

## Press Release

**HELEN HOUSTON** from Golspie scooped one of the first-ever *Champions for Sustainable Communities Awards* at a ceremony in Edinburgh on Tuesday March 18th.



Champion Helen (51) who works with the Alness Initiative has been rewarded for her pivotal efforts in schemes such as the refurbishment of a community centre, provision of improved play facilities, the installation of renewable heating systems and the development of family learning projects.

She said: "I just feel so strange as it seems that the boot is really on the other foot as it is usually me trying to get recognition for other groups. Obviously though, I am delighted and surprised as I did not think I was going to win.

"It goes without saying I can't do my work alone and this award is for all the people who work with me as well and the community groups who engage with the final goal and vision of any given project."

The award was made by Scottish designer and craftsman, Scott Irvine, using wood from fallen trees and fused glass off-cuts. Ian will also get the chance to visit another sustainable community project or similar experience in order to give him further inspiration for his work in his community project.

The organisation's Frazer Scott said: "All of our 20 finalists were of an excellent calibre and should be proud of their valuable efforts towards sustainability. However, there had to be one winner in each of the four categories and we are delighted to announce Helen Houston as the best of the best in the Public / Third sector category.

“At the heart of sustainable development lies the leadership and commitment to drive forward change. These awards were a great opportunity to honour individuals who have made a difference by improving the environment, economy and society at the local level.

“All the winners have shown outstanding endeavour that proves it’s possible to really achieve a better quality of life for future generations. It’s the power of individuals, such as these, that can make a real difference, and we hope the Awards will inspire others to make positive changes in their own communities.”



The three other winners were Liz Stewart from Ullapool (Business), Ian Mitchell from Invershin, Sutherland (International Development) and Ian Leaver from the Isle of Eigg (Community Group).

The nation-wide awards were devised to recognise individuals from across society who have led the way in improving the quality of a local environment in some way – whether that’s helping solve a community problem, transforming a piece of land or derelict space, or reducing climate change impacts.

Forward Scotland, a registered charity, is the country’s leading independent non-governmental organisation that works to make Scotland a sustainable nation in ways that create economic benefits, improve health and well-being and address issues of social justice to help change people’s lives for the better.

For further information on the work of Forward Scotland visit [www.forward-scotland.org.uk](http://www.forward-scotland.org.uk) or call us on 056000 10 560.

**ENDS**

**Notes for Editors:**

For the last 11 years Forward Scotland has championed an original approach to sustainable development. They carry out this work through a variety of projects and grant schemes, supported by information exchange. Forward Scotland is dedicated

to improving local environments and helping communities to achieve a better and more sustainable quality of life.

Frazer Scott is the Acting Chief Executive of Forward Scotland.

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