**DEFENDER AWARDS SHORTLIST REVEALED: FROM SAVING ENDANGERED BEARS TO SAFEGUARDING FORESTS**

* Defender has revealed the 56 international projects in with a chance of winning an inaugural Defender Award
* Diverse shortlist includes initiatives from disaster relief and species protection to raising awareness of skin cancer and tackling poverty and violence
* Pioneering awards programme includes entries from seven countries across four categories: Defenders of the Land, Sea, Wild and Humanity
* Defender Awards champions and supports small scale charities and nonprofit organisations that work on local humanitarian and conservation projects
* Meet the international judging panel led by Defender Managing Director, Mark Cameron, and conservation biologist, Dr Moreangels Mbizah
* Winning entries will receive a Defender vehicle, £100,000 bursary and expert mentorship – with the seven overall winners set to be announced later this year

**Gaydon, UK – 13 October 2025:** Original British adventure brand, Defender, has revealed its shortlist for the inaugural Defender Awards. The international initiative was launched in April to recognise and reward local conservation and humanitarian heroes across four categories in the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Australia, Japan and South Africa.

Winning entries will each receive a tough and capable Defender 4x4 to help support their vital work, a £100,000 bursary and mentoring support from a community of experts. The shortlist of 56 projects ranges from wildlife conservation and protection projects to a skin cancer checking programme in Australia for remote and at-risk communities.

The Defender Awards sees the brand extend its long-established support for conservation and humanitarian causes, following 70 years of partnership with the British Red Cross and 20 years of collaboration with African conservation charity Tusk.

A panel of expert judges will now assess the 56-strong shortlist to choose seven overall winners. Defender Managing Director Mark Cameron will co-chair the international judging panel with Dr Moreangels Mbizah, a Zimbabwean conservation biologist and founder of Wildlife Conservation Action.

**Mark Cameron, Defender Managing Director,** said: *“The initial round of national judging has cut hundreds of awards submissions down to a shortlist of 56 inspiring and diverse projects. The calibre of the entries is phenomenal and the variety of projects on the shortlist is testament to the pioneering work being done by local conservation and humanitarian heroes around the world. These awards celebrate those who embrace the impossible every day, just like Defender. Our international panel now has the difficult task of selecting just seven overall winners.”*

Fellow judges include German adventure and landscape photographer Max Münch, and Swiss explorer and environmentalist Bertrand Piccard, founder of a search engine for climate action, [Solar Pulse Foundation](https://solarimpulse.com/). They will be joined by Italian actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Alessandra Mastronardi, Australian TV presenter and National Geographic filmmaker Tyson Mayr, and Michiaki Matsushima, Editorial Director of WIRED Japan.

**Dr Moreangels Mbizah, co-chair of the Defender Awards judging panel,** said: *“I’m a firm believer that community-led conservation can save wildlife, so the Defender Awards can make a real difference. By championing and supporting small scale charities operating within our communities, we’re helping those who embody the pioneering spirit of Defender. Our shortlist includes more than 50 deserving entries, so the judging panel has a difficult job to select the most deserving projects.”*

The shortlisted Defender Awards entries will be evaluated based on their alignment across four elements. The judges will consider each entry’s alignment with its chosen award category, assess the impact the project is making and rate the level of innovation involved in their operations. In addition, the panel will assess how a capable Defender 4x4 will contribute to each project’s success.

**Rich diversity and innovation**

Defender is a brand with purpose at its heart, with humanitarian roots that can be traced back to the first Series Land Rovers of 1948. It is committed to supporting the heroes who embrace the impossible every day. The shortlisted projects cover a broad range of topics and a variety of approaches, from raising awareness of issues to taking direct action to alleviate suffering or bring about positive change.

In the **Defenders of the Land** category, eye-catching entries include Fondazione Sylva, A Forest for Arnesano in Southeast Italy. The organisation regenerates abandoned or Mafia-confiscated land and transforms it into forests for native species to enhance biodiversity, improve air quality and mitigate climate change. The proposed project aims to complete the reforestation of the Arnesano area and includes educational activities for young people.

It is accompanied by projects with similar ambitions from Japan. The Next Commons Lab initiative views forests, rivers and landscapes and seas as interconnected common areas to be regenerated and sustained. The success of its pilot site in Owase City, Mie Prefecture, saw the population of red-bellied newts – a near-threatened species – show a remarkable recovery. The Kinshizen Forest Creation Association Seedling Bank, meanwhile, stores seedlings to create and safeguard future forests. It relies on the natural process, Misho, where saplings up to 10cm tall remain dormant for decades while shaded, to store up to 10,000 seedlings.

The **Defenders of the Wild** shortlist includes a project focused on returning an apex predator to landscapes it hasn’t occupied for more than 200 years, as a catalyst for broader landscape recovery. The Restoring Upland Nature (RUN) programme aims to return the Golden Eagle to UK skies using a combination of cutting-edge conservation science and hands-on engagement, working with landowners, gamekeepers, schools and community groups.

The African Pangolin Working Group is dedicated to the treatment and rehabilitation of Temminck’s Pangolin. This vulnerable species is traded for its meat and distinctive scales. The organisation’s purpose-built veterinary facility, the Pangolarium, is situated in the Lapalala Wilderness Reserve in South Africa.

