



CIWEM

The Chartered Institution of Water
and Environmental Management

media release

Please find below the latest press release issued by RSPB and The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM)

EMBARGO TO: 00:01 am, Tuesday 3rd February

World Wetlands Day 2004

LIVING WETLAND CREATED IN JUST FOUR YEARS STAFFORDSHIRE FARM WINS PRESTIGIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

Aston Hall Farm, at Stone in Staffordshire, will today be named the winner of the RSPB/CIWEM Living Wetlands Award 2004, at a conference which brings together key players in the wetlands debate to discuss how to take forward protection, promotion and creation of these important sites.^{1, 2, 3} The project represents a unique collaboration of farmers, a water company, conservation groups, and a local community.

Over four years, the 300-acre site has been transformed into a floodplain grazing marsh, prompting a huge increase in bird numbers and diversity of bird species. Parts of the River Trent margins have been restored, voles and bats are thriving in the new environment, and a model scheme used as an example by the government brings together farmers and conservation groups to look at sustainable farming methods.⁴

The judges of the annual Award were particularly impressed by the project's ability to create valuable wildlife habitats within a landscape that benefits the local community and is at the same time a working farm.

Ruth Davis, Head of Water Policy at the RSPB, said:

“This scheme has produced really valuable habitat for threatened birds such as lapwing, snipe and reed-bunting. It has also given local people somewhere exciting to visit, helped protect the River Trent from pollution, and reduced the risk of nearby properties flooding. This is exactly the kind of innovative project our Award was designed to celebrate. Let’s hope we see many more of them in the years to come.”

Richard Clinton, Regional Manager for Severn Trent Water, which manages the Aston Hall site, said:

“I am delighted that this project has confirmed my belief that objectives which are often considered to be conflicting can actually be realised. Through careful planning and implementation the diversity of both habitat and species have been improved, the primary use to which the land is put has been preserved and access for people enhanced.”

Justin Taberham, Director of Policy at CIWEM and one of the judges, said:

“It is impressive to see a water company working on its own land to create a project with benefits to so many different groups. The strong promotion of farming involvement, increased access for the public, and concentration on increasing habitats and biodiversity made the Aston Hall Farm project the winner in a strong field.”

A project to create habitat and recreational improvements at the Wigan Flashes in Greater Manchester was also commended for the Award, recognising the multiple benefits the project has brought to a site that was previously very degraded. In addition, there was very active community involvement and significant recreation benefits to local people.⁵

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Photographs of the winning site are available on request.

For further information and to arrange an interview, please contact:

Melanie Edmunds, RSPB press officer, on 01767 681577. Out of hours: 07654 344078

Ilana Cravitz, CIWEM press officer, on 020 7269 5820. Out of hours: 07714 945971

Editor's notes

1. Project partners for the Award include Severn Trent Water Ltd, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, West Midlands Bird Club,

the Environment Agency, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Rodbaston Agricultural College and Aston Hall Farm.

2. The judging for the 2004 Award was carried out in January by representatives of RSPB and CIWEM. The managers of the Aston Hall Farm Project will be awarded a specially-commissioned bronze trophy of a snipe (the Mance Memorial Trophy) and £1,500, to boost conservation work on the site. The Award will be presented to Severn Trent Water at CIWEM's Annual Dinner (details from lpoole@ciwem.com) on 22 April.
3. The World Wetlands Day Conference 2004 is being held at SOAS, London, on 2 and 3 February. Speakers represent organisations including RSPB, Thames Water, the Environment Agency, English Nature, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the National Trust. World Wetlands Day is 2 February. For more details contact Ilana Cravitz on 020 7269 5820, ilana@ciwem.com.
4. The project increased from one to three the number of UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats on the site, delivering 25% of the County target for floodplain grazing marsh.
5. Wigan Flashes was a project developed by community groups alongside the working group of the Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, United Utilities, English Nature and the Environment Agency. Funding for the project has been assisted by money from the EU LIFE fund.
6. To make a submission for next year's Living Wetlands Award, and for information about other CIWEM Awards, contact Helen Wilson on 020 7831 3110, helen@ciwem.com.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

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