by Natural England, allowing flexibility in addressing bat-related challenges. Additionally, it engaged over 70 churches with advice and simpler solutions, ran a national citizen science programme involving over 750 churches, and provided specialised training. Stakeholder engagement was a key aspect of the project, involving ecological and building conservation professionals, church staff and volunteers, bat group volunteers, and the public.

The engagement efforts focused on improving stakeholder understanding of bats, their behaviour, and how they use buildings. Changing attitudes toward bats was deemed crucial, alongside physical mitigation measures. Engagement officers and accredited ecologists played a pivotal role in this process, adopting a listening-first approach and gradually introducing new information to shift perceptions. By the end of the project, there were noticeable changes in attitudes toward bats, with more churches open to coexisting with them and even incorporating them into community engagement and fundraising activities.

The project's five-year duration allowed sufficient time for surveys, discussions, and adjustments before implementing mitigation measures. It began with light-touch surveys and meetings, gradually introducing mitigation options and community engagement events like bat nights.

The project engaged with 108 churches across England, providing each with a named Engagement Officer and supporting various stakeholder needs. The project website was designed for user-focused navigation, offering relevant guidance promptly updated in each area and released in multiple formats for accessibility.

Stakeholders at churches ranged from people of strong Christian faith to those passionate about heritage and history, requiring sensitivity and understanding from the project team. Training was provided to recognise religiously sensitive areas and understand the Church of England Faculty system. Ecologists worked closely with church architects and conservation specialists to design appropriate works for historic buildings.

In summary, the BiC project successfully addressed conflicts between bats and churches through a comprehensive approach involving stakeholder engagement, ecological expertise, and targeted mitigation measures. It fostered understanding and cooperation among stakeholders, leading to more positive attitudes toward bats and practical solutions for preserving heritage items and supporting bat conservation.

Winner

Integrating Trees Network

Scottish Forestry and Scottish Government

The Integrating Trees Network (ITN) is a collaborative initiative by the Scottish Government and Scottish Forestry, aimed at promoting the integration of trees into agricultural landscapes across Scotland. Through a series of farmer-led events, both in-person and virtual, the ITN encourages farmers and crofters to consider planting and managing trees on their land. The initiative facilitates knowledge sharing among farmers, crofters, and technical experts, highlighting the benefits of tree integration for agricultural businesses, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation.

The ITN relies on volunteer hosts, farmers, and crofters who generously share their experiences of incorporating trees into their operations. Despite minimal funding, the initiative has thrived, leveraging community engagement even during the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that left many farmers feeling isolated. Various resources, including a website, videos, and publications, offer accessible information tailored to the needs of farmers and crofters. Feedback from participants shapes the content and focus of events, ensuring relevance and usefulness.

The initiative builds its programme of events with its audience. Frequent opportunities to feedback topics of interest are an important part of how the initiative operates. The most popular events have focused on integrating trees to improve biodiversity on farms, the Woodland Carbon Code, and how best to design shelterbelts. Events cover a range of topics, from biodiversity enhancement and carbon sequestration to practical considerations like funding access and tree species selection. Farmer hosts provide authentic insights, offering a realistic perspective on the benefits and challenges of tree integration. Ongoing monitoring indicates high satisfaction among participants, fostering confidence and intention to implement tree planting.

Central to the ITN's approach is effective communication, emphasising peer-to-peer engagement to inspire behavioural change. The initiative collaborates with various organisations within the agriculture, land management, and environmental sectors, expanding its reach and impact. By showcasing success stories and facilitating dialogue between farmers and policymakers, the ITN influences policy development and promotes best practices in land management.

This approach ensures that the network reaches across the agriculture sector as well as more broadly across the land management and environmental sectors. The ITN was showcased at CIEEM's 2023 Scottish Conference in Edinburgh, two joint Scottish Land and Estates (SLE) & ITN Expert Panels at the Royal Highland Show, with Ministerial attendance, as well as at the UK Agroforestry Show. The ITN and its hosts have been featured on BBC's Landward and FAS TV.

The ITN's outreach promotes the network through extensive joint communication via social media and wider publications with organisations including: NFU Scotland, SLE, QMS, Nature Friendly Farming Network, Scottish Crofting Federation, Farm Advisory Service, NatureScot, Scottish Young Farmers and Highland Environmental forum.

Furthermore, the ITN serves as a platform for research collaborations, such as the FARM TREE project, which develops decision support tools for tree expansion on farmland. Events cater to diverse audiences, including crofters, and feature expert speakers providing specialised knowledge and guidance on topics like shelterbelt design and funding opportunities.

The initiative extends its educational outreach beyond events, with host farmers participating in conferences and engaging with students to share their experiences and insights. By fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer, the ITN encourages future generations to embrace sustainable land use practices.

In summary, The Integrating Trees Network is at its heart a project focused on effective communication to a diverse audience as a way to inspire change. It plays a vital role in promoting agroforestry and tree integration within Scotland's agricultural sector. Through community-led events, resource dissemination, and policy advocacy, the ITN contributes to building resilient and sustainable agricultural landscapes for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Highly Commended

The Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Net Gain Project

Buckinghamshire Council and the Natural Environment Partnership for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

The Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Project, initiated in 2018, has demonstrated early financial investment facilitating an innovative and adaptable approach to current BNG delivery and readiness for the mandatory 2024 statutory framework. Through collaboration with stakeholders and sharing best practices with other Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), Buckinghamshire Council has been a leading advocate for biodiversity-focused development.