In the **Defenders of Humanity** category, the shortlist includes Project Check Mate, which aims to bring early detection services to the people most at risk of skin cancer in Australia – where rates are 12 times the global average. Over the last decade, the organisation has conducted more than 25,000 checks, identifying more than 600 potential melanomas.

A volunteer organisation in Italy offering drone-assisted monitoring and search and rescue services is also shortlisted in this category. ReAct helps vulnerable communities with emergency response operations during natural disasters such as floods, fires and earthquakes. It uses both ground and aerial drones equipped with powerful 360-degree cameras and infra-red technology, often working from inaccessible locations.

Sapocycle, in Germany, takes an innovative approach to reducing waste by recycling used hotel soaps. It aims to provide meaningful work for people with disabilities while giving those in need access to hygiene and transports 1,500 bars of soap across Germany each month – a mission perfectly suited to Defender.

Among the **Defenders of the Sea** entries to make the shortlist is the BlueHeart project in Germany. The brainchild of extreme swimmer André Wiersig, it aims to raise awareness of and foster empathy for environmental issues such as plastic pollution and over-fishing. In the UK, the Women in Ocean Science initiative has made the shortlist. It is focused on empowering the next generation of female ocean leaders, delivering marine research, restoration and outreach through a trio of women-led coastal expeditions.

From France, the Blue Carbon Gardeners project aims to restore underwater forests responsible for carbon sequestration, supporting marine biodiversity and protecting against coastal erosion. Based in the Bay of Calvi, Corsica, it employs an innovative method of transplanting natural Posidonia seagrass cuttings, using biodegradable staples, to restore damage caused by anchoring boats. This is an initiative that will resonate across the Mediterranean.

To see all 56 shortlisted projects, visit: [landrover.com/defender-awards](https://www.landrover.com/defender/defender-awards/index.html) -The seven winning entries will be revealed later this year.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

**Defender Awards 2025 shortlist in full**

**Defenders of the Land** shortlisted entries:

* Australia – Boomerang Alliance
* Australia – Co-Exist: Youth-led conservation
* Germany – PATRON
* South Africa – Nuwejaars River Nature Reserve
* South Africa – Rhino Revolution
* UK – Thousand Year Trust
* UK – Youngwilders CIC
* France – Save the Forest of Fontainebleau
* France – Solidraid 91: Guardians of the Hedges
* Italy – Fondazione Sylva: Environment regeneration
* Italy – APS Rocciaviva
* Japan – Watershed Regeneration
* Japan – Nature’s Guardian Expedition
* Japan – Conference for future of Yakushima and The Earth
* Japan – Moo Mow Project
* Japan – Kinshizen Forest Creation Association Seedling Bank

**Defenders of the Wild** shortlisted entries:

* Australia – Aussie Ark Conservation of endangered native species
* Australia – Possumwood Wildlife Recovery and Research
* Germany – Tierrettung Uckermark
* Germany – Falconry Greifenstein Castle
* South Africa – African Pangolin Working Group
* South Africa – Wild Bird Trust Cape Parrot Project
* South Africa – Rooiberg Bewaria
* UK – Shepreth Wildlife Conservation Charity
* UK – Restoring Upland Nature
* France – Totem
* France – Igema
* Italy – Salviamo L’Orso
* Italy – C.R.A.S. Rimini, wildlife rescue

**Defenders of Humanity** shortlisted entries:

* Australia – Skin Check Champions
* Australia – On the Ground: Community Relief & Resilience Project, Community Response Australia
* Germany – K-9 Pro Vermisstensuche
* Germany – SapoCycle Germany
* South Africa – iThemba Kuluntu
* South Africa – Hope SA Foundation
* UK – Suicide Prevention UK
* UK – North East Wales Search and Rescue
* France – DPS 64 Pyrénées Atlantiques
* Italy – ReAct: Drone assisted monitoring, search and rescue
* Italy – Scuola Fatoma
* Japan – OPEN JAPAN Emergency Support Project

**Defenders of the Sea** shortlisted entries:

* Australia – Take 3 for the Sea
* Australia – White Rock: Defenders of the Great Southern Reef
* Germany – Lahntaucher
* Germany – The Blueheart
* South Africa – The Litterboom Project
* South Africa – The South African Whale Disentanglement Network
* UK – Sussex Dolphin Project
* UK – Women in Ocean Science Charity
* France – Blue Carbon Gardeners, NAECO
* France – The Blue Odyssey Initiative
* France – Apex Cetacea
* Italy – Operation Adriatic Defenders, 2HANDS
* Italy – Underwater Dome, CESTHA
* Japan – Yagishiri UNIMOBA Sustainable Fisheries Project
* Japan – Everlasting Nature Ogasawara Marine Center

**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, Founder and Executive Director, [Wildlife Conservation Action](https://www.wildlifeconservationaction.org/)
* **Germany**: [Max Münch](https://muenchmax.com/), adventurer and landscape photographer
* **France**: Bertrand Piccard, explorer, environmentalist and founder of [Solar Pulse Foundation](https://solarimpulse.com/)
* **Italy**: Alessandra Mastronardi, actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
* **Australia**: Tyson Mayr, TV 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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