

# THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AWARDS 2023

## Application Guidance

# Rewarding the region's Natural Environment work

The Natural Environment Awards are all about recognising community groups, businesses, local authorities and educational institutions for the work they do to protect and enhance the West Midlands natural environment.

In 2021, the WMCA launched our Natural Environment Plan to work with partners over the next five years to enhance the region's biodiversity, protect endangered species, and improve access to green spaces and waterways for residents.

The Natural Environment Awards will showcase the regions good practice and highlight organisations and projects that could be replicated across the region. The awards aim to inspire others to work towards enhancing and protecting our natural environment.





# The Awards

The Natural Environment Awards are the first region wide award scheme dedicated to recognising excellence within organisations in the West Midlands for protecting, restoring and enhancing our region's natural environment.

The annual awards will acknowledge the achievements of organisations across the region, who have showcased their commitment and enthusiasm for creating improving our green and blue spaces, not only for environmental benefits, but also for the enjoyment of the local community.

## Timelines

The awards will be open for nominations in October 2022 – January 2023 with winners announced in March 2023 by the Mayor of the West Midlands at an in-person awards ceremony, where award winners and those who are highly commended shall be invited to attend.

## How the judging will work

Each award category will be judged by a panel of independent judges who will review and score the applications. The judges will discuss the projects to choose a winner and highly commended.

The winners shall be announced by the Mayor at an in-person awards ceremony in March 2023.





# Why enter?

The West Midlands has ambitious and exciting plans to protect, restore and enhance its natural environment. The natural environment plays an important role in the region achieving Net Zero by 2041 and we can do this through committing to being “Greener Together”.

There is a huge amount of work happening at a local and regional level already and these awards would like to recognise this.

By applying for the awards, you will be sharing your projects at a regional level, which can not only inspire others but also opens the doors to new opportunities:

- Increase awareness about your natural environment projects
- Engage your staff, volunteers and the community and acknowledge your efforts
- Gain recognition from your peers
- Showcase your projects through case studies and videos





# Applicants

Applications for the awards will only be open for organisations who are within the seven constituent authorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority which are:

**Birmingham City Council**

**City of Wolverhampton Council**

**Coventry City Council**

**Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Walsall Council**





# Award categories

## Community

This award is to recognise community groups and/or not for profits who are going above and beyond to improve the natural environment for people and wildlife in their local areas. This could be a local group who has planted trees through to a charity who clears up our local waterways.

## Education

A nursery, school, college or university who are committed to improving the natural environment. Examples could be encouraging hedgehogs onto your grounds through to creating new habitats for birds and amphibians where students are involved in learning and shaping the projects.

## Businesses

A business (including SME's) that deserves recognition for continued and ongoing efforts to improve the natural environment through their work. This could be, but not limited to, through a natural environment policy the company adheres to, improving habitats on sites they are working on or encouraging wildlife around their office building.

## Public sector

An organisation who deserve recognition for their ongoing commitment to creating and improving the natural environment for local residents and wildlife. This could be through tree and hedgerow planting projects or ensuring new housing developments improve biodiversity.

