

Countryside Management Association Gordon Miller Award 2016



Project B

Name of individual, organisation or project being nominated: Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group (StOC)
Where is the activity/project being carried out? (location & region) Dartmoor National Park, South West

Nominee Contact details – CMA needs to be able to contact someone about this nomination (NB personal details these will not be published without explicit permission)

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Your contact details (if different to above)

Contact name:
Email:

About the activity/work/project

<p>Overview (150 words max) Please summarise the activity/work/project, being clear about what was achieved and explaining why the nomination has been made</p>	<p>StOC was set up 25 years ago and is run entirely by volunteers.</p> <p>The group is open to anyone regardless of age, gender or ability and runs tasks for different organisations including public, private, community and not for profit organisations.</p> <p>Every Friday throughout the year, group members take on a new task, planned in a 3 monthly work programme.</p> <p>Tasks also always include an element of learning.</p> <p>The group is set up as a sustainable way of encouraging local community participation/volunteering in practical conservation work. It has flourished for 25 years achieving a mammoth amount of work, gaining respect from all of the organisations and individuals it works for. Members have also benefited in many ways!</p>
<p>What was done (500 words max) Please describe activity/work/project in more detail</p>	<p>Depending on the time of year, tasks include bridge construction, board walks, path revetments; removal of invasive species; habitat restoration; conservation of archaeological features and various vegetation management projects on the commons.</p> <p>Nearly everywhere you go in the area covered by this group, their impact is clear to see! Not only have visitors and locals alike benefited from the improvements to the rights of way network or better access to the commons, wildlife has also flourished. Invasive vegetation control has led to an increase in the biodiversity in specific areas.</p> <p>The group is well respected locally for what they have achieved and this has encouraged visitors to the area which has an economic benefit</p>

	<p>Group members have also benefited both physically and mentally – through outdoor exercise and social interaction.</p>
<p>Outputs/Outcomes (300 words max) Please provide some facts and figures (e.g. no of schools / vols engaged, events delivered, acres improved/linked, partners/joint working), how the activity/work / project was innovative or demonstrates best practice. Sell your project!</p>	<p>Being run by local people, for local people and all voluntarily, has sustained this group irrespective of changes in membership over its long history. It's a model that works! Overheads are kept to a minimum e.g. insurance cover, tool purchase and voluntary donations by organisations or individuals receiving the benefits, are enough to keep the group solvent.</p> <p>They are run in a professional manner regarding project coordination, risk assessments, work done and first aid provision but maintain a friendly and welcoming atmosphere that does encourage wide participation no matter what the ability of the individual joining for the first time.</p> <p>We are the only National Park that has actively encouraged the setting up and support to, local conservation groups like StOC.</p> <p>In an age where numbers and kudos are everything, it's refreshing to see an Authority stand behind its long standing policy despite the lack of recognition for this innovative approach.</p> <p>It's is harder to see the wider benefits of achieving a greater understanding and respect for the National Park that comes from groups like this but undoubtedly this does happen in a more gentle and sustainable way! Officers also benefit from having willing volunteers who will tackle almost anything!</p> <p>It has been estimated that in the region of 40,000 hours of work have been achieved over this 25 year period and has included over 200 volunteers many of whom stay for several years at a time and a few, throughout the group's long history.</p>
<p>Learning (300 words max) What was key to the success of the activity?</p>	<p>A decision made in 1991 to support the setting up of local volunteer groups rather than setting up a Dartmoor wide volunteer group was the key to the success of these groups long term and has not created a burden either in time or financially to the National Park Authority.</p> <p>This approach has proved to be sustainable at a time when the word was not in common use!</p> <p>Five such groups now exist on Dartmoor covering a good proportion of the Park area and although some are run in slightly different ways, they all run independently of the Authority.</p> <p>The Authority has set up a networking group with membership from these groups and others to help disseminate information and to update each other on progress and projects being achieved.</p>

<p>Downloads, videos, images <i>(please add links or attach documents/2 -3 images for use on the CMA website and wider promotion eg press releases).</i></p>	<p>See StOC website www.stocgroup.org</p> <p>There are many hundreds of images that can be provided but the website gives a flavour!</p>
<p>Quote from nominee One / two sentences describing value of project/successes from someone directly involved</p>	<p>Without this group I would not have achieved half of what I have as an Area Ranger on Dartmoor!</p> <p>I can plan ahead a variety of conservation tasks knowing the group's capabilities and skills and have never been let down by them.</p>
<p>Quote from someone who has benefitted (100 words max)</p>	<p>From: Mike Watson. Group Coordinator – quoted in a local newspaper</p> <p>“The 25th Anniversary demonstrates a sustained commitment to conservation in our local environment.</p> <p>We have had a lot of fun in a very mixed group including adults with learning difficulties, undertaking diverse tasks in beautiful areas. This kind of work carried out by volunteers is becoming increasingly important in these times of economic restrictions.”</p>

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Signature:

Ian Brooker

Name:

Ian Brooker

Date 1st Oct 2016