Initially led by the Natural Environment Partnership for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (NEP), the project embedded net gain policies into local plans and developed Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for BNG. Upon Buckinghamshire Council's establishment as a unitary authority in 2020, the project continued, benefiting from high-level financial support enabling the recruitment of three BNG Officers.

Regular meetings and cross-departmental collaboration ensure effective implementation and readiness for statutory BNG requirements. The project's recognition as a leader in BNG delivery and preparedness is evidenced by its involvement in national advisory groups and mentions in relevant forums such as webinars and parliamentary debates.

The project's website serves as a hub for information and updates. The project has produced a wealth of resources, including guidance documents, legal templates, and assessment tools, to support BNG implementation. Extensive training has been provided to internal and external stakeholders, ensuring widespread understanding and capability in delivering BNG.

Key project objectives include directing resources for ecological outcomes, aligning BNG with Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) requirements, influencing national policy, and reviewing council-owned land for BNG potential. The project's value for money is evident in its capacity to deliver biodiversity gains locally and support other LPAs ahead of statutory obligations.

Through continuous engagement with partners, the project has facilitated cross-departmental understanding of BNG's role within the organisation. External collaborations have resulted in contributions to national policy discussions and consultations, demonstrating the project's influence at both local and national levels. The project's proactive engagement with stakeholders, including government bodies like Defra and Natural England, underscores its commitment to shaping national BNG policy.

Future initiatives include developing deep dive sessions on specific topics to enhance internal capacity and ensure BNG delivers tangible biodiversity gains at the local level. Overall, the Buckinghamshire BNG Project stands as a model for effective collaboration, innovation, and readiness in biodiversity net gain implementation.

Highly Commended

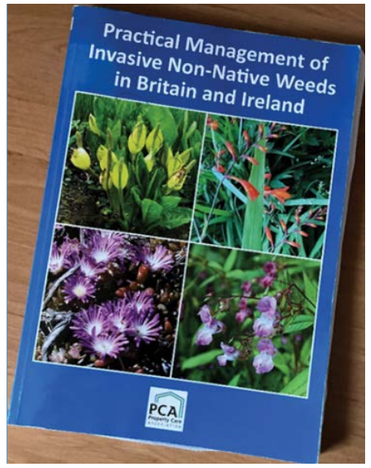
Creation of a national knowledge sharing programme for the management of invasive non-native plants

Invasive Weed Control Group of the Property Care Association and AECOM

The Property Care Association (PCA) established the Invasive Weed Control Group (IWCG) in 2012 to promote knowledge exchange regarding invasive plants. The IWCG comprises environmental managers, landscape specialists, invasive weed contractors, and ecology consultancies dedicated to managing INNP. Over the past 11 years, the IWCG has developed and delivered a comprehensive training programme, including courses, videos, webinars, and outreach events, to address various aspects of INNP management. Their efforts have significantly contributed to promoting best practices and knowledge sharing within the industry.

Key initiatives of the IWCG include conducting gap analyses, organising annual conferences, providing free guidance materials, and collaborating with governmental bodies such as Defra and the GB Non-native Species Secretariat. Their dynamic website serves as a central resource hub, offering essential documents and training materials to both IWCG members and external stakeholders. Feedback from training sessions and conferences has guided the development of new training courses and publications, such as the "Practical Management of Invasive Non-Native Weeds in Britain and Ireland" handbook.

One of the IWCG's primary focuses has been on Japanese Knotweed, initially the most prominent INNP. Through collaborative efforts with industry stakeholders, they developed a Code of Practice for Japanese Knotweed Management and contributed to research projects examining its impact. Additionally, the IWCG has influenced policy development, including revisions to RICS guidance and presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. Their ongoing research efforts, including studies on glyphosate-induced dormancy and regrowth potential after herbicide management, demonstrate their commitment to addressing emerging challenges in INNP management.



The IWCG's training programme caters to individuals at various levels of expertise, offering courses ranging from introductory sessions to advanced examinations for certified surveyors. Their training has been widely recognised as essential for professionals dealing with INNP and has attracted attendees from diverse backgrounds, including local authorities, NGOs, and water companies. Furthermore, the IWCG has been contracted to provide customized training for specific organisations, highlighting the reputation and relevance of their programme within the industry.

Overall, the IWCG's efforts have significantly contributed to promoting effective INNP management practices, fostering knowledge exchange, and raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation. Through their comprehensive training program and collaborative initiatives, they continue to play a vital role in addressing the challenges posed by invasive non-native plants.

Highly Commended

'Snakes in the Heather' Reptile Survey Training Programme

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust

The 'Snakes in the Heather' project, conducted from August 2019 to February 2024, aimed to achieve three primary objectives: raising awareness of reptile and heathland conservation needs, promoting community relationships and well-being through volunteering opportunities, and developing technical guidance for land managers regarding the conservation of smooth snakes and other heathland reptiles.

To fulfil these goals, the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) launched a comprehensive training programme for reptile survey volunteers and established a systematic reptile survey and monitoring initiative. Prior to this programme, there was a lack of standardised reptile survey methods, resulting in fragmented data storage and limited sharing capabilities. The 'Snakes in the Heather' Reptile Survey Training Programme aimed to address these issues by coordinating survey methods and data management to provide comparable data and a clearer national picture of lowland heathland reptiles.

