



EAST MIDLANDS

East Midlands in Bloom

ENTRANTS REPORTS 2021

EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM REPORTS 2021

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SMALL VILLAGE CATEGORY

Sponsored by FCC Environment



AMCOTTS

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 19th July 2021

Judge: Martha Wörsching

Judges Award: For the Tiddy Mun Marshalls and Monitors

Introduction

The context of the Bloom entry and judging tour was provided by the narrative of the Tiddy Mun Trail, developed by Tricia Murphy, chair of the community group; it was based on work for the village children during Covid to cover Science, History, Geography and Art, published in a professionally produced booklet, putting the points of interest of the tour into the context of a delightful, informative story of the 'little man'. The concept of the 'Tiddy Mun Marshalls and Monitors' has proved highly effective in rallying the community to take part in further improving their social and natural environment.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Plant displays and residential gardens showed very good attention to detail, with imaginative designs and very good coordination of different types of plants. Plants were used to highlight local history, as in the commemorative display for the Flixborough disaster of 1974, and the community flower boxes and hanging baskets in the pub garden were excellent. Standards of horticultural maintenance were consistently high, in both private and public areas. Plant selection was very good for seasonal impact, and there was also some indication of all-the-year interest; there was a very good mixture of perennial plants (with some wonderful hydrangeas, lilies and well-pruned hedges) and annuals with great vivid colours. The quality of the plants in most displays and gardens was very good, reflecting consistent care.

Section B

There was very good evidence of efforts to highlight the historical as well as agricultural/industrial identity (from Roman finds, the draining of the area by the Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden in the 17th century, the Trent navigation, the church rebuilding in Victorian times, VE Day, the Flixborough disaster, the old School House and the windfarm) clearly depicted in a number of very good public displays and information boards, together with the ongoing exhibition of children's work in the church and church yard. The figure of Tiddy Mun, a legendary bog figure in Lincolnshire, was an excellent focus for all the environmental work shown. The bird, bee, butterfly and bat work is clearly depicted in many installations on special sites along the trail and in the pub garden; this work is supported by a wide range of wild as well as garden flora. The John Muir Award gained earlier in the year is proof of the high awareness and involvement of local children at the later stage of primary education, and the work on light pollution reflected in some of the displays is particularly interesting. The Bug Garden in Jubilee Garden in Chapel Street and the butterfly garden in the churchyard with good wildflowers and beautifully painted stones can both be seen as excellent ways of making the community as a whole aware and proud of their work for the environment. The high value given to environmental concerns is reflected throughout the attractively illustrated booklet of 'The Tiddy Mun Trail'.

All streets, street furniture, information boards, the Jubilee Garden and the playground in the pub garden appeared clean and well-cared for. The lack of traffic (outside times when residents drive to work) contributed to the impression of a well-looked after environment.

Section C

The Amcotts in Bloom group is led by a committee of 8 members plus their partners, very ably headed by Tricia Murphy. The group is clearly very well embedded in the community and has made the most of their local amenities, with the pub and the church as particularly good sites for activities. The community flower boxes in the pub garden, the display cases reflecting all-year-round activities and also a pub wall decorated with silhouettes of insects and birds, all indicate a very public commitment to gardening as well as environmental priorities. The presence of a professional photographer during the visit was also a sign of the organisers aiming to showcase the Bloom work for the record. The fact that Keadby Wind Farm sponsors the professional publication of work involved in Bloom during lockdown and the last year is also contributing to the effective showcasing of the work, and this is imaginatively used by committee members to enhance environmental education in general. All signage and interpretation is clear and of good quality. The community involvement is captured in the description of the village children and grandchildren as “Tiddy Mun Marshalls and Monitors”, with grandparents wearing their special aprons as signs to show their commitment to the scheme. The carved figure of Tiddy Mun, hidden in a tree stump along the trail, was designed by one of the grandparents, Jo Meays. There are holiday activities planned for the village children, with some free school meals provided to encourage inclusive participation and engender wide support among residents.

Areas for Development

Section A

Apart from perhaps encouraging even more wildlife plants in some public places, with cherry, bird cherry, crab apple and rowan trees on Trent Side, the pub garden and the churchyard, your planting provides a very good mixture of private and public efforts. Perhaps consider encouraging more sharing of propagated plants, as in the example of one resident who offered his mint plants for public consumption (“Please help yourselves”); a swap scheme of surplus seeds, plants and produce could perhaps be integrated into the Bloom activities during the year.

Section B

Is there some rainwater harvesting and a composting scheme used? This was not evident during the visit on one of the hottest days of the year, but the careful use of natural resources could be a more conspicuous part of your very good environmental work.

Section C

The Wind Farm is already involved sponsoring your excellent community work to give it more visibility to the community in general. Perhaps it could also be persuaded to sponsor a number of workshops during the Easter, summer and autumn vacations to teach plant propagation (seed sowing, seed saving, hard wood cuttings etc.) to encourage more experienced gardeners to pass on their skills to the younger generation?

RANBY

Silver Award

Judged on 20th July 2021

Judge: Martha Wörsching

Introduction

Clive Hebden, coordinator of Ranby's Bloom entry, led the tour round the village, from the Chequers Inn, along Blyth Road past a florally-enhanced bus stop to a plant display at a traffic island; the route led back past the church and some pretty domestic gardens with flower baskets, past the pub again all the way along Blyth Road, showing well-kept residential gardens with good flower displays, and on to the canal bridge; the village hall, the school and the adjacent Fun Field were viewed, the latter with a substantial shed donated by the prison.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

There are some beautiful planters and hanging baskets around the Green, at the Chequers Inn and along Blyth Road, with attractive residential gardens and well-kept verges. At the Green, Peter Blank, an engaged local resident, explained that 'his men' had planted three new cherry trees on the area this year. The pub has sponsored the colourful trough nearby, and there were flourishing hanging baskets around the pub entrance. Plants in public and residential areas are generally of very good standard, and residents take responsibility for watering and maintaining hanging baskets and planters in public areas. Plants looked fresh despite the recent hot weather. Plant selection was varied and interesting, and the quality of plants was generally very good in all containers and hanging baskets.

Section B

There is some evidence of efforts being made to highlight local identity around the Chequers Inn and the picturesque wild canal side leading past the village from the pub. Cooperation with the Canal Trust is planned to develop amenities along the canal where kingfishers and jays have recently been seen. The Brown Bin scheme is mainly used for composting, although some residents are composting their garden waste themselves. There is very good control of street weeds, with pavements and gutters clean; no evidence of dog-fouling, graffiti or flyposting. Clive and Peter's men have been responsible for keeping lawns around the Green and the road verges in good order and cleaning the gutters.

