**\*\* EMBARGO 09:00 (GMT) THURSDAY 22 JANUARY 2026 \*\***

**DEFENDER AWARDS: WINS FOR FORESTRY, MARINE PROTECTION AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PROJECTS**

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* Defender has revealed the international winners of the inaugural Defender Awards
* Winners include initiatives for marine welfare, protecting rare species and environmental restoration and regeneration
* Defender Awards champions and supports small-scale charities and non‑profit organisations that work on humanitarian and conservation projects at a local level
* Winners will receive a Defender vehicle, a £100,000 bursary and expert mentorship to support their pioneering projects. To find out more about Defender Awards, click [here](https://www.landrover.com/defender/defender-awards/index.html)

**Gaydon, UK – 22 January 2026, Gaydon, UK**: The winners of the inaugural Defender Awards have been announced, with conservation and humanitarian projects around the world receiving a tough and capable Defender 4x4, a £100,000 bursary and mentoring support from a community of experts.

The original British adventure brand launched the Defender Awards to recognise heroes across four categories: land, wild, humanity and sea. Selected from a 56-strong shortlist, the outstanding global winners are champions of biodiversity and ecological restoration in the UK and Japan, wildlife conservation in Italy, vital healthcare provision in Australia and marine protection in South Africa and France.

Defender Awards represents a £1m commitment and extends the brand’s long-established support for conservation and humanitarian causes, following 70 years of partnership with the British Red Cross and two decades of collaboration with African conservation charity Tusk.

The winners were selected by a panel of expert judges. Defender Managing Director Mark Cameron co-chaired the international committee alongside conservation biologist and founder of Wildlife Conservation Action, Dr Moreangels Mbizah from Zimbabwe.

Entries were evaluated based on how they aligned with the chosen award category, the impact the project is making, the level of innovation in the operation and how the addition of a Defender 4x4 would contribute to the project’s success.

**Mark Cameron, Defender Brand Director**, said: *“Selecting our winners from an incredible shortlist of 56 global projects was tough but we believe those chosen best reflect the conservation and humanitarian heroes around the world that are embracing the impossible every day. We can’t wait to see the impact that the Defender Awards will have on these inspiring projects in taking them to the next level.”*

Defender is a brand with purpose at its heart. Its humanitarian roots can be traced to the first Series Land Rovers of 1948. The winners, which are all taking direct action to alleviate suffering or bring about positive change, reflect Defender’s commitment to support the heroes who embrace the impossible every day.

**Dr Moreangels Mbizah, Co-Chair Defender Awards judging panel**, said: *“Every one of the award nominees is making a real difference to the planet and embodies the true spirit of Defender. We hope our community-led winners will thrive and flourish with the support offered by Defender and make an even bigger positive impact around the globe.”*

**Defender Awards 2025: The Winners**

**Defenders of the Land**

**UK: Thousand Year Trust**

The Cornwall Rainforest Project (CRP) will deliver a 10,000-acre restoration programme on Bodmin Moor, providing ecological, economic and cultural benefits. This includes planting 1.28 million native trees to reconnect habitats and support rare species, while also sequestering 220,000 tonnes of CO2e. The project will use Defender as a mobile field base and basecamp, with its off-road capability allowing the team to reach remote planting zones.

**Japan: Next Commons Lab**

The initiative views forests, rivers and satoyama landscapes (areas between mountain foothills and arable flatlands) as single, interconnected areas to be regenerated and sustained. Following a successful pilot project in Owase City where 700 people joined forest restoration workshops to aid the recovery of the red-bellied newt, a near-threatened species, the Watershed Regeneration project now plans to expand with the first-ever training programme for watershed regeneration. The scheme aims to train more than 100 professionals in the next two years to future-proof the vital work and tackle the fact the current average age of people working in the forestry and primary industries in Japan is over 60. Defender will provide reliable travel of up to 1,400km between project sites, as well as operating as a mobile research hub working on steep roads.