The training programme comprises a structured curriculum including classroom sessions covering species identification, ecology, health and safety, survey apps, and data use, as well as fieldwork sessions for practical experience. Participants receive access to a suite of tools and resources via an online portal, along with ongoing mentoring and support from project officers. The programme has equipped over 350 individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct reptile surveys effectively.

The impact of the training programme has been significant, filling a crucial skills gap in the sector and providing comparable data essential for reptile conservation efforts. The programme has received positive feedback from participants, who praised its informative and interactive nature.

The 'Snakes in the Heather' project has been communicated extensively to stakeholders and the public through various channels, including events, email updates, conferences, workshops, and national media outlets.

The project's collaborative nature ensures that stakeholders, including heathland managers, Natural England, local volunteer groups, and researchers, have input into shaping project outputs and research priorities. Training participants have gained valuable knowledge on reptile management practices, leading to improved conservation outcomes.

Moving forward, the training programme will continue to be an essential component of the project's legacy, contributing to ongoing reptile conservation efforts and research. The project's success demonstrates the importance of collaborative partnerships and stakeholder engagement in achieving conservation objectives.

Winner

Native Ecology LLP

Native Ecology, founded in 2015, boasts a substantial client base in the south-east of England and recently earned B CORP certification, reinforcing its commitment to positive social and environmental impact. Leveraging technology, the firm has transitioned to cloud-based systems and equipped its team with field tablets and night vision aids for more efficient, paper-free operations. A successful 4-day work week trial, implemented in 2023, has yielded significant benefits including increased productivity, reduced stress, and enhanced work-life balance for employees.

The company has a proven track record in managing ecological aspects of residential developments, exemplified by its management of a multi-phased project involving a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence for great crested newts. Through innovative approaches aligned with Natural England Policy 1, Native Ecology facilitated the creation of high-quality habitat, minimised delays, and secured long-term monitoring commitments.

Native Ecology's expertise extends to riparian mammal ecology, evidenced by its involvement in closing a beaver burrow in Kent under licence, a first in the region. The team's commitment to environmental causes is demonstrated by their participation in the Big Green Hike, raising funds for the Beaver Trust while fostering team cohesion and environmental awareness.

In 2018 Native Ecology founded a local ecology focus group (Kent Ecology Symposium (KES)) to discuss industry changes and to share experience and knowledge with other like-minded ecologists. The group holds round table meetings, case study presentations and organises expert-led training sessions. KES has resulted in a number of local consultancies and freelancers working together collaboratively on local projects, sharing expertise and resources. Native Ecology also frequently runs external face-to-face and online CPD sessions for our existing and prospective clients. These have included many lunchtime webinars and training with architects, developers, planning consultants, schools and community groups. Over the past 5 years staff have delivered many CPD sessions on BNG, preparing their clients and project stakeholders for this huge industry shift.

In pursuit of sustainability goals, Native Ecology has set ambitious targets to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and actively manages its carbon footprint using Ecologi Zero and renewable energy sources. The firm prioritises eco-friendly practices, from paperless operations to efficient scheduling and vehicle choices.

Learning and development are integral to Native Ecology's ethos, with personalised learning and development plans aligned with individual and company goals. A neurodiverse team approach ensures tailored support and flexibility in CPD opportunities, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and inclusivity.

The company also offers work experience placements, contributing to the development of aspiring ecologists and promoting inclusivity within the industry.

Highly Commended

Geckoella Ltd

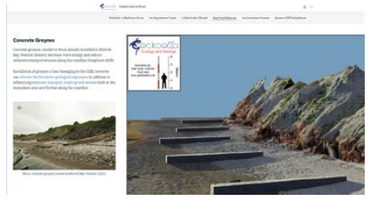
Geckoella Ltd., is an ecological and geological consultancy serving clients in the southwest of England and beyond. With eight employees, the company has been operating since 2010, delivering high-quality work across a diverse range of projects. Their work spans major infrastructure developments such as Hinkley Point C Connection Project and regional initiatives such as Nature Recovery Plans for National Landscapes. Geckoella's work often results in substantive enhancements to ecological baselines, leading to better site management and positive outcomes for wildlife.

At the local level, Geckoella engages in biodiversity gains, community climate change awareness, and citizen science projects in Watchet and surrounding areas. Their team ethos emphasises excellence, innovation, and engagement, fostering a collaborative and cross-sector approach. They cover both ecology and geology, allowing them to provide a comprehensive range of services.

Geckoella is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and has taken steps such as developing a scientifically robust carbon calculator. They aim to use green tariff energy and explore options like Blue Carbon offsets to further mitigate their environmental impact. Despite challenges in carbon reduction, they are actively seeking innovative solutions and are open to sharing their experiences with others.

Their approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is team-driven, with priorities set through collaborative discussions and informed by individual career aspirations. Project-based learning opportunities and tailored training programmes ensure that staff members receive the necessary skills and support for career advancement. Additionally, Geckoella invests in general skills development, such as communication and health and safety certifications, to equip their team members for success.

Overall, Geckoella prides itself on achieving a wide range of benefits for its clients, the environment, and society, despite its small size. Through their dedication to excellence, innovation, and collaboration, they continue to make significant contributions to ecological and geological consultancy.



