An Tobar is Northern Ireland's National Lottery



Ardal O'Hanlon presents the An Tobar team with their National Lottery Award. Credit: Bill Smyth Photography.

The wellness centre and social farm in Silverbridge, south Armagh has won a National Lottery award for helping young people explore the natural and cultural heritage of Brian's Wood.

Sisters Margaret Finnegan and Kathleen Finnegan-Agnew have welcomed over 450 local primary school children to the native woodland located on their 40-acre ancestral farm. The wood is dedicated to the memory of their uncle.

A group of young adults with disabilities undertook the John Muir Environmental award as part of the project. They installed trail signage and fencing to help visitors explore the wood and continue to manage the trail's maintenance.

> Congratulations to the team at An Tobar on winning this award! It recognises the positive impact their heritage project has made in the community, particularly for local school children and young people.
>
> *Margaret Henry, The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Head of Engagement in Northern Ireland*

Wide public support

Margaret Finnegan, Project Manager at An Tobar, said: "It's an honour to receive this award, made even more special by the public support and incredible number of votes we received from our local community and beyond.

“We were delighted to get funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to create our heritage and poetry trails in Brian’s Wood. They reconnect visitors with nature, allowing them to learn about and enjoy the rich cultural heritage rooted within this ancient landscape and the stories of its people.”

Their award was presented by comedian and actor Ardal O’Hanlon, who has family connections to the area.

An Tobar narrowly missed out on the UK-wide Project of the Year award, showing the power of community when it comes to raising awareness of a heritage project’s impact. The UK winner will be announced later in December.

Two people stand in field

Young people look after Brian's Wood.

Get funding for your project

An Tobar’s heritage project received £61,900 National Lottery funding in 2021.

Margaret Henry, The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s Head of Engagement in Northern Ireland, said: “Congratulations to the team at An Tobar on winning this award. It recognises the positive impact their heritage project has made in the community, particularly for local school children and young people.

“We’re always keen to talk to people in communities who have heritage stories to tell which could become projects that make a real difference to where they live. We encourage anyone who has an idea to explore to get in touch.”



The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project has won a National Lottery award. Credit: Phil Wilkinson/The National Lottery

Golden eagles soar in Scotland’s National Lottery Award-winning project



Clive Gray is the National Lottery Awards Heritage Winner for 2022