Section C

Some evidence of activities taking place during the year was noted, though the extent of this might have been affected by the pandemic. Good levels of funding through individual effort was noted.

Areas for Development

Section A

Planting of some evergreens, drought resistant plants and perennials in troughs and road-side beds may help in the long term to reduce maintenance. Without more human resources, the neglected areas round the church and the village hall will remain a problem. Post-pandemic, there could be a chance to involve the school population to expand the outdoor learning area in the school grounds and use part of the adjacent Fun Field as an orchard, with more native trees along the hedges.

Section B

The canal areas could be developed more as an asset of natural beauty and wildlife, perhaps with the help of the school children who could gain a better understanding of the area's agricultural as well as industrial past. A school garden with propagating and composting facilities would also enhance the children's

environmental engagement, while providing opportunities for encouraging scientific experimentation and active learning in general.

Section C

The fact that most school children are not from the village is problematic, but it seems that, in post-pandemic times, more active engagement of the school with local residents would be necessary to widen the community basis for the Bloom campaign. This could be used to draw in more residents as gardening mentors and encourage the development of the natural assets of the wider village environment. It might also encourage an effective distribution of responsibilities and representation of different local groups in the interest of the community as a whole, signpost the area's historical context and natural assets, and so provide more local interest for visitors to the village.

Consider showing photographic evidence of all-year-round seasonal interest around the Village .Consider using the initial presentation (or a handout/portfolio) to explain more about the planning for your Bloom entry, the extent of community engagement, funding sources etc.

TATTERSHALL THORPE

SILVER GILT AWARD

Judged on 6th July

Judge: MARTHA WORSCHING

Introduction

Tattershall Thorpe is an attractive small village in Lincolnshire not far from the medieval Tattershall Castle, along the B1192. The village is surrounded by wooded areas and many small lakes which were former gravel and sand pits; they are used as fishing lakes, and large parts of the surroundings have been developed for wildlife and recreation; there are footpaths for recreational walks, something that has proven particularly beneficial during the pandemic; the old airfield site has been taken on by Lincolnshire Wildlife. Among the residents there is just a small number of families with children, there is a pub but no school and no local shop; with an electorate of about 250, all residents can participate in the Jubilee Group which is steered by a committee; the members fundraise, organise social events and care for numerous colourful plant displays in the public areas of the village. Driving or walking through the village, the overall impression is of very good horticultural design and maintenance, appropriate to the location, with interesting plant selection, reflecting very good community cooperation and local pride.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Approaching the village, you are greeted by a colourful flower trough, with a plaque highlighting the fact that Tattershall Thorpe had earned the award of 'best kept village in Lincolnshire' in 2010. The first bus stop has a delightful plant border with well-trimmed evergreens and a mixture of colourful annuals and perennials, with yellow and orange marigolds particularly brightening up the display. The Bluebell Pub on the main road is open again after lockdown and has some tidy shrubs and a few colourful annuals in its well-gravelled forecourt. All the verges around the chapel and the war memorial are well cut, with tidy mixed planting in beds and containers around the memorial and the Parish Council noticeboard; in a stone trough opposite the former Wesleyan chapel (now a private residence), at the junction of the main road and Chapel Lane, there is an exuberant display of white alyssum, red pelargonium and strong marigolds of different heights. The small wildlife garden around the Charles-and-Diana-Tree is well-kept and secluded off the main road, with a barrier towards the canal and a bird box installed more recently; further on the main road, the absolute highlight of planting and garden design is the wide flowerbed on the island between the main road and North Road: rose bushes and evergreen shrubs with a variety of coloured foliage make up the background, there are strong perennials such as delphinium, larkspur, rose campion, lavender and antirrhinum, and these are interspersed towards the front with annuals like cornflowers, marigold and lobelia. The bus shelter on the other side of the island has a bed of some tall cornflowers and African marigold just about to flower, and this is backed by well-trimmed hedges. Along North Road there is Maple View, the railway-themed garden maintained by Mark and Jean; tubs and planters are displaying white, pink and red begonias; there are tidy bright gravel and slate areas around the wooden planters. The annual fundraising event had just taken place on the previous Sunday in the garden behind the house where there is a mini-railway; the event brought in the community for a sunny afternoon of coffee/ tea and cake, raising a substantial amount of funds for community projects. Photographic evidence was provided to show that planters in public areas were looked after with care all the year round by members of the group and provided excellent colour in early and late spring, too.

Section B

There is particularly good evidence of a sense of local identity: History from stone age settlements, a Roman burial, the 2nd World War prisoner of war camp and the stationing of the RAF in the area to this day is memorialised in plaques and notice boards. Street furniture is kept to a minimum and is of good quality

and condition, and there is no litter to be seen. Former gravel pits have been developed as fishing lakes, home for a variety of waterfowl and wild animals in general, and there are mixed wooded areas and wildflower meadows providing an excellent environment for birds – nesting boxes are also evident in many trees, and a former air shelter in Carr Woods has bat boxes installed. Reed beds and wildflower verges are attracting a variety of birds for nesting and food. There are foot paths including a raised walkway connecting lakes, to give access for fishermen, bird watchers and walkers seeking recreation in nature generally. Members of the Jubilee Group, led by Servais Coulber, are propagating most of the plants themselves, using horse manure for soil maintenance which is sourced from Steve and his wife's stable; all plant waste is also composted there. There is a water tank behind one of the bus shelters to collect rain for watering the beds around the street island between the main road and North Road. There is an overall sense of respect for the natural environment and sensitive use of natural resources.

Section C

On arrival at the meeting place in Chapel Lane, where I was met by Servais and Steve, I was shown colourful displays of photos reflecting the group's activities taking place throughout the year. The group's members are involved in growing and planting out at different times of the year and also constructing and maintaining street furniture; there are litter picking events, and the well-tended roadsides and spaces between private gardens have been used for distanced socialising during lockdown. The fundraising event at Mark and Jean's railway garden was very well attended again this year by many local families and, similar to the successful celebration of bonfire night in November at the lakes and other social events, this can be seen as an excellent way of reinforcing the sense of togetherness and community; the proceeds from the fundraising event will be spent to buy a speed detector for the main road, allowing residents to feel actively involved in contributing to the community's well-being. As a result of the pandemic situation at the beginning of July, it was not possible to meet a larger representation of the community members before or after my tour of the village, but it was evident to me that the excellent maintenance of planted areas and public spaces around the village were the result of long-term and collective strong engagement of this community to ensure the sustainability and success of the Bloom project in Tattershall Thorpe.