Commended

Burton Reid Associates

Burton Reid Associates (BRA), formerly known as Tor Ecology, was founded by Jenni Reid in 2013 and now has a team of 7 ecologists, 3 landscape architects, and support staff. They specialise in providing ecological and landscape services, primarily in the South West of England. The company has undertaken over 1000 projects, ranging from small-scale ecological assessments to large-scale biodiversity masterplan designs and Environmental Statement Ecology Chapters.

Notable projects include habitat creation for great crested newts, biodiversity masterplan designs for new residential developments, and collaborations with local attractions such as Paignton Zoo and Splashdown Quaywest Water Park. They are also involved in strategic planning for biodiversity net gain at both local and landscape scales.

BRA is committed to contributing to the environmental and sustainability agenda. They have initiated the B-corps certification process, implemented measures to reduce their carbon footprint, and adhere to an environmental and sustainability policy. Additionally, they support employee development through structured and unstructured CPD, career aspirations discussions, and human-centric contracts that prioritise individual well-being and growth.

The company emphasises collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the industry, participating in projects with organisations such as Natural England and Bat Conservation Trust to improve professional standards and outcomes for biodiversity conservation. They also engage in public outreach through events, talks, and publications, advocating for green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain.

Overall, Burton Reid Associates is dedicated to delivering high-quality ecological and landscape services while promoting environmental sustainability, professional development, and employee well-being.

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Winner

JBA Consulting

JBA Consulting is a multi-disciplinary consultancy with 46 ecologists/ environmental managers across the UK and Ireland, working on diverse projects including habitat creation/ enhancement design, river restoration, flood risk management scheme appraisal and implementation, designated site assessment, Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, Ecological Impact Assessment, and protected species and habitat surveys. They focus on wetland and riverine environments and the ecology team regularly inputs to multi-disciplinary projects, working with colleagues in engineering, geomorphology, heritage and landscape teams, amongst others, to deliver projects that benefit biodiversity through promotion of natural system functioning and nature-based solutions, whilst also delivering wider benefits such as flood risk reduction, amenity value and landscape improvement. Notable projects include the Bollin Catchment Restoration and NVC survey of coastal vegetated shingle in Wales.

Knowledge-sharing is integral to their ethos, with staff encouraged to teach, deliver training courses, and present at conferences. The ecology team has links with numerous academic institutions which they use to share knowledge by conducting lectures and supporting research projects. Currently JBA ecologists teach an MSc module on the Sustainable Floodplain Management and Restoration course at Lancaster University. They also deliver training courses to a variety of audiences covering a range of ecological topics, including the Water Framework Directive and catchment management and they have previously delivered CIEEM's course on Invasive Non-native Species.

The team has established internal training sessions and an R&D program (JLabs) to innovate processes and tools. Sustainability is paramount, with an ISO14001-certified Environmental Management System and a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040. They promote EV use, paperless offices, and low-carbon commuting through environmental reward schemes.

JBA invests heavily in staff development, providing generous training budgets, structured programmes, and mentoring for career progression. Informal webinars and lunchtime sessions discuss emerging ecological issues and upskill staff. The Graduate Recruitment Scheme offers a structured pathway for graduates, allowing cross-disciplinary work and career specialisation.

In terms of social value, JBA actively supports community-led initiatives and volunteering efforts. In 2023, staff participated in tree planting projects, created STEM videos for school children, loaned equipment to local schools, and volunteered for various ecological surveys and conservation activities. The JBA Trust, an independent charity supported by JBA Consulting, promotes research and skills development in environmental management, with staff delivering career talks and engaging with educational institutions.

Overall, JBA Consulting emphasises sustainability, knowledge-sharing, staff development, and community engagement in their operations, demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

Highly Commended

Baker Consultants

Baker Consultants prides itself on delivering high-quality work, with 49% of its projects in 2023 coming from repeat clients, demonstrating client satisfaction and trust. Their work extends to diverse areas such as biodiversity monitoring in iconic parks like Hyde Park and Richmond Park, developing methodologies for listening to soil health, and engaging with communities and schools to raise awareness about invertebrates and soil ecosystems. Notably, Baker Consultants collaborated with Hinckley Point C to revise proposals for mitigating environmental impacts, resulting in significant improvements in conservation outcomes.

Pioneering research in ecoacoustics has led to innovative techniques for bird surveys and soil health assessment, contributing to better ecological monitoring and management. The company's involvement in developing guidance on ecoacoustic methods and long-term monitoring projects showcases its commitment to advancing ecological research and practice.

In addition to their ecological contributions, Baker Consultants prioritises sustainability in their operations, implementing measures to reduce their carbon footprint and promote staff well-being. Initiatives like transitioning to a four-day work week (primarily to promote staff wellbeing) with its concomitant reduction in carbon footprint, promoting train travel for international meetings, and investing in energy-efficient equipment demonstrate their commitment to environmental responsibility.

Their dedication to professional development is evident through their investment in staff training and apprenticeship programs, ensuring that their team stays abreast of the latest developments in the field. By actively engaging with professional bodies like CIEEM and participating in industry events and publications, Baker Consultants strives to uphold high standards in ecological practice and contribute to the wider ecological community.