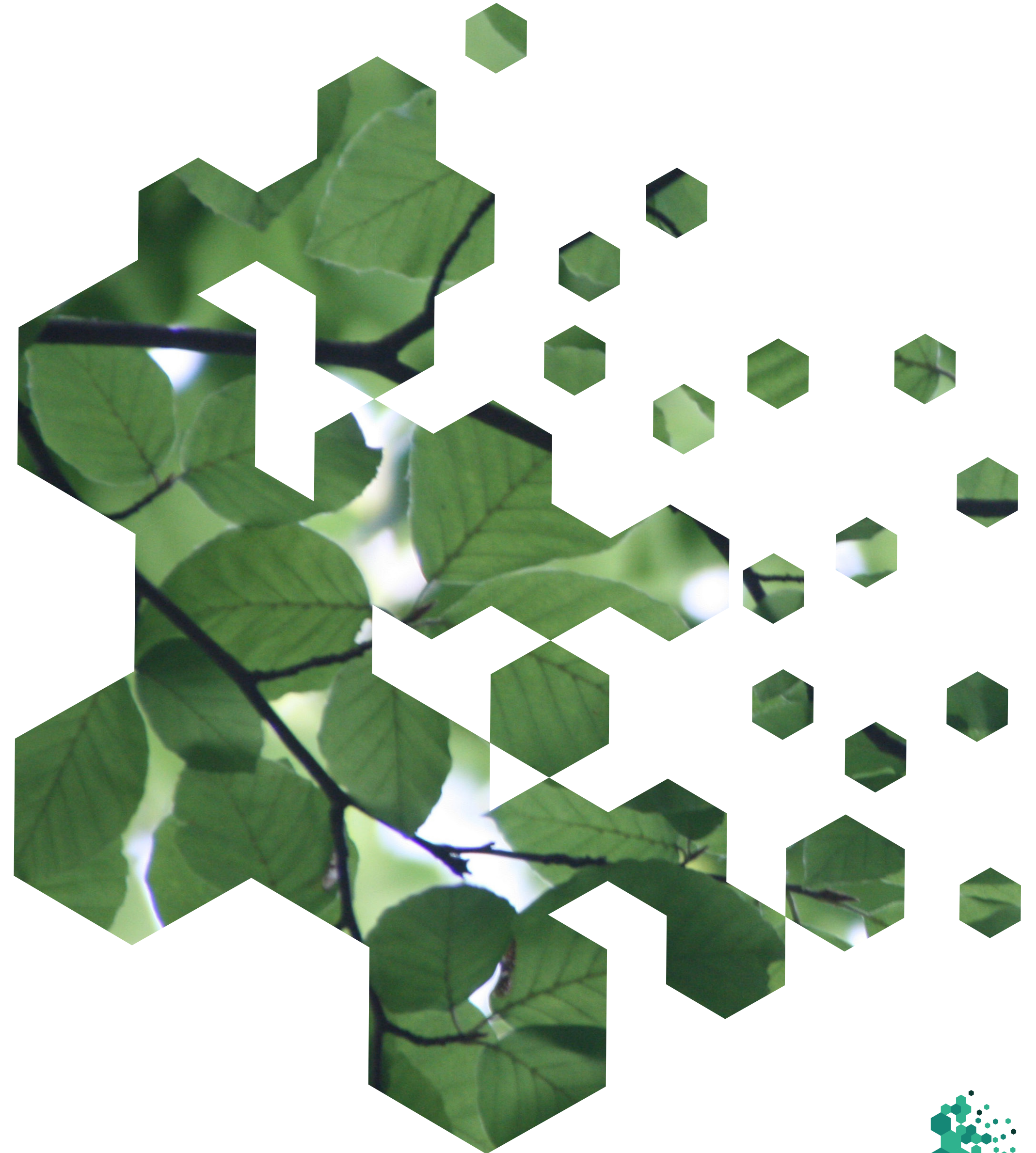


# How to use this guidance

Everything you need to know about the awards is here. We have outlined what the judges will be looking for, eligibility and details on how to enter.

If you would like to enter:

- 1** Read through the award specific information in this document
- 2** Complete the entry form
- 3** Or return your nomination in a word document format and any supporting information to [wmgreenertogether@wmca.org.uk](mailto:wmgreenertogether@wmca.org.uk) by midnight of the closing date.





# Community award

This award seeks to recognise community groups and not for profits who have gone above and beyond to create and/or improve the natural environment in their area.

This award can be for organisations/groups or to individual projects. The emphasis will be on how the local community have been involved and how projects will be maintained over the years.

The judges will be using the scoring criteria to assess your application.

## To apply:

Compile supporting material for your entry. This can include images and short videoclips, which you must have permission to share. If images include students under 18, you must have parental permission to include in award submission. Return your completed nomination form and supporting material by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

## Eligibility

Any community group, not for profit organisation can apply to be considered for an award. For profits cannot apply. If your project includes planting trees or hedges, these must be registered on the **Virtual Forest**. You must be based in one of the **WMCA constituent authorities** to apply for an award.

1	Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have engaged the local community with creating and maintaining the natural environment</li> <li>• Have worked with other local community groups/ not for profits</li> </ul>	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity</li> <li>• Demonstrates impact on people and place</li> </ul>	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects can be easily replicable</li> <li>• Shows creativity to tackling issues</li> </ul>	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of sharing learning and providing educational activities</li> <li>• Evidence of how the project will be sustained for years to come</li> </ul>	20%

A panel of independent judges will have a standard scoring criteria to assess your application against the criteria above.