Areas for Improvement.

Section A

It would be nice if the Blue Bell Inn could again have some colourful hanging baskets, as in the year before lockdown; more floral colour in front of the pub in such a prominent position would highlight the benefits of all Bloom activities in the village to any visitors. Some dogwood, wild rose or box plants could provide more permanent colour in the small park around the Charles-and-Diana-Tree. This could create a more natural barrier towards the canal.

Section B

As mentioned in the previous report, some work had been started with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, but it was not evident this year during the Bloom visit how this work has been progressing.

Section C

As been mentioned before, the core members of the Jubilee Group have demonstrated very good gardening skills in producing their own plants, both annuals and perennial, and sharing their skills with a wider circle of villagers through seed sowing or soft/hardwood cutting workshops could help to engage more residents of all ages. Events such as plant swaps and plant sales could also be added to the fundraising calendar.

Given that there is no school in the village, it might still be possible to consider the suggestion from the 2019 Bloom Report, namely, to find a small area of land which could be turned into a mini allotment where

children could be encouraged to grow flowers and simple food such as herbs, strawberries, lettuce, peas and tomatoes; work started in the Easter Holidays could be tended at weekends and hopefully give more skilled gardeners the opportunities to pass on their love for gardening.

VILLAGE CATEGORY

Sponsored by FCC Environment



BLOOMING MILFORD

Award Gold

Judged on 12th July 2021

Judge: Jenni Oliver

Judges Award: Milford Community Green Space

Introduction

Milford is a small village in the Derwent Valley situated next to the river Derwent. It is a World Heritage site as has a rich industrial heritage due to the Strutt family for local millstone grit. The Strutt family built homes for their workers who work at the mills, giving the village unique character homes and gardens.

They first entered EMIb in 2011 winning a silver Award & in 2013 winning a Silver Gilt. In 2019 won an outstanding IYN award for the 'Triangle' on Chevin Road near to the A46. Milford Social Club won the Floral display Award. Over the last 18 months work began creating new projects. The Bloom committee, 12 in total remain enthusiastic and extremely busy under the guidance of David Moreton who arranged to meet me at the Milford Social Club where the tour commenced.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The village was extremely tidy with high impact flora displays, well maintained streets and street furniture. No evidence of graffiti, litter, or dog fouling. New projects this year include the creation of the Community Spring Garden with total thoughts given to Special needs people. Wheelchair friendly and a clear pathway to guide you along the river side.

Milford Community Green Space was set up by a parent from Milford Primary school in 2020 and provided people with a sense of achievement during Covid Lockdown. This dense over-grown area was cleared in September and October 2020. The children and parents meeting through lockdown to clear a very overgrown allotment revealing a swing & a shed that they have recycled. The waste was taken down many steps to the main A6 to be collected by the council. This area has been transformed to a now working allotment to provide a green area for the school and community activities. The new addition of the "laying hens" has proven a great hit with the children, a fire pit so they can stay overnight albeit under the supervision of adults, varied vegetable beds and fruit trees all showing no evidence of pest disease. A grant from Belper town council was given to purchase the materials to make a sturdy ladder to access the site. The Community Orchard follows on from the Spring Garden. This space has been well design and thought through for its use. Good selection of Fruit trees, healthy looking and free to pick. An in-formation board is displayed to show the different kinds of trees and fruit. Very recently, they have cleared an area near to the A6 that has be disused for many years. This is an ongoing project for next year and in my opinion would be a lovely seating area or a place to sell their plants and jams.

Section B

Running through the village is the very busy A6 main road. Not deterred by this the street has a wonderful display of hanging baskets and post brackets supplied by the council, a colourful display and blend well into the natural environment. The streets were clean and no litter/weeds to be found. No dog fouling en-route. Recycling initiatives evident along the route. It was bin day and every effort to get them out of the way before judging had been made. The floral display of wonderful planters and hanging baskets at the social club, nurtured by the owner and hand watered provided more than 20 containers of flora and stood well against this fascinating building. Many hours de-heading was apparent which will encourage new growth. The Triangle gave a wonderful show of a wildlife garden with sustainable herbs and fruit trees. All displayed in good condition and growing happily within their environment. Within this small area they have managed to include two new herb planters and a bug hotel to encouraged insect fauna. A grant from Belper Town Council funds the maintenance of this area.

Section C

All year round activity includes seed sowing, open days for selling healthy plants, seeds, and homemade jam from their established fruit trees, this is organised from the chairman's house creating a small income for the bloom. The village is sponsored by the local council for watering and planting.

Areas for Development

Section A

Continue with the high impact along the route and delivering excellent attention to detail. The planters/hanging baskets were of high standard and formed an excellent display along the main road, in turn helping the area become more carbon neutral. Probably start from the public house where it has a suitable carpark for the judge to park and would give a wonderful display of flora if entered into the Bloom competition. This would be a suggestive way of persuading them to enter for best village pub as well. Continue developing and increasing the range of wildlife friendly and perennial plants. Continue working with the school on the community green space developed. Consider showing before and after photographs, this is a great way to show visitors/residents what you have achieved so far.

Section B

Continue with the excellent community orchard program - story boards showing details of the protection of wildlife along the river and how they are conserving the natural environment. The Wild-flowers amongst the fruit trees provides our insects and birds with a wide range of flora and fauna. Bird and bat boxes were evident along the route.

The addition of an information board to highlight the otters den on the opposite side of the river, perhaps near the weir.

Section C

The bloom committee have a great number of volunteers and are always forward planning with their next projects,

many of these can be extended and it would be good to see this included next year, for instance the green space, they have so many ideas they would like to bring to fruition, education within the community being one. They have introduced open days and advertised at the site, I have recommended re-siting the info-board to the main road, attaching bunting to catch the visitor's

eye. Funding and support through Belper Town Council, the green space allotment & Open days seems to work. I did notice that the church was vacant, and it would make a great place to meet, sell and integrate with Milford in Bloom, it has its own wildlife garden “another great project”.

SOUTH FERRIBY

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 14th July

Judge: Jenni Oliver

Judges Award: For Horse Pond and Decorative wall.

