

OUTSTANDING SKILLS WIN DEVON HEDGE LAYING COMPETITION



A specially commissioned trophy of a wooden billhook will be presented to Ross Gray, winner of the Devon Hedge Competition, at Holne Community Shop and Tearoom on Thursday 12th November at 11.00am.

Ross, who lives at Princetown, exhibited exceptional skills to win last winter's open competition for best-layed hedge. The hedge concerned is close to the community shop in the village of Holne within Dartmoor National Park. It can be seen by customers as they take their refreshments outside.

The trophy will be presented by Ian Mobbs from Western Power, sponsors of the competition.

“Western Power is pleased to sponsor the competition because good management of hedges is so beneficial to wildlife and the landscape and helps ensure that they fulfil a useful agricultural role” said Ian.

The Devon Hedge Competition is organised by the Devon Hedge Group and SW Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to raise awareness of the good management that many farmers and landowners carry out on their Devon hedges.

Traditional hedge laying is a very skilled country craft. Tom Hynes, North Devon Biosphere Service and Devon Hedge Competition judge explained:

“When assessing the Devon Hedge Competition entries, the judges are looking for a layed hedge that looks neat, is thick and stockproof, provides a safe habitat for nesting birds and is growing back well. Ross's work last year was particularly impressive considering the many factors making the job extra difficult, from years of rubbish in the bottom of the hedge through to having to work just above, sometimes in, the adjacent stream.”

This winter's competition is now open for entries. There are two classes - open and novice, for best laid hedge. In both classes there are prizes of 1st £250, 2nd £125 and 3rd £75. The closing date for entries is 18th April 2016. Competitors are asked to submit before and after photos to help the judges to shortlist. So, anyone thinking of entering the competition should take a photo before they get started.

The competition entry form is available on the Devon County Council website <http://www.devon.gov.uk/hedges> where pictures of previous winning hedges

can also be seen. Entries are welcome from farmers, landowners and contractors in Devon.

For details of how to lay a hedge in the Devon style, see the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=in8KXI5YQRM>

Ends

Notes to Editors:

For further information contact Tom Hynes, 01271 388534 Or 07968 079431

- The Devon Hedge Group aims to work together to foster support for hedge conservation in Devon, particularly through promoting management that optimises the value of hedges for farming, wildlife, landscape, archaeological and cultural purposes, whilst acknowledging practical farming constraints.
- Devon has more hedges remaining than any other county in the UK, reflecting its large size, its pastoral landscape and the favourable management and agricultural systems adopted by local farmers. It is estimated that there are 53,000 km (33,000 miles) of hedge still in the county
- A recent hedge laying training course run by North Devon Biosphere and Devon Wildlife Trust. Photo: Tom Hynes.