# Business award

This award seeks to recognise SMEs to large businesses across the West Midlands who have either supported projects, or have embedded policies into their working practices which enhance and/or protect the natural environment.

This shall be awarded to the whole company. Submissions should stress the importance of why the natural environment is important to the company and what their ambitions are.

The judges will be using the scoring criteria to assess your application.

## To apply:

Compile supporting material for your entry. This can include images and short videoclips, which you must have permission to share. Return your completed nomination form and supporting material by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

## Eligibility

Any for profit company based in one of the **WMCA constituent authorities** can apply for this award. If your project includes planting trees or hedges, these must be registered on the **Virtual Forest**.

1	Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a whole organisational approach to supporting natural environment projects OR have policies in place to ensure the natural environment is protected and enhanced through the companies operations.</li> </ul>	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company has a positive impact on the natural environment as well as the communities they operate within.</li> <li>Has created or enhanced green/blue spaces</li> </ul>	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows creativity to tackling issues and including biodiversity in projects</li> </ul>	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of sharing learning and best practice within your industry</li> <li>Evidence of the companies long-term plans</li> </ul>	20%

A panel of independent judges will have a standard scoring criteria to assess your application against the criteria above.



# Education award

This award seeks to recognise educational institutions who have sought to improve the natural environment and includes students within these projects.

This shall be awarded to the whole institution. Emphasis should be on how the students have been engaged with the natural environment projects and how they are encouraged to protect and enhance biodiversity at home. The judges will be using the scoring criteria to assess your application.

## To apply:

Compile supporting material for your entry. This can include images and short videoclips, which you must have permission to share. If images include students under 18, you must have parental permission to include in award submission. Return your completed nomination form and supporting material by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

## Eligibility

Any educational institution including but not limited to; nurseries, schools, colleges or universities can apply to be considered for an award. If your project includes planting trees or hedges, these must be registered on the [Virtual Forest](#). You must be based in one of the [WMCA constituent authorities](#) to apply for an award.

1	Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has involved students in projects and may have worked with local community groups/ charities</li> </ul>	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has created or enhanced green/ blue spaces whether within the grounds or the local community</li> <li>Has included teaching on the natural environment</li> </ul>	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects can be easily replicable</li> <li>Shows creativity with engaging students with projects</li> </ul>	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of sharing learning outside of classrooms and how students and where appropriate, parents, are educated on the benefits of the natural environment.</li> </ul>	20%

A panel of independent judges will have a standard scoring criteria to assess your application against the criteria above.



# Public sector award

This award seeks to recognise public sector organisations for their ongoing commitment to creating and improving the natural environment.

This can be awarded to either a whole organisation or for individual projects. Emphasis should be on how the work not only improves the natural environment, but also for the local community. There should be a long-term commitment to natural environment projects

The judges will be using the scoring criteria to assess your application.

## To apply:

Compile supporting material for your entry. This can include images and short video clips, which you must have permission to share. Return your completed nomination form and supporting material by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

## Eligibility

Any public sector organisation can apply to be considered for an award. You must be based in one of the **WMCA constituent authorities** to. If your project includes planting trees or hedges, these must be registered on the **Virtual Forest**.

1	Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has procedures and/or policies in place for including the natural environment in projects e.g. housing and regeneration</li> <li>• Has engaged with local community groups and/or charities with projects</li> </ul>	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation has a positive impact on the natural environment as well as the communities they operate within.</li> <li>• Has created or enhanced green/blue spaces</li> </ul>	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows innovative practices for including the natural environment within projects.</li> </ul>	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of sharing learning and best practice within the sector</li> <li>• Has an ongoing commitment to natural environment projects</li> </ul>	20%

A panel of independent judges will have a standard scoring criteria to assess your application against the criteria above.



# Summary

We are delighted to be able to recognise the incredible achievements of organisations across the West Midlands on enhancing and protecting the regions natural environment. We believe the awards will enthuse and inspire incredible projects across the region and would be delighted if you were to partner with us.

We are open to hearing your sponsorship suggestions and are happy to work with you to update any of the sponsor offers to suit the needs of your organisation.

Thank you to our sponsors KPMG for supporting the awards.

**For more information please contact:**  
[wmgreenertogether@wmca.org.uk](mailto:wmgreenertogether@wmca.org.uk)