Introduction

South Ferriby is part of the Viking Way and sits near the Humber Bridge, which can be seen from the village. It has recreation areas including tennis courts and playground, a lovely church, post office and community pub. Chair of South Ferriby in Bloom David Mouncey explained the history of South Ferriby and how he started the bloom. The bloom group consists of four adults and two teenage girls who meet regularly. There are some friendship groups who maintain their own colourful display beds on route. The village was flooded in December 2013 which left devastation to South Ferriby.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The Horse Pond is exemplary, cared for by two sisters and a husband with such enthusiasm and dedication. A new wooded area acts as an extension to the pond area, allowing children to explore, learn and educate about nature. A new wildflower garden helps provide beauty to this part of the Viking Way. Last year the RSPB gave sunflower seeds for sowing to attract greenfinches, and it was evident that the sunflowers have seeded down this year. The natural spring from the hills has been defined by the group and is used to water the bedding areas around, particularly at the decorative wall. The wall is a wonderful display of art and horticulture, making an extensive display of colourful bedding plants.

Section B

Running through the village is the busy A1077 road which splits the tour into two sides. On both sides are pretty beds of plants that appear well-weeded and blend into the natural environment. The streets were clean, and no litter or weeds were seen. Recycling initiatives were evident along the route. The pond area enhances the village, supporting a wide range of flora and fauna e.g. rudd, carp, sticklebacks, tench, frogs, dragonflies, a heron and kingfishers! The judge was met at Halfway House, with a lovely natural environment (and perhaps should be on the tour route next year). Brightly painted tubs that had been rescued from the old cement place were filled with wonderful bloom. A huge bug hotel sits proudly on the path of recycled red brick near the horse pond. Bat and bird boxes were apparent and tree logs were laid to outline the short walk into the new wooded area. An informative sign about the history of South Ferriby sits at the top end of the village, a good position for visitors and walkers alike. Opposite is the Viking Way

with a silhouette of a Viking to denote the walk: this is set in a beautiful display of wildflowers attracting butterflies, bees, and other insects.

Section C

All year round activities include seed sowing, flower drying, selling plants and homemade jam. The pond volunteers have open days and also have daily visits from young mums with babies/toddlers. Friendship groups sponsor their own bedding areas with well maintained, healthy plants. Four new planters are planned for next year. The village is sponsored by 10 companies who give £100 per annum. Leaflets to recruit more members have been issued through letterboxes.

Areas for Development

Section A

Consider an increase in planters and hanging baskets along the planned route which would further enhance it. Give greater prominence to the public house, as it would be a good entrant into the 'best pub' Special Award. Continue developing and increasing the range of wildlife friendly and perennial plants. A visit to the churchyard would be a good addition to the tour. Other green areas to include would be "The Rise" & "North End", which has a beautiful street walk with wonderful displays of planters (and might be a possible IYN entrant?). Could the raised beds be higher and so easier to see from the road? A colour theme could be considered, and signage about those who tend them would be positive recognition for the gardeners.

Section B

South Ferriby has a very interesting history dating back 4000 years described on an interpretation board near the pond. A similar interpretation board of what can be seen around the pond would be a great addition: children would love this, and you may find interested volunteers from this. Also consider planning for more of the route to be on-foot rather than driving.

Section C

It would be valuable to recruit more volunteers to help with the growing extension of the pond and wooded area. This is an excellent area with more potential and might be considered as an IYN entry for next year. The introduction of the wildlife garden makes a very good statement, please keep this going. The 'sloping' bedding area that the two young girls have taken on would benefit from steps to help maintain and support. A border around this area would help the water to stay put and not run off onto the road. Many beautiful front gardens were seen – do consider encouraging an entry into the Frank Constable MBE Award for the Best Front Garden next year. Try to raise the profile of your efforts, perhaps by contact with local media; also see if you can gain interest from the local authority, churches, schools, and clubs in joining in with Bloom activity.

LARGE VILLAGE CATEGORY

Sponsored by FCC Environment 

BARROW UPON HUMBER

Award – Silver Gilt

Judged on 7th July 2021

Judge: Richard Stephen

Judges Award: To Jon and Alison of Nettleton Mowing and Maintenance for the beautifully maintained open spaces and grass verges throughout the village.

Introduction

On a rather wet morning the Judge received a warm welcome from Ann Boulton who, on behalf of the village began the tour which incorporated a visit to the Parish Church and War Memorial, the Community Garden, residential gardens, open spaces, local businesses and historical locations throughout the village. Despite the poor weather conditions the judge thoroughly enjoyed the tour and greatly appreciated the work put in by the volunteers and partners over the last 12 months. Well done Barrow upon Humber, another very good entry.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

As in previous years the Community Garden in Martin's Close with its wide selection of plants / shrubs / herbaceous and perennials were looking particularly good this year. Several of the residents had excelled themselves ensuring that the gardens were colourful, full of different textures and aromatic aromas. Along the route the judge enjoyed seeing many beautiful residential gardens notably in Cherry Lane (no.10 and Ariona), North Street (The Old Nursery frontage). Throughout the tour there were many very good floral tubs and troughs on display – 5 new planters introduced this year. Particular praise must be given to the Market Place and Sargeant's the local butcher. The Market Place was a riot of colour with a good selection of mixed planting on display, ensuring that residents and visitors to Barrow upon Humber have a wide range of beautiful floral features to enjoy. The Holy Trinity Church (Parish Church) is prominently located within the village and the well maintained grounds are a real feature. Along with the village War Memorial a recently installed memorial bench is located just off the main foot path. Both these memorials are very special to the residents and are being well looked after. The roundabout located at the entrance to the village has been beautifully planted and is a colourful greeting to the local traveller.

Section B - Environment

As you walk through the village there is plenty of historical evidence indicating just how important the village had been in the past. The Giant Water Pump located close to Palmer Lane is quite magnificent and the adjacent former Watercress Beds (now maintained open space) have a story to tell in their own right. It was good to see that a number of trees had been donated and planted on that open space. In time they will most certainly become a feature to this part of the village.

The 'renovated' red Telephone Box (now listed) tells of a bygone age which many of today's youth would have difficulty understanding as they are in the age of the mobile phone. Of course the John Harrison connection to the village is particularly well portrayed. The sculpture of the inventor of the Marine Chronometer dominates the Market Place. (Beautifully sculpted by Marcus Cornish) Another historic building is the Papists Hall situated in the main street not far from the Parish Church. These and others contribute significantly to Barrow upon Humber's significant past. There was no evidence of litter or graffiti throughout the route and generally the street scene was neat and tidy and was a credit to the Parish Council and local residents.

