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Unique experiences nominated for new Sussex Award

Three unique rural projects including an opportunity to become a shepherd for the day and the chance to build a greenhouse out of recycled bottles have been nominated for a new Environmental Education award.

The Sussex branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE Sussex) introduced the new award earlier this year to recognise the county's most environmentally minded educational projects. It becomes one of four categories now being judged for CPRE Sussex's tri-annual Countryside Awards to be held later this year.

The nominations include **Saddlescombe Farm** near Brighton, Barcombe based, **Schools Without Walls** and the **Oak Community Project** in Rustington.

Saddlescombe Farm is run by tenant farmers, Camilla and Rory Puzey who open their doors to the public for lambing weekends and educational visits throughout the year. They also offer a unique **Shepherd for the Day** experience and **Green Gym** sessions which encourage people to get fit by doing conservation work. The couple say the shepherding idea came from a friend:

"Our friend's husband has always wanted to be a farmer and she suggested she pay us to have him for the day when it was his birthday," says Rory. "We

are very busy at lambing time which provides the most opportunity for hands on experience and is magical.”

The idea quickly developed and now the farm holds a variety of shepherding experiences for individuals, couples and families - there are even corporate team building events which conclude with a ‘shepherding challenge’.

Also nominated is Barcombe family business, So Sussex, which created **Schools Without Walls** to provide Sussex teachers with an opportunity to get their pupils out of the classroom and into the community.

The project’s founders, Nigel and Maria Greenwood believe that the great outdoors can enhance children’s education:

“Our aim is to offer people a range of enjoyable, educational and fun outdoor experiences in the Sussex countryside,” they explain. “We strive to develop people’s understanding of and appreciation for our local environment through providing activities and events that bring people close to the varied natural landscape of Sussex in different ways.”

Schools Without Walls has been working with local schools to develop and improve outdoor spaces which has included the creation of a recycled bottle greenhouse; geodesic domes and willow pods.

The third project is **The Oak Community Project** in Rustington which helps adults with learning difficulties to grow local produce to sell to the community.

The project keeps an allotment, several raised beds and a greenhouse where it grows fruit, flowers and vegetables to sell at market through the local Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS).

Shortlisted entries will join those from three other categories - Rural Enterprise, New Sussex Landscapes and The Making Places Design Award - at the ceremony at Petworth House in October.

“We are delighted to have so many excellent entries for this year’s awards,” says CPRE Sussex’s Director, Kia Trainor. “Shortlisting is very difficult and the judges making the final decision on the winners have an even harder job!”

“Sussex is a fantastic place to live, work or visit. From our iconic landscapes and historical houses to contemporary and innovative enterprises, we want to celebrate and promote the best that Sussex has to offer. This is why we hold the Sussex Countryside Awards - to give a platform to the community groups and businesses working hard to make Sussex great.”

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