

Gordon Miller Award 2016



Nomination Form

The search is underway to find the **most deserving project, initiative or innovative practice that has made or is making an outstanding contribution to countryside/urban greenspace management for the Gordon Miller Award 2016**. The Award will then be presented annually, with the 'trophy' being passed to the next recipient.

The Award is a way of acknowledging the hard work and commitment of people who contribute to making the UK's countryside and urban greenspace a wonderful and inspiring place to visit, live and work in. Each year CMA will look for a person or a group of people for whom sharing their knowledge, skills, experience and enthusiasm has resulted in an exceptional contribution to the management of the countryside and/or urban greenspace of the UK.

The intention is **not** to introduce a highly competitive 'winner/loser' scenario; the aim is very much to encourage members to put forward great projects that everyone can see and hear about; showcasing the fabulous work that we all know takes place around the land. The RANGER already highlights great work from around the country. Each of these projects submitted will receive acknowledgement and feature in the RANGER and on the web site. Let's take some time to promote and celebrate great work whether it's through members, organisations, volunteers or partners working together.

The project doesn't have to have started during 2016, although it may have done! In fact it may have been running for a few or several years. Important elements are likely to be innovative ideas, people working together, commitment, time & effort, and *results or outcomes* of the project.

Nominations can be **projects, initiatives or innovative practices that have resulted in positive improvements for habitats, species, access or people (education or interpretation)**. Nominations can be for employers, other organisations / groups, volunteers or individual countryside management staff. You can nominate a person or organisation that you feel deserves to be the winner of this year's Award, or you can put one of your own projects forward.

Nominations should be made by completing the form overleaf and returning to chairman@countrysideassociation.org.uk by end of play Monday 26th September 2016.

Nominated projects will then give a "final pitch" at the CMA Conference 2016. Please ensure that someone will be attending and willing to give a 5 minute presentation on Wednesday 2nd November (with or without powerpoint). It doesn't have to be someone directly connected to the project. You could ask someone who is attending to present for you, or it may be the person who has submitted the project. They could be given text to read, a ppt to bring, a video or set of pictures. It simply needs to be shown via a laptop for everyone to see.

The presentation itself is not part of the judging process; it is simply a chance to ensure conference delegates are fully aware of the work involved, and benefits of, the project put forward. The recipient of the Award will be decided by a paper vote following the presentations and the Award presented that evening.

CMA is hoping for around 6 projects to come forward to Conference. If there are more submitted (great!) applications will be sent around the membership by email to determine those that go forward.

Countryside Management Association Gordon Miller Award 2016

Nominee

Name of individual, organisation or project being nominated:

Natural England National Nature Reserve dedication project

Where is the activity/project being carried out? (location & region)

Nationally on Natural England National Nature Reserve in freehold ownership

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)

Primary contact name: Kevin Vigers

Address: Lancaster House, Hampshire Court

Town/City: Newcastle upon Tyne

County: Tyne and Wear

Postcode: NE46 4DB

Email: kevin.vigers@naturalengland.org.uk

Phone number: 07771 943396

Your contact details (if different to above)

Contact name:

Email:

About the activity/work/project

Overview (150 words max)

Please summarise the activity/work/project, being clear about **what was achieved** and **explaining why the nomination has been made**

The Natural England National Nature Reserve dedication project aims to demonstrate that access and conservation management can co-exist. Improving access effectively re-connects people with nature to establish long term public support for conservation management.

It was once a common sight to see the term “nature reserve” as shorthand for no access for people. Indeed in the early 1990s nature reserve ‘Keep Out’ signs were not uncommon and were an accepted part of the access management toolkit for nature reserve managers and conservation organisations throughout the country.

When Natural England was vested in 2006 as a new integrated agency we had an opportunity and a revised duty under the NERC Act to demonstrate how people and nature could flourish together. Experience suggests that people are more likely to value biodiversity if they are directly exposed to it and can share and enjoy it in person.

What was done (500 words max)

Please describe activity/work/project in more detail

In an effort to demonstrate how natural England was integrating its functions, and to work towards a more consistent approach to access provision on the freehold NNR estate, the Natural England Board considered a proposal in November 2011 to dedicate all of Natural England’s freehold estate for public access under the provisions of section 16 of CRoW. This proposal built on a few earlier dedications of particular NNR areas by English Nature.

The first part of the NNR dedication process was to compile a list of the eligible NNRs where Natural England had freehold interest in the land. These NNRs were then grouped according to a mixture of criteria including geographical spread and potential complexity of issues.

