



PRESS RELEASE

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TOP AWARD FOR WILTS NATURE RESERVE

A former Wiltshire quarry that has been transformed into a spectacular nature reserve has earned a top award for the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and for the Marlborough-based family business the Hills Group.

The WWT's Langford Lakes Nature Reserve at Steeple Langford, between Warminster and Salisbury, received the coveted Chairman's Trophy in the Quarry Products Association's 2007 Restoration Awards. The sheer quality of the site, coupled with its wildlife and community benefits, brought high praise from the independent judges, who described it as "exceptional".

The award was presented by QPA chairman Lynda Thompson to WWT director Dr Gary Mantle and Hill Group managing director Alan Pardoe at a London ceremony hosted by news personality Fiona Bruce.

Guests included WWT warden Chris Riley, who says he is "privileged" to live on the site. "The award is a wonderful accolade for a great site," he says. "It is a

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place where you can immerse yourself in the environment and learn much about it. And, with our habitat development plans, there is a lot more to come yet.”

Set in the picturesque Wylde valley to the west of Salisbury, Langford Lakes is one of the UK’s best examples of long-term gravel workings that have successfully made the transition to become a stunning nature reserve. Since purchasing the site in 2001, the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has built on the good restoration work achieved previously by Hills to establish what has become its flagship reserve. It is now an important refuge for wetland birds, a centre of excellence for environmental education, a popular destination for anglers and a valued venue for the local community.

While its permissions for quarrying stretch back to the days following the last world war, the majority of the mineral extraction at the site took place in the 1970s. As the last of three operators, Hills completed the restoration before the site initially became a commercial fishery in 1984.

The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust acquired two of the site’s three lakes in 2001 and instigated an extensive programme of habitat creation and enhancement. It subsequently bought the third lake. The end-product attracts some 150 bird species and provides a much needed body of open water in south Wiltshire. The wildlife in turn attracts people and the site has welcomed an estimated 25,000 visitors to date. The site’s educational programme has drawn wide praise from teachers and attracted visits from some 60 schools, involving 4,000 children.

WWT and Hills enjoy a close relationship that has greatly benefited the cause of nature conservation right across Wiltshire through donations and investment of landfill tax funding. Hills has provided a total of £2 million of funding since 1990, of which £253,000 has been devoted to the development of Langford Lakes.

“The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has done an amazing job at Langford Lakes and I am proud that we have been able to assist,” says Hills Group managing director Alan Pardoe. “It demonstrates very well that gravel extraction has the potential to create some superb new environments.”

The award entry was supported by Steeple Langford Parish Council whose chairman, Mrs Georgie Helyer, says: “Langford Lakes has become a considerable asset to the village and makes a considerable contribution to our community. Restoration of the old gravel workings created a wildlife haven, but what we have seen over the past six years has been a quite spectacular enhancement of the potential.”

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- Further information on the [Wiltshire Wildlife Trust](#)
- Further information on the [Hills Group](#)