****

**LITTER LEGENDS & WASTE WARRIORS ASSEMBLE**

**Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Announce Community Award Winners**

Tuesday 12th February saw volunteers gather at the 3rd annual Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Community Awards in Belfast City Hall with host, TV presenter Joe Mahon and guest speaker Jo Ruxton, filmmaker and campaigner who opened the eyes of the world to the problems of plastic in *A Plastic Ocean* and influenced *Blue Planet II*.

The evening was designed to recognise and thank all the volunteers who had been short listed for their continued hard work and dedication to the cause – with an opportunity to hear their inspirational stories which instil pride in our local communities through practical environmental action.

From regular litter picks to the creation of shared community spaces these unsung heroes dedicate their time and efforts into making our home cleaner, greener, safer and more sustainable.

The winners have carried out some remarkable work this year including addressing social isolation and loneliness among older people living in care homes by creating beautiful gardens - the only green space that some residents will see.  A keen canoeist has made a significant effect on the appearance of the waterways by removing debris and litter while a young 15 year old litter picker has collected around 100 bags of litter and even taken his litter picker on holiday. Another local hero raised over £1000 from biscuit wrappers alone for ‘Kicks Count’, a charity that promotes baby movement awareness to reduce still birth whilst one group reached out to minority groups to address language barriers by publishing an infographic pack that displays the dos and don’ts of domestic waste disposal and littering - improving community relations.

Guest Speaker Jo Ruxton encouraged volunteers to make a stand in their local communities and champion the reduction of litter: “Never underestimate just how much one single person can achieve. The problem might seem insurmountable but take that first step on your own and just watch how many people join you and help bring about change.”

Live Here Love Here Manager Jodie McAneaney comments: “These awards are so important, they give us the opportunity to highlight the issues and reward those who are actively making a difference. Plastic in particular has been hitting the headlines this year with its devasting effects, making our special guest Jo Ruxton the perfect candidate to inspire us to really strive for change. The fact that every piece of plastic ever created is still on the planet is a real eye opener. Hopefully in 2019 our continued efforts and that of our volunteers and partners can make steps towards tackling this terrible problem.”

At Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful we run a number of campaigns and programmes that embody the values of Live Here Love Here which would not be possible without the help of our dedicated volunteers. If you would like to find out more or get involved with Live Here Love Here please visit our website; [www.liveherelovehere.org](http://www.liveherelovehere.org) or contact [enquiries@liveherelovehere.org](mailto:enquiries@liveherelovehere.org) **ENDS**

**The Litter Heroes Awards - RESULTS;**

**Antrim and Newtownabbey Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Glas Na Braden Conservation Group*

*Six Mile Water Trust*

**Winner:** Rosie Watkins

**Ards and North Down Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Phil Wilkinson*

*Laura Finnegan*

*Strangford Lough and Ards Peninsula Volunteer Rangers*

**Winner:** The Gibson Family

**Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Victoria Street and Surrounding Area Residents Group*

*Darkley Rural Community Group*

*Heather and Bruce Crawford, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland-Newry and Portadown*

**Winner:** Inland Waterways Association of Ireland-Newry and Portadown

***Belfast City Litter Heroes Award;***

*Honorary Mention:*

*Tommy Holland, Springhill Garden Group Belfast*

*Social Action Girls Programme*

**Winner:** The Flowerpot Men Glenbank Cross Community Garden Belfast

**Derry City and Strabane Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Jim Trotter*

*Enagh Youth Forum*

**Winner**: Biodiversity on Your Doorstep

**Fermanagh and Omagh Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Elwin Jones, Camowen Community Anglers*

*Jayne Scallon, Lack Community Group*

**Winner**: Trevor Foster, Blue Green Yonder

**Lisburn and Castlereagh City Litter Heroes Award**

**Winner:** Anna Neal, Protect Our Pristine Seas

**Mid and East Antrim Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Barn Court Children's Home*

**Winner:** Cameron Liddle

**Mid Ulster Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Michael Davitt's Gaelic Athletic Association (GAC)*

*Castlecaulfield Horticultural Society ECO Buddies Youth Group*

**Winner:** Vicky Seviour-Crockett

**Newry, Mourne and Down Litter Heroes Award;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Rostrevor Men’s Shed*

*Glasdrummond Community Association*

*Conor O’Loughlin, Inland Waterways Association Ireland – Newry and Portadown Branch*

**Winner:** Newry Reporter

**Adopt A Spot Award presented by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful;**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Barn Court Children's Home*

*Strangford Lough and Ards Peninsula Volunteer Rangers*

**Winner:** Shimna Eco Warriors

**Good Neighbour Award presented by Choice Housing**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Jim and Maureen Nelis*

*Wesley Court Gardening Club*

**Winner:** Lawrence Murphy

**Community Together Award presented by Housing Executive**

*Honorary Mention:*

*The Flowerpot Men Glenbank Cross Community Garden Belfast*

*Shimna Eco Warriors*

**Winner:** Victoria Street and Surrounding Area Residents Group

**Big Transformation Award sponsored by McDonald’s**

*Honorary Mention:*

*9.30 Club*

*Jonesborough Community Association*

*Darkley Rural Community Group*

**Winner:** Castlecaulfield Horticultural Society

**Coast Care Award sponsored by Coca-Cola HBC**

*Honorary Mention:*

*Six Mile Water Trust*

*Phil Wilkinson*

*Elwin Jones, Camowen Community Anglers*

**Winner:** George Raymond Smyth

**Spirit of Live Here Love Here Award** presented by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

*Honorary Mention:*

*Inland Waterways Association of Ireland-Newry and Portadown*

*Bill Pollock, Brighter Whitehead*

*Ellie Dempster, Portaferry In Bloom*

**Winner**: Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership Coastal Guardian Volunteers

**Note to Editors**

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is an environmental charity working towards the vision of a beautiful Northern Ireland by inspiring people to take responsibility for creating cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful runs a number of awareness raising campaigns including Live Here Love Here, BIG Spring Clean, Clean Coast and Adopt A Spot. The charity also runs the Green Flag Award for parks and open spaces, Seaside and Green Coast Awards, the international Blue Flag (for beaches and marinas) and Eco-Schools all of which set environmental quality standards.

Live Here Love Here is a national campaign aimed at promoting civic pride and a community can-do attitude by improving environmental quality in Northern Ireland. We tackle issues such as poor environmental quality, littering and dilapidation, by encouraging volunteers to take practical action in their local communities. Live Here Love Here is an inspiring partnership between the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs; Tourism Northern Ireland; Choice Housing; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Coca-Cola and a number of local authorities, working alongside Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. To learn more please visit [www.liveherelovehere.org](http://www.liveherelovehere.org) .

****