Highly Commended

CSA Environmental

CSA Environmental is committed to delivering practical and commercially grounded schemes that benefit both people and nature. Recent projects include collaborations with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the completion of significant undertakings such as Birmingham University's 'Green Heart', Sugarhouse Island, and Albany Park SANG, Fleet, which delivers 17ha of diverse recreational space and public enjoyment and to help mitigate pressures on the nearby Thames Basin Heaths SPA. These sites are now available, bringing benefits to people and wildlife.

The company engages in habitat creation and enhancement projects nationwide, promoting biodiversity net gain principles to foster sustainable development. They are also working with local landowners to deliver habitat banks and other natural capital projects. Schemes include an advanced proposal at Bentley Heath where, after significant input from CSA, Biodiversity Units are ready to be marketed. Their work, embracing the biodiversity net gain principles, is demonstrably delivering benefits for nature, whilst also facilitating sustainable development, benefitting the communities and the economy.

CSA forms and manages relationships with stakeholders to promote ecologically sound management practices. They engage in discussions, attend events, and deliver CPD to raise awareness of their work, actively sharing knowledge with peers, clients, and community groups through various outreach activities and partnerships.

CSA prioritises staff development and knowledge sharing, investing in training and hosting events like the Annual Ecology Day. They also proactively support mental health and EDI initiatives, and their efforts have earned them recognition as a Great Place to Work. The company fosters connections with universities, offering opportunities for students to gain experience in the field.

CSA values employee feedback and prioritises staff wellbeing, offering flexible working arrangements and overtime pay. They believe that supporting their staff is essential for creating fulfilling careers and advancing the profession.

Consultancy of the Year – Large

Winner

Arcadis Consulting (UK) Ltd

Arcadis, in their pursuit of enhancing the quality of life while championing nature-positive projects, has achieved significant milestones in 2023. Noteworthy accomplishments include obtaining outline planning permission for Otterpool Park, a project committed to delivering 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), evidencing environmental net gain via the EBN tool for which it has been a trial project since 2018 and delivering largely nature-based nutrient neutrality. Their collaboration with National Highways and local land managers resulted in the delivery of over 2000 biodiversity units, showcasing the value of offsetting. Additionally, Coed Elai Business Park's redesign earned them commendation at the Brownfield Awards for creating valuable brownfield habitats and wetlands.

Their longstanding involvement in Sizewell C demonstrates exemplary mitigation efforts, including wetland creation and badger management, aligning with nature-positive principles. Arcadis has also played a pivotal role in innovative designs for HS2, incorporating no net loss GIS dashboards and green bridges, leaving a lasting ecological legacy.

Furthermore, Arcadis has been instrumental in promoting and delivering nature-based solutions (NbS), such as constructed wetlands and wet woodlands for catchment based phosphate removal across Wales. Their carbon reduction initiatives, commitment to science-based targets, and renewable energy adoption underline their dedication to environmental sustainability. They are NbS carbon reduction innovators with sustainability trackers for major projects driving carbon reduction. The carbon management policy drives changes throughout our company, clients and supply chain, with a Science Based Target Initiative pledge a key part of the Race to Zero campaign. The company is on track for its global targets to achieve net zero by 2035, halving emissions by 2028, transitioning the entire company fleet to electric by 2030 and have renewable energy across all offices.

In addition to project accomplishments, Arcadis has been proactive in knowledge sharing and capacity building. They participated in COP28, delivered training on environmental net gain, and contributed to various conferences and publications.

They are committed to investing in the experts of tomorrow and mentoring their career development and progression. The company's grow, perform, succeed process drives training and monitors advancement. Personal development plans support career advancement, transparent promotions processes ensure equal opportunities. Training and mentoring provide a strong platform for development monitored by a competency matrix and driven by CIEEM competency to which our promotion progressed is linked.

Internal training programmes cover a wide range of topics, ensuring staff development and competence enhancement. External training sessions attended by colleagues reflect their commitment to staying abreast of industry developments.

Arcadis's influence extends beyond project delivery to legislative and policy spheres, contributing to the growth and diversification of the profession. Moreover, their active involvement with CIEEM showcases their dedication to professional standards and industry advancement.

They provide pro bono services to charities and community groups, exemplifying their commitment to societal well-being. In 2023, members of their team supported the Urban gardening charity GrowtoKnow (with pro bono ecological and arboricultural advice and surveying), the Canal and Rivers Trust and the Treehouse School for Ambitious about Autism. All of their ecologists have a charity day and over 90% use this time to support nature, sustainability and wellbeing.

In summary, Arcadis's achievements in 2023 underscore its commitment to sustainability, innovation, and social responsibility. Through their project work, knowledge sharing initiatives, and community engagement, they continue to make significant contributions towards creating a more sustainable and resilient future.

Highly Commended

Tetra Tech

Tetra Tech is committed to driving sustainable development and positively impacting the environment and society. They undertake over 100,000 projects annually across 100+ countries, focusing on sustainability and utilising their Leading with Science® approach. The company launched the 1 Billion People Challenge in 2021, aiming to improve the lives of 1 billion people worldwide by 2030, measuring impact through various sustainable initiatives.

Key accomplishments include treating protecting, managing, or restoring 185 million hectares of land and water annually, and avoiding or capturing 101.2 million metric tons of CO2 per year. Their UK Ecology team, including Tetra Tech and RPS, has significantly contributed to these achievements through various projects, such as sustainable residential developments, minerals and aggregates support, peatland restoration, energy production initiatives, government projects, and infrastructure design.