Section C - Community

Due to the current Covid 19 restrictions the judge was unable to visit the John Harrison Church of England Primary School and therefore not get the opportunity to meet with the children to talk about what they had done as their contribution to the in bloom campaign. However it was noted that their floral displays (several troughs) located at the front of the school's main building looked very colourful and significantly brightened up this area of the school yard. Once again the Red Telephone Box played its part within the community. Though no longer used as a phone box its uses are still based around 'communication'. The judge was shown contributions from a number of businesses, notably The Red Oak hostelry and Sergeant's the butchers. Further support has been obtained from organisations such as Thornton Curtis WI, Meridian Rotary Club, Lifestylers Youth Project and grants from North East Lincolnshire Council. Despite the enforced restrictions imposed due to Covid19, Barrow upon Humber still carried out their 'Open Gardens' competition and their traditional wheelbarrow competition with some 60 entries taking part. The village is fortunate to have several buildings / halls which are regularly used to support their all year events program. It was also noted that the community make use of Facebook and the village noticeboards. The judge was very impressed with the way Sargeant's Butcher had played a crucial role in supporting the community through the lockdown periods.

Areas for Development

Section A - Horticulture

Try to encourage the Royal Oak to use their existing wall brackets for colourful hanging baskets next year and perhaps use bigger wall mounted troughs which would provide a greater impact of colour whilst complementing the colourful display in the Market Place across the road. The judges will be keen to see how Midby Park improvement scheme develops over the next 12 months. Consider locations where additional floral features could be introduced.

Section B - Environment

Try to ensure that the planned route is weed and detritus free. Unfortunately the area around Hallam Close was disappointing. The 'Historical' information boards at the Market Place were very good but could their location be improved other than attached to the back and side of the bus shelter. It could be a little disconcerting for visitors trying to read the information while people are waiting / queuing for a bus. Consider introducing an additional information board at the other end of the Watercress Field (not just by the giant pump) so visitors can learn about the historical importance of this open space when approached from a different direction. Consider where it might be feasible to introduce some areas for wild flowers to establish. (Grass verges, open space boundaries, adjacent buildings etc.)

Section C - Community

Consider placing an information board close to the new memorial bench informing visitors as to the story behind it and its importance to the village. The proposed new steps leading to the War Memorial will be a much appreciated addition to this area particularly on Remembrance Day. The main historical information board at the Giant Pump is beginning to look a little tired, perhaps it is time to consider renovating it or replacing it with something more up to date. Continue to encourage the local community and local businesses to support your bloom campaign. Continue to engage with the general public through Facebook, Twitter and Newsletters, whilst always looking to recruit additional volunteers to help with the work load. Consider how to involve the local press / radio station to show more support for all your efforts, particularly on judging day. It would benefit your entry if the press could be persuaded to attend judging day or second a volunteer to take photographs during the judge's visit to put on Facebook or send to the press with an accompanying article after the visit.

CRESWELL

Award – Silver

Judged on 14th July 2021

Judges: Richard Stephen

Judges Award: Portland Street Allotment for the environmentally friendly greenhouse complex which provides with the help of volunteers all the plants used in the village floral displays.

Introduction

Steve Smith and Bob Glassey gave a warm welcome to the judge on his arrival to Creswell on a fine summer morning. Throughout the tour, the hosts outlined all the hard work the volunteers had been involved in over the past 12 months. The judge had the pleasure of viewing the renovated War Memorial, Pit Disaster Memorial, Community Allotment, residential gardens and some very good, planted displays throughout the village. Well done Creswell, despite the difficulties, another solid entry.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The judge was delighted to see some very good floral displays across the tour including the very good Memorial Garden, the colourfully planted Pit Truck and the well planted beds at Elmton Road, Laburnum Close and in particular the displays on Mansfield Road. The judge was pleased to see that planting densities had improved considerably since 2019. The floral display known as the 'Cinema' bed and chat bench was also good. The 3 tier pyramid, baskets and troughs had a good mix of seasonal colourful annuals giving good impact to the street scene. Portland Street Allotments was good, and it was lovely to see where the hub of the work takes place. The judge enjoyed seeing a number of residential gardens including a couple that entered their recent garden competition. The Model Village area was very impressive and was being well maintained.

Section B - Environment

Steve and Bob provided the judge with some very interesting information regarding Creswell's heritage in particular the 1951 Pit Disaster, the Model Village and the recently renovated War Memorial. The 56 Memorial Benches located around the village were a nice feature and a sombre reminder of those who had lost their lives in the pit Disaster. Portland Street Allotments is an amazing facility with solar panels, water harvesting, and recycled newspaper used as growing on pots. Obviously a well-oiled growing facility providing most of the plants for the village. The 'Subway' project is an amazing achievement. The removal of the graffiti that once adorned this well used facility is a credit to the organisers and the volunteers involved. It was nice to hear that the local junior school had been involved with the bloom campaign by providing bird boxes for the village.

Section C - Community

Overall the village has been quite successful with bids for financial support from Awards for All, Big Local, Well Being and Connect Bolsover Social Connectedness which has definitely been beneficial to the village. Some partnership working has been successful, notably the Subway project which saw ECHBL and ECPC and bloom volunteers working together for the benefit of the community. Bloom volunteers have been the mainstay for ensuring the village Street scene is

attractive and colourful. The portfolio has been nicely presented and the judge was pleased to hear that Facebook is used to promote bloom activities and village events. Some sponsorship has been achieved and the Midland Garage has special mention for their support

Areas for Development

Section A - Horticulture

The overall quality of the grounds maintenance across the village was quite good in places but needed improving in other areas. Partnership working between the various authorities and the 'bloom' group needs to develop in order for the village to show its full potential to residents and visitors. For next year's tour try to ensure that the judge visits the cemetery, church grounds and if possible a school if they have been involved in some way. The judge felt that the planting adjacent to the Pit Wheel could be improved through a better choice of plants for the site - something with more impact which would complement the ' Cinema' bed. Looking forward to seeing how your plans develop at the village station.

Section B - Environment

Consider developing specific wildflower / natural habitat areas (grass verges, adjacent walls/fences, parts of the unused allotment) which would in the right location save money, help the environment and have an educational value .On deciding the route for the judging tour try to ensure that the area is weed (including street gutters) and litter free. Whilst your heritage is quite good, consider providing information / interpretation boards about the Model Village, where Creswell's mine was sited etc. Consider developing a trail pointing out the important areas relating to Creswell's heritage.

Section C - Community

Try to develop working partnerships with the Parish, Town and County Councils in order to get a more joined up campaign for next year. Whilst the tour was enjoyable, it seemed to miss out some key locations that were shown to the judges in 2019. Try to recruit more volunteers to help spread the load

Continue to work with local businesses to support your in bloom efforts. The Black Diamond pub and Ours pub could make a huge contribution to the look of the village as a whole, consider working with them to develop their floral content and visual appeal. The judge enjoyed reading your portfolio, however he felt that it could be improved by considering the following possibilities - create a proper introduction about Creswell, reduce the content about the greenhouse, mention more about heritage and partnership working.

