

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AWARDS 2024

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.



I'm pleased to launch our 2024 Natural Environment Awards where we celebrate the fantastic efforts of organisations from across our region to protect, restore and enhance the wonderful waterways and green spaces we are blessed with here in the West Midlands.

We had a fantastic award ceremony last year and I look forward to seeing all of those applying at the award ceremony and wish them all the very best of luck.

Andy Street
Mayor of the
West Midlands

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 until the 15th January 2024 with winners announced on 7th March 2024 by the Mayor of the West Midlands at an in-person awards ceremony, where all applications will be invited to attend.

How the judging will work

This year applications will be sent through pre-screening to ensure they relate to the Natural Environment. 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 the in-person awards ceremony in March 2024.



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 charities 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) who deserve recognition for continued and ongoing effort 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

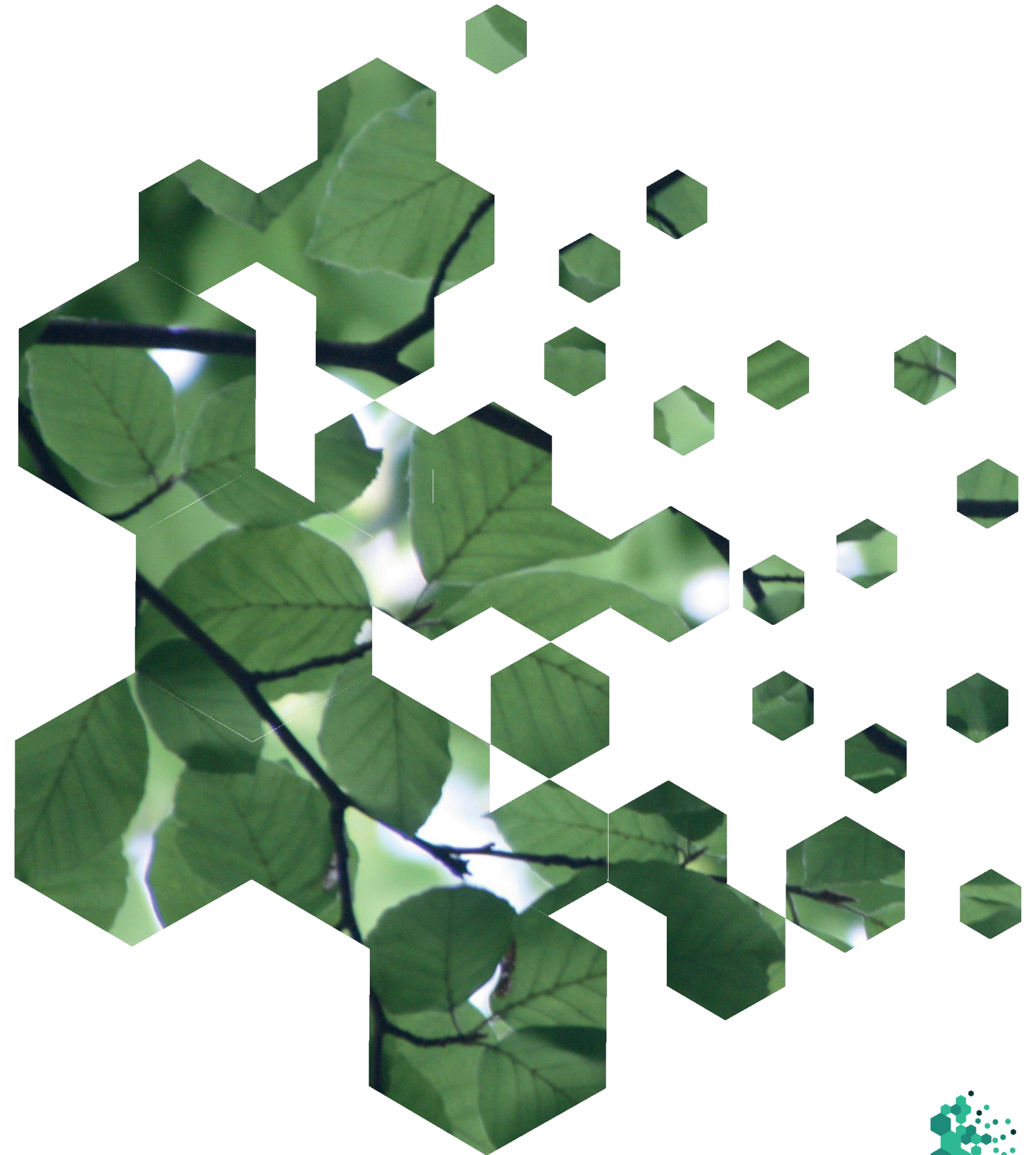
An organisation who deserve recognition for their ongoing commitment to creating and improving the natural environment for local residents and wildlife. This could be through tree and hedgerow planting projects through to ensuring new housing developments improve biodiversity.

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 award nomination form by the 15th January 2024.
- 3** Please only include 5 supporting photos in your application. Any additional evidence will not be sent to the judges.
- 4** This year applications will be sent through pre-screening to ensure they relate to the Natural Environment. This screening will be completed by members of the West Midlands Combined Authorities, environment team. Applications that pass-through screening will be sent to a panel of independent judges to assess.



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 a maximum of 5 images, which you must have permission to share. If images include young people under 18, you must have parental permission to include in award submission.

Return your completed nomination form by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

Supporting evidence additional to the 5 images will not be accepted

Eligibility

Any community group or not for profit organisation can apply to be considered for an award. For profits and public sector bodies cannot apply. If for profits or public sector bodies are applying in partnership with a community group, you must either apply for the business or public sector 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"> • Have engaged the local community with creating and maintaining the natural environment • Have worked with other local community groups/ not for profits 	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity • Demonstrates impact on people and place 	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects can be easily replicable • Shows creativity to tackling issues 	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of sharing learning and providing educational activities • Evidence of how the project will be sustained for years to come 	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 a maximum of 5 images, which you must have permission to share. If images include young people under 18, you must have parental permission to include in award submission.

Return your completed nomination form by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

Supporting evidence additional to the 5 images will not be accepted.

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](#). Joint applications are accepted but the leading organisation must be a business.

1	Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The company has a positive impact on the natural environment as well as the communities they operate within. Has created or enhanced green/blue spaces 	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows creativity to tackling issues and including biodiversity in projects 	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of sharing learning and best practice within your industry Evidence of the companies long-term plans 	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 a maximum of 5 images, which you must have permission to share. If images include young people under 18, you must have parental permission to include in award submission.

Return your completed nomination form by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

Supporting evidence additional to the 5 images will not be accepted.

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. Joint applications with other organisations are accepted but the leading organisation be an educational institution.

1	Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has involved students in projects and may have worked with local community groups/ charities 	30%
2	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has created or enhanced green/ blue spaces whether within the grounds or the local community Has included teaching on the natural environment 	30%
3	Creativity / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects can be easily replicable Shows creativity with engaging students with projects 	20%
4	Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of sharing learning outside of classrooms and how students and where appropriate, parents, are educated on the benefits of the natural environment. 	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 a maximum of 5 images, which you must have permission to share. If images include young people under 18, you must have parental permission to include in award submission.

Return your completed nomination form by the closing date specified on the nomination form.

Supporting evidence additional to the 5 images will not be accepted.

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](#). Joint applications are accepted but the leading organisation must be a public sector body,

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

See the 2023 award winners on our website and gain inspiration from these incredible organisations.

For more information please contact:
wmgreenertogether@wmca.org.uk

See our website to apply by the 15th January 2024
<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment-and-energy/natural-environment-awards/>