The company shares knowledge extensively, involving staff in various professional groups and committees, volunteering on industry bodies, and contributing to publications and events. They focus on training and development, with initiatives like bi-annual appraisals, career pathway options, specialist technical groups, lunch and learn sessions, external training courses, and a formal mentoring program. They also incentivise professional development through financial awards and support staff in developing innovative service streams.

Moreover, Tetra Tech encourages the next generation through university lectures, school presentations, work placements, STEM programmes, and participation in industry initiatives. They emphasise diversity and inclusion, with programs like the Tetra Tech Graduate and Apprentice Programme aimed at recruiting young talent.

Tetra Tech is committed to being Climate Positive by 2030 and Carbon Negative by 2050. They track and report CO2 emissions, implement carbon reduction initiatives, and support clean energy projects and policies. They also engage with clients to promote net zero requirements and develop carbon tracking tools for projects and clients.

Tetra Tech demonstrates a comprehensive approach to sustainability, environmental stewardship, and professional development, making significant strides towards their ambitious goals while positively impacting communities and the environment globally.

Commended

AtkinsRéalis

At AtkinsRéalis, the commitment to nature, society, business, and the economy shines through their diverse range of impactful projects across the country. Through innovative approaches, such as the live-dig badger sett mitigation method and the pioneering use of bioacoustics and AI in ecological surveys, they demonstrate their dedication to practical outcomes for nature and efficiency in project delivery. Their advanced geospatial system streamlines processes to ensure Biodiversity Net Gain requirements are met efficiently. Additionally, they help lead the development of new technologies like conservation detection dogs and contribute to industry standards through their involvement in various committees and publications.

The company prioritises employee wellness and professional development through bespoke programmes and training initiatives, ensuring a supportive and thriving work environment for all staff. Their dedication to promoting the profession is evident through our extensive involvement in conferences, publications, and outreach activities aimed at inspiring the next generation of ecologists and fostering diversity and inclusion within the sector.

AtkinsRéalis stands as a beacon of excellence in environmental consultancy, consistently delivering high-quality outcomes while pushing the boundaries of innovation and sustainability. Through its collaborative efforts and unwavering commitment to positive change, they continue to lead the way in shaping a more connected, sustainable world for generations to come.

Commended

Jacobs UK Ltd

Jacobs is a leading advocate for sustainability, integrating it into their business model through initiatives like PlanBeyond 2.0. Their ecologists play a pivotal role in ensuring biodiversity and environmental considerations are embedded in project delivery from the outset, aligning with changing legislative requirements.

Their ecologists embrace digital innovation, adopting a "Digital by Default" approach to enhance data collection and analysis, leading to more efficient and predictive assessments. Jacobs invests heavily in ecological training and professional development, offering various programmes such as the Graduate Development Programme tailored to CIEEM competencies. They emphasise an "Agile Careers" initiative, supporting career transitions within and beyond the ecology discipline.

Jacobs is committed to promoting ecology as a rewarding career path, advocating for diversity and inclusion in the sector. Their engagement extends to educational outreach programmes like the STEAM initiative, where ecologists organise events to inspire young minds about environmental stewardship.

Moreover, Jacobs prioritises sustainability in project delivery, reducing both cost and environmental impact for clients and the wider economy. Their digital platform, Carbon First, facilitates strategic carbon reduction planning and has garnered industry recognition for its innovation.

In summary, Jacobs' holistic approach to sustainability encompasses various facets, from embedding biodiversity considerations in project delivery to promoting ecological careers and investing in educational outreach. Their commitment to innovation and sustainability underscores their leadership in the environmental consulting sector.

Award Sponsors

VIP SPONSOR

CIEEM Insurance Services is administered by MFL Insurance Group.

We have worked alongside CIEEM for many years and have had the privilege of being the preferred provider of insurance solutions to CIEEM Members since 1997. During this time, we created a suite of products to cater to the unique requirements of CIEEM Members.

The availability of these bespoke solutions enables CIEEM members to benefit from a wide scope of insurance protection that may not be readily available to them on an individual basis.

We already represent many CIEEM members with their insurance and welcome the opportunity to assist new members. Given our long-standing commitment to CIEEM and our focus on professionalism, sponsorship of this event was an easy choice.

Events like the Annual Awards are an important part of our collective responsibility to acknowledge the great achievements of Members, share knowledge, and network with our peers.

We are now looking forward to being part of this successful event.

VIP SPONSOR

One of the world's leading companies, delivering sustainable design, engineering and consultancy solutions for natural and built assets. We have more than 3,600 people in over 70 countries, dedicated to improving quality of life. We understand the dynamic needs of our people, clients, and collaborators and we appreciate the enormous contribution that CIEEM and their members have made by creating, inspiring and sharing knowledge for and within the ecological community.

Diversity and flexibility drive innovation which is vital to thrive in such a dynamic political, legislative, physical and social environment and work towards achieving our sustainability goals. All Arcadians embrace diversity and focus on innovative and agile approaches for design, implementation and management. We draw on the support of our professional communities to deliver our vision of improving quality of life.

CIEEM is a community that drives change and innovation within our profession for the benefits of society at large. A community that continues to collaborate and acknowledges that it needs to reach a wider and more diverse audience to accelerate the vision of our profession. We are very proud to be sponsoring the innovation, knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement awards. We are excited by the potential for inspiration, action and legacy that the ecology profession can deliver.