**Defenders of the Wild**

**Italy: Salviamo l’Orso**

Salviamo l’Orso is dedicated to protecting the Marsican brown bear, a unique subspecies with only 60 individuals remaining across central Italy. The Bear Smart Landscapes project reduces human-wildlife conflict as well as restoring and improving habitats. Defender will provide a vital resource for daily travel across dirt roads and mountain trails, with funding also supporting a new volunteer centre for bear conservation.

**Defenders of Humanity**

**Australia: Skin Check Champions**

Skin Check Champions launched Project Check Mate over a decade ago to detect skin cancer across Australia. It’s carried out 25,000 skin checks for people in remote locations and identified more than 600 potential melanomas and 1,800 non-melanoma skin cancers. The charity uses AI technology to help regional clinic nurses detect skin cancers early, as well as setting up local healthcare networks to train doctors in high-risk communities. Defender will be used as the primary tow vehicle for the charity’s mobile clinic, helping the team reach more communities and take on tough rural roads, while funding will support the charity operations for the next two years.

**Defenders of the Sea**

**France: PolluSub**

PolluSub captures underwater waste at ports, tackling invisible pollution before it settles at the bottom of the ocean through the Blue Odyssey Initiative. The eco-friendly, discreet net transforms port entrances and exits into environmental filters, while also helping raise awareness among port users and communities about this type of pollution. The project aims to establish a model that can be replicated both in France and internationally, contributing to the evolution of environmental standards at ports. Defender will help transport equipment for the pilot project installations and operate as a mobile base for team members.

**South Africa: The Litterboom Project**

The Litterboom Project protects ocean and marine life by deploying teams to manage plastic barriers (known as Litterbooms) in the Tongaat, Umhlanga, Umgeni and Umbilo rivers. By installing these barriers, an estimated five tonnes of waste per month is stopped from reaching the ocean and harming fish, birds and other marine wildlife. Defender will help teams access remote and overlooked river systems to identify new suitable sites for protection.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

**International Defender Awards judging panel:**

* **Co-chair:** Mark Cameron, [Defender](https://www.landrover.co.uk/defender/defender-awards/index.html) Managing Director, JLR
* **Co-chair**: Dr Moreangels Mbizah PhD, Founder and Executive Director, [Wildlife Conservation Action](https://www.wildlifeconservationaction.org/)
* **Germany**: [Max Muench](https://muenchmax.com/), adventure and landscape photographer
* **France**: Bertrand Piccard, explorer, environmentalist and founder of [Solar Impulse Foundation](https://solarimpulse.com/)
* **Italy**: Alessandra Mastronardi, actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
* **Australia**: Tyson Mayr, television presenter and National Geographic filmmaker
* **Japan**: Michiaki Matsushima, Editorial Director of WIRED Japan, Moonshot Ambassador for the Cabinet Office

**About Defender**  
Defender embraces the impossible. Each member of the Defender family is purposefully designed, highly desirable and seriously durable. A modern-day hero that respects the past but at the same time anticipates the future.

Available in 90, 110 and 130 body styles, with up to eight seats, each has a charisma of its own.

As part of our vision of modern luxury by design, Defender 110 is available as an electric hybrid.

Defender Hard Top means business, with 90 and 110 body styles for professional capability.

The tough luxury Defender OCTA is the master of extreme performance – taking performance and capability to another level on and off-road.

A beacon of liberty that can trace its roots back to the first Land Rover in 1948, Defender is a brand that supports humanitarian and conservation work with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Tusk Trust.

The Defender brand is underpinned by Land Rover – a mark of trust built on more than 75 years of expertise in technology and world-leading off-road capability.

Defender is designed and engineered in the UK and sold in 121 countries. It belongs to the JLR house of brands alongside Range Rover, Discovery and Jaguar.

**Important notice**JLR is constantly seeking ways to improve the specification, design and production of its vehicles, parts and accessories and alterations take place continually. Whilst every effort is made to produce up-to-date literature, this document should not be regarded as an infallible guide to current specifications or availability, nor does it constitute an offer for the sale of any particular vehicle, part or accessory. All figures are manufacturer’s estimates.

**Further Information**

**Media website:** [www.media.landrover.com](http://www.media.landrover.com)

**Social Channels:**

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