GREAT COATES

Award – Silver Gilt

Judged on 9th July 2021

Judge: Richard Stephen

Judges Award: To Gerry Smith for his overall contribution (Memory Boxes and more) to Great Coates's in bloom campaign.

Introduction

On a beautiful sunny morning the judge was met by Carl Thomas and Dawn Stewart outside the village church of St Nicholas and immediately began the tour which incorporated the church itself, residential properties, the main railway station, war memorial, historical sites of interest and the village hall. The tour was well thought out and very interesting. Carl and Dawn were excellent enthusiastic hosts successfully outlining the story behind their entry and future plans for the village. Well done Great Coates. This was an excellent first entry to the competition.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Throughout the tour there were many well planted colourful beds, floral tubs and troughs. In particular the barrier baskets located on the traffic island across from the church and the railway crossing adjacent to the village station. They were of a very high quality and a real eye catcher for motorists and pedestrians. The planted model train was very impressive and a credit to Chris Dunn for constructing it for the village resulting in a very attractive feature. Tommy's Mound and Blackstone Corner were also looking very good, and it was noted that William Dixon has been helping to maintain this particular bed including 'Nellie' the elephant which has been well crafted over the years. The judge was delighted to see the floral contribution by Great Coates Village Nursery School. The 100 Hands Project in memory of Capt. Sir Tom was very clever and a credit to the pupils. The Cow Byres was a lovely feature. Thoughtfully planted and well executed in relation to their location. Overall the maintenance of the grass verges and open spaces were very good and helped to present the village beautifully for residents and visitors. The village church, St. Nicholas is well located at the entrance to the village. The grounds are being thoughtfully managed and maintained (work in progress) including the care of War Graves, flora and fauna. The recently renovated and relocated War Memorial looks good in its new position within the Nursery School grounds.

Section B - Environment

The judge enjoyed the presentation and story board at St. Nicholas Church. The maintenance of the grounds is a work in progress and is developing well for the benefit of visitors, wildlife and the development of local heritage days. (Barnardiston – Lords of the Manor). Great Coates is classed as a 'closed' village (surrounding moat) and has a number of historical features e.g. Cow Byres, St Nicholas Church (parts grade 1 listed) Woad Lane (Roman connections), some evidence of the 'enclosing moat', Herbert Rollett (local artist) Way. It was nice to see that old detritus bins have been recycled and are now being used as planters in a number of locations around the village. The recently planted Queen Elizabeth 2 Community Orchard (5 trees) on a roadside verge is a lovely

idea and appears to be doing well. The new fernery is looking new at this point in time, but it could develop into a lovely feature. The little wildlife den within the copse was very imaginative and should be quite successful overtime. Overall the street scene was looking good. Generally free of litter, detritus, graffiti and weed growth.

Section C - Community

The Memory Boxes (35) made by Gerry Smith are a lovely addition to the village street scene and have been well planted providing plenty of colour for visitors and residents to enjoy. Congratulations again to Chris Dunn for making the model train and well done to William Dixon for helping the bloom group to maintain the planting on Blackstone corner. The judge loved the knitted hearts provided by the WI which were dotted around the village. The judges will be looking forward to meeting some of the Nursery School pupils next year to see what they create in 2022. There appears to be a program of planned all year round events e.g. Scarecrow and Halloween Weekends, litter picks, VE and VJ day celebrations etc. The portfolio indicates that there is good business involvement through financial and 'in kind' support. Well done to those volunteers who are part of Great Coates campaign and the 'bloom' organiser's use of Facebook as a means to share news, seek funding and develop community events. The creative aspects of the entry were very good and full of fun. E.g. Post box / bicycles.

Areas for Development

Section A - Horticulture

Next year the judges will be looking forward to seeing how the Herbert Rollett Way project has developed over the last 12 months. The new Fernery will take time to establish, and it will be interesting to see if it has thrived and become a feature. Consider supporting your community orchard by installing some fruit / vegetable plantings in raised beds. e.g. The village hall might be a suitable location. Consider doubling up on your smaller planted boxes (memory box) as two boxes together would give greater floral impact. The barrier troughs are a big success. Consider where additional barrier troughs could be sited.

Section B - Environment

Consider providing more information about Herbert Rollett the artist particularly as he has a strong link to the village. Perhaps an information board or a leaflet / trail promoting all the historic elements the village has to offer. The Village Hall is a great asset, however perhaps you could consider ways as to how this facilities outside appearance could be improved. Overall the street scene was generally pretty good; however there were a couple of areas where weed growth could be seen in the road gutters. Try to ensure that the route selected is free of weed growth in pavements, road gutters and planter beds. The judges will be look forward to seeing how the Field House area will be improved. The wildlife den is a clever idea, so consider how this facility can be used as an educational aid to the Nursery School and other youth organisations.

Section C - Community

The judge was quite impressed with the portfolio but consider including more photographs of your spring floral displays, children's activities, this year's press coverage and general recycling information. A presentation to the judge at the beginning of the visit outlining what the village had

been doing over the last 12 months would have enhanced your entry. You do get an extra 15 mins for this aspect of the judge's visit. Try to involve more of the local media next year (radio, press) and there is an extra 15mins allocated for press and photographs. Consider making use of your community notice boards to promote your 'bloom' campaign and to inform residents of your very important judging day. The wildflower field and bug den are very important aspects of your entry, so consider installing information boards at both locations to inform the general public as to what they are looking at or could expect to see. Continue to work with local businesses in order to gain additional funding and 'in kind' support for your very impressive entry.

LUBENHAM

Award Silver gilt

Judged on 15th July 2021

Judge: Joyce Slater

Judges Award: For the innovative sempervivum and sedum planter to minimise watering.