SILVER SPONSOR

We are delighted to be supporting the CIEEM 2024 Awards in not only one, but two inspirational categories. This prestigious event embodies our values and mission here at Wildcare – to support ecologists and wildlife enthusiasts so they in turn can support our environment and natural ecosystems. We're always growing and evolving, and support of these landmark events allows us to continue to work within the community of industry leaders and connects us with ecologists.

Our chosen sponsored categories were selected carefully. We chose the Member of the Year Award as we feel this strongly ties with our value to support the community. This award is dedicated to those who selflessly go the extra mile, often unnoticed. We are extremely proud to celebrate this valuable partnership.

The Promising Professional Award is all about encouraging and supporting junior ecologists who are taking the first steps in their ecology career. At Wildcare, our products and services support students and education too, not just wildlife enthusiasts and established professionals. Therefore, this award is something we strongly endorse and encourage.

It is a privilege for us to have a longstanding partnership with CIEEM and support the wonderful work they do in inspiring youth, supporting professionals and raising awareness of the natural world and challenges it faces. Its very mission is selfless – to promote the highest standards and practices for the benefit of nature and society. Therefore, we are honoured to support the charity in these awards and wish every success to the nominees and participants.

SILVER SPONSOR

RSK Biocensus (together with RSK Wilding) is a market leading ecological consultancy comprising a team of over 170 highly qualified in-house staff, supported by a network of more than 700 quality assured consultant ecologists. We therefore have the scale to tackle the largest of jobs and the range of expertise to deliver on any ecology project.

At RSK Biocensus we work with our clients to make their projects great for people and great for biodiveristy. Our experts will not only identify ecological impacts and risks but will always identify the opportunities to enhance developments for the benefit of nature.

SILVER SPONSOR

DNV is an independent assurance and risk management provider, operating in more than 100 countries, with the purpose of safeguarding life, property, and the environment. Whether assessing a new ship design, qualifying technology for a floating wind farm, analysing sensor data from a gas pipeline or certifying a food company's supply chain, DNV enables its customers and their stakeholders to manage technological, regulatory and market complexity with confidence. As a trusted voice for many of the world's most successful organizations, we use our broad experience and deep expertise to advance sustainable performance, set industry standards, and inspire and invent solutions.

In the energy sector, we work across the entire energy value chain providing advisory, monitoring, verification, and certification services. As the world's leading resource of independent energy experts and technical advisors, the assurance provider helps industries and governments to navigate the many complex, interrelated transitions taking place globally and regionally, in the energy industry. DNV is committed to realizing the goals of the Paris Agreement, and supports customers to transition faster to a deeply decarbonized energy system.

Further to this, at DNV we are trusted by our customers to help deliver their biodiversity responsibilities, develop their sustainability strategy and co-create nature-based solutions for the benefit of all. Biodiversity resilience is key to safeguarding life, property, and our environment and sponsoring CIEEM's large and small conservation project of the year awards allows us to magnify and support the outstanding work being executed by our peers which contributes towards achieving biodiversity resilience.

SILVER SPONSOR

We are delighted to have the opportunity to sponsor the Large Scale Best Practice Mitigation Award and to showcase the latest and best examples of excellence within our sector.

Binnies recognises that mitigating environmental impacts within the objectives of a project at a catchment level is where opportunities arise for new and innovative thinking, and where cross-discipline working can be so important.

Binnies UK is a global engineering and environmental consultancy that has been at the forefront of sustainable infrastructure development for over a century. Through eco-conscious methodologies and digital ingenuity, we deliver pragmatic, sustainable solutions for water utilities, government regulatory agencies, infrastructure and industrial clients.

Our experts focus on efficient delivery using a whole lifecycle planning and design approach offering long term environmental and social infrastructure solutions. Binnies aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to create a more environmentally responsible and resilient world, delivering on low and zero carbon initiatives.

At Binnies you are part of a family that encourages multi-disciplinary professionals to collaborate and achieve excellence. Our people champion diversity and unity harnessing a positive environment for employee wellbeing.

We are part of the 14,000-member strong RSK Group.

Binnies stands beside our clients in the pursuit of a better world. Find out how we enhance lives, communities and the environment.

Award Sponsors

BRONZE SPONSOR

Tetra Tech is a leading provider of high-end consulting and engineering projects with 27,000 associates, working across the full project life cycle worldwide Leading with Science® to solve our clients' most complex problems.

Our operations in the UK and Europe include more than 5,000 employees working alongside local, national and international clients to develop their strategies and provide the services they need to take plans forward.

Our ecology team supports national projects through feasibility, planning, and beyond from habitat survey work to protected species licensing. We work on projects across all sectors including defence, nuclear, property, government services, energy and utilities (on and offshore), transport and residential. We also have specialist expertise in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Neutrality, Nature Positive, Natural Capital, Peatland Restoration and Habitats Regulations Assessment. At Tetra Tech we focus on positively impacting the lives of those around us by protecting our natural environment by developing and designing nature positive and sustainable solutions to help address the current biodiversity and climate crisis.