	<p>The full programme of the four year project was published on our website from the inception of the project. This was done for several important reasons.</p> <p>Firstly it made the work we were doing transparent and visible to the public. An important consideration as the project focused on the dedication for access of public land.</p> <p>Secondly with the existing pressures on staff time across Natural England and very limited dedicated staff resource for the project an approach had to be found to maximise the ability of staff to ‘fit’ the NNR dedication work into existing busy work schedules. The demand fell on three groups of staff, the open access case officers, the SSSI responsible officers and the NNR managers.</p> <p>The project was designed to minimise demand on staff time wherever possible and the basic work flow is set out below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial meeting on site with the Open Access case officer, NNR manager. The agenda covered; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Site familiarisation; ➤ Tenure; ➤ Boundaries; ➤ General and specific issues; and ➤ Higher rights 2. Assessment Meeting involving the Responsible Officer for the NNR and the NNR manager and, if appropriate, included relevant local stakeholders such as County Wildlife Trust. <p>Legal Checks - In a parallel process one of the NNR team land agents undertook to look in detail at the extent of the freehold ownership so that the appropriate legal checks were made to confirm Natural England’s ownership. Checks are also made to ensure that an NNR is not subject to any other legal interests that would impair our ability to dedicate. For example, anyone with the necessary legal interest would be asked to agree to the dedication; in effect, the process can’t proceed without their agreement.</p> <p>The process ends with the production of the dedication instrument, which includes a map of the area of freehold that shows the area to be dedicated. Once this is signed the new access rights take effect six months after that date. During this time any work on the site is undertaken that has been agreed as a part of the appraisal process.</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>Widening accessibility</p> <p>The core aim of the dedication project was to secure and improve the quality and consistency of access for visitors on foot. The project has dedicated 73% of our total freehold ownership, creating some 14,000 hectares of new open access land.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible to relax the general restrictions that CRoW places on horse and cycle access to create revocable rights for these users. As part of the project we looked in detail at the suitability of all existing paths for cycling/horse riding, and the project has delivered approximately 21 km of new higher rights access.</p> <p>Another issue that can raise practical concerns on some NNRs is visitors with dogs. As a part of the project we have worked closely with the</p>


	<p>access advisor for the Kennel Club, providing support and advice for our staff on changing the more problematic behaviours shown by some dog owners, and producing win/win solutions that improve dog access where possible without compromising the values of the site. A 'dogs toolkit' has been produced which provides NNR managers with a range of solutions and strategies to assist with some of the dog (and human) behaviour issues that they encounter.</p> <p>Compliance with UK and EU species and habitats legislation</p> <p>A key feature of the dedication project was that the specific arrangements we make for improved access are designed locally, site by site, in the light of the practical circumstances and requirements on the NNR and the sensitivity of its special nature conservation interest. There was discussion throughout the process between our access and nature conservation staff, starting at the earliest stage of development. Our initial access proposals are often iterative and modified as a result of this dialogue. This work has helped to shape the "sensitive features assessment" process in delivery of Coastal Access.</p>
<p>Learning (300 words max) What was key to the success of the activity?</p>	<p>As the project progressed the approach to aspects of the work were amended on the basis of feedback and experience. The feedback was gained through case officer discussions and through a more formal survey that was sent to NNR staff involved in the project.</p> <p>Higher Rights</p> <p>A key change made was around the approach to the identification of higher rights potential within the project.</p> <p>Initially, NNR site staff were asked what they felt were the opportunities for such higher rights. In the majority of cases few opportunities were identified; the project was in danger of not delivering against this element of the project.</p> <p>It was clear that we needed a new approach that enabled both a more objective assessment of the options on each site.</p> <p>Instead of asking for suggestions from the NNR staff a more comprehensive objective assessment approach was adopted. All established paths and tracks were identified and assessed both in practical management terms and for any impacts on the integrity of the conservation management of the site.</p> <p>Revocable rights</p> <p>CRoW allows a land owner to relax general restrictions on certain activities listed in Schedule 2 including horse and cycle riding. This caused concern for NNR staff and Responsible Officers due to the irrevocable nature of the dedication for higher rights. They felt that there had to be some flexibility to amend if circumstances on the ground changed.</p> <p>CRoW allows a land owner to relax general restrictions on certain activities listed in Schedule 2 by a paragraph 7 direction. Using these powers provided the mechanism to deliver access for higher rights users but retaining the ability to revoke or amend the rights if circumstances changed. This power gave concerned staff the confidence that changes could be made if problems arose.</p>
<p>Downloads, videos, images <i>(please add links or attach</i></p>	<p>See attached photos to email</p>

<p><i>documents/2 -3 images for use on the CMA website and wider promotion eg press releases).</i></p>	
<p>Quote from nominee One / two sentences describing value of project/successes from someone directly involved</p>	<p><i>"Thank you very much to everyone involved in this work, really great stuff. I think it's a milestone well worth celebrating!"</i> (James Cross, NE Chief Executive, May 2016, after the signing of the last batch of dedication instruments)</p>
<p>Quote from someone who has benefitted (100 words max)</p>	<p><i>"We're delighted that the crown jewels of England's natural world will be permanently open for walkers to enjoy"</i> (Kate Conto, Ramblers Senior Policy Officer, January 2014, following access rights going live on batch 1 NNRs).</p>

Permissions:

By submitting this form for the Award you agree to CMA storing the information for the purposes of administering the Award.

By submitting this form you agree to CMA publishing the information provided on the form, photographs or video (BUT NOT THE PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS WITHOUT SEPARATE PERMISSION) to publicise the Award and your work. CMA is happy to discuss specifics that should not be publicised (names/details/photos etc)

Signature: 

Name: Kevin Vigars (on behalf of the project team)

Date: September 26th 2016