Introduction

Lubenham bloom group provided an excellent portfolio, story board in the church porch and visit route that ensured the judge understood the extensive year-round activity of Lubenham community groups. They are to be commended for doing their bloom planting on a shoestring, mainly from donations, and still made Lubenham an attractive village. With a strong environmental focus across many community groups, Lubenham have worked very hard to improve many areas in the village despite the challenges of lockdowns and Covid restrictions.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

There has clearly been a huge amount of work undertaken to continue the improvement of the church yard. The portfolio & story board “before and after” pictures illustrated it very clearly. During the visit it was been used as a community space. Tree management had been undertaken and crowns lifted. Other wooded areas in the village were also well managed. The new areas of planting in the village looked good with donated perennial plants and the new self-watering planters were very colourful with their red, white and blue theme. It was good to see the old planters re-used elsewhere in the village. The sempervivum and sedum planting by the pump was innovative and a good example of water minimisation. The extensive planting of spring bulbs gave Lubenham a colourful start to the year. The splitting of snowdrop clumps in the green will extend the display further in future years. Sunflower seed and wild flower seed were saved from last year and these have ensured the bee garden and new wild flower areas looked good. Previous wild flower planting was doing well, which is an achievement. The financial constraints limited the purchase of plants and the donation of divided plants from residents’ gardens have enabled the village to look good even if the “theme” could not be followed everywhere. It is a credit to Lubenham that they have not used chemicals to weed kill problem areas, relying instead on extensive manual clearing of ground by volunteers. The allotments in the village were impressive. They were particularly well tended and productive, and it was good to hear that all were in use with a small waiting list. Composting bins are at all of the allotments for communal use. The Undle project, a permaculture cooperative smallholding is still active in the village. The war memorial planting has been maintained by a work party led by Dr. Peter Shelton and the wild flower areas, red roses and lavender were doing well. The plans for English bluebells in the wooded area are to be commended. The Grafters and Growers group actively encourage locally grown apple trees and 2 trees were planted on the Wash Pit Lane project.

Section B

Proud of its rich history, Lubenham has an active heritage group with a heritage trail that attracts visitors. Lockdowns have, however, impacted on visitor numbers and key attractions such as the scarecrow festival could not take place. It was great to see that after 15 years of fundraising and

work “Adamsmile”, a foot path and cycle path between the village and Market Harborough had finally opened, in memory of Adam who was killed cycling to school in Market Harborough. Collaboration with the Welland River Trust has led to a team of local wardens monitoring the river Welland environs. In addition, 2 days of wetland wild flower planting was undertaken to help manage this wetland. Wild flower planting has been extensive in the village and bug hotels, log piles, bird boxes and hedgehog houses were all around the village and were well maintained. It was good to hear about the Lubenham lambs’ involvement. The clearance of the walkway by the bridge and its wildflower planting is doing well. The wildflower planting at the rear of the village hall is being maintained alongside some perennial planting. The Parish council is considering wildflower verges which will add to the local street scene. There are small areas of well-established woodland well managed by the village trustees and also Fox Wood - newer woodland planting, that is developing well. The village was immaculate on the day of the visit. There was no graffiti, vandalism, litter or dog fouling visible. The street furniture was in good order; benches have been replaced or refurbished, street signs, railings and bins have been washed clean by the Bloom group. The new all-weather benches by the memorial are a good choice. Funded entirely by donations they will be well used. The regular litter picks have been done by over 60 people around their own homes. It is sad that in this time of restrictions litter has increased along the busy main road dividing the village. The litter picks in this area have sometimes been done 3 times in a week with over 14 bags collected.

Section C

Lubenham in Bloom are clearly active throughout the year and the portfolio diary was very helpful in this respect. Different residents taking responsibility for different beds in the village has worked well around covid restrictions. The information boards were very appropriate for village and there are plans for signage in the community orchard. A monthly village newsletter goes to all homes and Bloom activities are reported in this alongside other community groups and activities. It is very clear that the different groups work closely on different projects that all contribute to the village. The Bloom group also uses Facebook. The school was closed at the time of the visit however it achieved a Green Flag eco school award last year and has a school garden with chickens which delighted keyworker children from other local primary schools. The Bloom group were successful in getting a community grant to replace old planter barrels with 7-day watering barrels. The old barrels have been reused around the village. Fundraising for Lubenham in Bloom has been a massive challenge during recent lockdowns and restrictions. The cancellation of scarecrow festival was a massive blow to the community, and it was a key fundraiser for the Bloom group and many others. “Open Gardens” were also cancelled last year and instead Lubenham tried a virtual “Open Gardens” online. Sadly, this was not a good fundraiser for the work involved so was not attempted in 2021. To replace the benches the group put out an appeal for donations which was successful and individuals such as Dr. Shelton have recycled tools and bicycles to raise much needed funds.

Areas for Development

Section A

No fertiliser had been used however some planting areas would benefit from a feed or mulch , for example the Margaret Merrill roses which were not as robust as one might expect. The approaches to Lubenham on the main road lacked visual impact and this is something that you may wish to consider in future plans. The use of perennial plantings can be a cost-effective

approach and may make the maintenance of more beds easier. Precious funding can be focused on gaps.

Section B

The heavy focus on wild flower and bee friendly planting is to be commended. Maintaining wild flower plantings for summer interest will require careful management. Some street weeds were visible near the village hall and the group will need to find an alternative to the use of weedkillers to prevent these becoming a larger problem.

Section C

Given the challenges of the last 18 months and the serious impact on funding, the group may wish to develop a longer-term financial plan to ensure viability. Accessing corporate community funding may help as might commercial and familial sponsorship of beds/ planters each year. Very young people were involved in growing projects and work groups however there was little mention of young adults. It would be an asset to the bloom group to have their input as well as that of the primary school.

MARKET BOSWORTH

AWARD GOLD

Judged on 5th July

Judge: JOYCE SLATER

Introduction Despite Covid restrictions and unseasonable weather there was a fantastic year-round effort by the experienced Market Bosworth Bloom team and local community groups.

Their gratitude to the NHS was reflected in the rainbow theme in spring and summer planting. The bright, colourful beds, planters and over 100 hanging baskets seen on the visit were stunning and the quality of the blooms was impressive given the weather on the previous day. The bloom group have also supported initiatives in the park and collaborated with other groups giving Market Bosworth residents and visitors something to be proud of.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Bosworth in bloom is a very experienced team and they have ensured that the scale and quality of the planting of beds, hanging baskets and planters has been excellent despite the challenges of the last year and the very cold spring. With 100 hanging baskets around the village the impact was impressive and the quality very consistent. The rebuilt park street beds and butterfly planter were particularly colourful. The fire engine planter and beds by the fire station were very effective with their red/yellow/ orange theme. The use of old helmets as planters outside the fire station and former court were fun as well as effective. The day before judging saw storms and torrential rain but the impact on the displays were minimal. The floral displays were of a very high standard, large flower heads and clearly well maintained. The baskets were some 3 weeks behind their peak growth after the cold spring. The bloom group planting is complimented by many colourful and well trended front gardens throughout the town, including Rainbow cottage and gardens on Park Street. The deer park was equally well maintained, especially with the increased usage in lockdowns. The rangers were well supported by teams of volunteers to ensure the arboretum, meadows, ponds and open spaces were well managed and very clean. Trees were well managed in line with a plan. There was perennial planting in certain locations, but the majority was colourful annual bedding, and this was a deliberate choice to enable year on year variety and change. Widespread bulb planting provided spring colour especially by the road into Market Bosworth. All bedding plants were grown at a local nursery. The new electric bowser had made watering and fertilising all planters much easier and was funded by donation.