BRONZE SPONSOR

Greenhouse Graphics is an award-winning graphics and print company, recognised as one of the UK's leading sustainable print centres, partnering with some of the UK's leading environmental organisations. Greenhouse was established in 1993 with the aim to provide a greener choice in print, offering a wide range of graphic projects including design, print, signage and exhibition graphics. Greenhouse services clients from global multi-nationals to local sole traders. Our pioneering carbon calculator has provided clients with an informed choice for the lowest impact print production. In addition, we offer carbon balancing, via the World Land Trust, helping to protect the tropical rainforests under the imminent threat of deforestation. From concept to job delivery, examples of our work include brand design, development, management, and adherence; design and production of brochures, annual reports, books, magazines, interpretation boards, exhibition design, internal and external signage. Please call Emma to discuss your project on 01256 880770, or visit www.greenhousegraphics.co.uk.

BRONZE SPONSOR

Countryside Jobs Service is an ethical business working in harmony with environmental professionals to conserve the British countryside and natural world. Motivated by conservation success, not profits. Although primarily known for our job service, CJS is much more than a recruitment site. We've been publishing countryside, conservation and wildlife sector information since 1994. Countryside Jobs Service is delighted to continue our association with the CIEEM Awards; this year sponsoring the NGO impact award. We work with many of the conservation NGOs and feel privileged to see the wonderful results of their hard work which all too often go unnoticed by the public and even fellow professionals, by sponsoring this award we are helping to promote and throw a spotlight onto some of their amazing achievements.

DRINKS RECEPTION SPONSOR

Ecus, part of the Cura Terrae Group, provides future-facing solutions to help our clients maintain and enhance the natural and built environment. We offer our environmental expertise across the UK and provide services to the construction and building, transport, energy, utilities, and government sectors, using our 30 years of experience to support them in working with the environment as sustainably and safely as possible. Our technical experience covers all sectors from rail and roads infrastructure, through to commercial and residential development. We work inside the energy and utilities sectors, supporting some of the largest providers.

Our multi-disciplinary range of consultancy services include sustainability, arboriculture, climate change advice, ecology, environmental services, habitats, heritage & archaeology, landscape, and water.

We keep sustainability at the forefront of our mind to ensure your projects progress efficiently while adhering to environmental measures. Through close collaboration and a combination of Ecus services, our teams discover and deliver technical solutions. Our service teams are highly adaptable and are able to draw on cross-disciplinary support from our other technical staff.

We're proud to support CIEEM as we enter an exciting new chapter of growth in the environmental sector and our ecologists work to protect the environment and be guided by the professional standards of this valuable group of peers.

Judges

We are very grateful to the following members who volunteered their time to judge the awards:

Postgraduate Student Project Award
Dr. Eirene Williams CEnv FCIEEM (rtd)
Sarah Jane Chimbwandira CEnv MCIEEM
Rosalyn Smallshaw CEnv MCIEEM
Dr Aidan Marsh CEcol CEnv MCIEEM
Joanne Ellam CEnv MCIEEM

Promising Professional
Nina Birkby MCIEEM
Charlotte Rimmer MCIEEM
Rachel Short MCIEEM
Charmaine Noel MCIEEM
Cody Levine CEcol CEnv MCIEEM

In Practice (Editorial Board)
Kate Bayley MCIEEM
Joanne Denyer MCIEEM
Ursula Digby CEnv MCIEEM
Sally Fraser CEnv MCIEEM
Neil Harwood CEnv MCIEEM
Claire Howe MCIEEM
Sue Lawley CEnv MCIEEM
Caroline McParland CEnv MCIEEM
Ian Morrissey CEnv MCIEEM
Patrick White FCIEEM
Helen Hyde (Student Member representative)

Climate and Nature Action 2030
Tanith Cook CEcol MCIEEM
Tom Butterworth MCIEEM
Victoria Hooper CEcol CEnv MCIEEM
Laura Thain MCIEEM
James Porter MCIEEM

NGO Impact
Dr Liz Allchin CEnv MCIEEM
Jo Rockingham MCIEEM
Stephanie Renshaw MCIEEM
Uttara Pandey MCIEEM
Hazel Murrells MCIEEM

Best Practice
Dr David Parker CEcol CEnv FCIEEM
Liz Anderson CEnv MCIEEM
Dr Sue Lawley CEnv MCIEEM
Andrew May FCIEEM
Hattie Spray CEnv MCIEEM
Kathryn Edwards CEcol MCIEEM
Chiara Magliozzi MCIEEM

Higher Education Programme of the Year
Dr Debbie Bartlett FCIEEM
Kat Stanhope CEnv FCIEEM
Prof. Rob Marrs CEcol FCIEEM
Bruce Shortland MCIEEM
Mark Webb CEcol CEnv FCIEEM

Member of the Year
David Tyldesley FCIEEM
Frances King-Smith CEcol MCIEEM
Lisa Kerslake CEcol FCIEEM
Patrick White MCIEEM
Laura Grant MCIEEM

Consultancy of the Year
Dr Ben Aston CEnv MCIEEM
Sally Cowley CEnv MCIEEM
Daniel Gotts CEnv MCIEEM
Sarah Cane Ritchie CEnv MCIEEM
Rob Hutchinson CEcol MCIEEM
Felicite Dodd MCIEEM(rtd)

CIEEM
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

CIEEM
Grosvenor Court, Ampfield Hill,
Ampfield, Romsey, SO51 9BD

t: 01962 868626
e: enquiries@cieem.net
w: www.cieem.net

@CIEEMnet @CIEEM91
https://www.linkedin.com/company/chartered-institute-of-ecology-and-environmental-management-cieem-