Section B

With such extensive history the Market Bosworth town trail is a well-used guide to the historical buildings, people and events and it attracts many visitors. It was good to hear about plans to enable visitors to walk from the Battlefield site into town which will ease the parking problems at busy times. The scaled back festival included outdoor theatre and art by local artists in shop windows which benefitted residents and visitors alike. The Country Park is an exemplar of environmental provision, from composting toilets, wildflower meadows, diverse wooded areas and pond features. It was interesting to hear how the switch of use of former grazed areas of the park to publicly accessible areas has increased observed wildlife. With significantly increased footfall and usage during restrictions the "take your litter home" approach has been complimented by volunteer litter picks and on the day of the visit the park and the town centre were spotless. Road signs, railings and benches are now cleaned by local community groups. Street furniture is in good order and the debate over the heritage lamp posts is ongoing. The battery powered bowser has been a success, replacing a petrol powered one and nearly all troughs and baskets have built in reservoirs. Used compost is taken for recycling locally. The group might want to look at how they can do more to encourage and support wildlife in the town.

Section C

Bosworth in bloom created planting plans and planned year round maintenance as well as the creation of new features. This last year has seen a reconstruction of the Park Street beds and the fabrication of a raised butterfly planter. Joey the wicker horse has also undergone maintenance, and more is planned. A retired firefighter has collaborated with the fire station to create a fire engine planter which was colourful and fun alongside the orange and yellow planting in the fire station boundary beds. The sunflower planting project run by the library team was effective last year and the uptake has increased this year. The small space growing of vegetables is also continuing and could be a project that could be incorporated into other Bloom planting. The bloom group members are well known locally and that was very obvious during the visit. They have found that Facebook has been more impactful than the website. It has been an especially difficult year for schools during lockdowns and restrictions and their contribution to Bloom activities was missed. Hopefully next year will see young people of all ages actually actively involved in the design and growing of planters and beds as it can so easily be integrated into the curriculum. It would be good to see the Bloom group encouraging and supporting edible growing to a much greater extent, possibly through allotments. As with other Bloom groups, the traditional fundraising activities were extremely limited during the restrictions. Sending a letter to all houses in the village requesting support, donations and / or sponsorship of hanging baskets, troughs and beds proved to be very successful and together with a parish council grant, enabled the bloom team to deliver their planting plans. Credit must go to the Bloom team member who has obtained charitable status for the bloom group and is currently working with HMRC to enable gift aid funding. If this is successful it will be a great benefit to the financial viability of the Bloom initiatives.

URBAN COMMUNITY CATEGORY

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EVINGTON IN BLOOM

Award Silver Gilt

Judged on 8th July 2021

Judge: Julie Walker

Judges Award: For the Garden of Hope, a former dumping ground given an inspirational new lease of life, named when everyone was seeking light at the end of the COVID tunnel.

Introduction

Evington in Bloom is back with oodles of enthusiasm, some great new ideas hatched during lockdown and a very healthy bank balance. More than 40 people are involved, each independently pursuing their own areas of interest but working very much as a team to enhance this lovely urban community with its proud heritage. As one local business said: "Helen and her team make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

In the weeks since the easing of lockdown, Evington's various Bloom groups have been picking up their beloved projects again and even starting some impressive new ones. Many plants have been grown and donated by the volunteers and Helen, the co-ordinator, attended the Leicester Environmental Volunteer leaders' course. The streets are flourishing with planters, many supported and maintained by local shops, cafes and pubs that have had the most difficult of years. Cannas – grown by Harry Pettman – are everywhere, in the tubs and planters in the High Street, in the new Garden of Hope and taking pride of place in beds at the War Memorial and at Evington Park. Evington also boasts an impressive array of Penstemons, with lovely varieties appearing throughout the tour. The grounds of St Denys' Church benefit from a successful maintenance partnership, with the council cutting the grass and donating plants and the congregation planting and tending flowerbeds. A local girl helped as part of the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award. Children have planted fennel, which has become a novel way to measure their height! Spring snowdrops, aconites and bluebells draw visitors from miles around. The Cedars pub has been given a boost with eight sturdy containers made from pallets planted with colourful perennials. The pub maintains and waters them and plans to raise funds. Half a dozen people look after the Village Hall beds, which feature a Cardoon towering over lots of lovely perennials. Over the years the main bed has encroached on to the path and the group face a challenge now that the council is taking back the space to restore the footpath to its full width. Building a retaining wall and removing plants will be a big upheaval but try to look upon it as an opportunity to refresh the bed. A former dumping ground in Davenport Road has been transformed into the Garden of Hope. Under the leadership of Paul Archdeacon, the land has been cleared of 10ft-high weeds and all manner of rubbish, including two motorbikes and numerous mattress springs. Flowerbeds were created last summer, with nine tonnes of recycled soil added, and the site is now a glorious blaze of colour. There will be surprises in store as people take an active interest and the site develops ad hoc, with someone already sprinkling a packet of poppy seeds and some self-sets.

Section B – Environment

Evington Community Nature Reserve was introduced this year by Jeff and Suzanne Henry, inviting individual households to dedicate four square metres of their garden to nature. Fifty-six households responded to

leaflets and an article in the Evington Echo and received a packet of wildflower seeds through the letterbox. Well done for spotting the potential for a COVID-secure activity that could be carried out despite lockdown, building on new-found interest in gardening. There's even an informative website – littlegreenshoots.uk/ecnr. The project was extended in March to create Evington Village Green Wildflower Embankment alongside the busy main road. Poppies and Foxgloves are already colourful additions, and the garden continues to develop. On the Village Green itself, the original group encourages biodiversity and is experimenting with wildflower strips. At the Garden of Hope, the idea is also to work with nature. Paul has created two benches from pallets and makes compost in a homemade hot bin on the allotments, producing 250 litres in two months. Jeff and Suzanne are taking the Community Nature Reserve one step further by developing an accessible wild area, complete with tree trunk seats. There are plans for woodland bulbs, wildflower margins, foraging, etc all with community involvement. A fledgling project at the old Co-op helps the new occupants, Carers Direct, to fulfil their corporate social responsibility. Evington in Bloom volunteers help look after the grounds, where there is a small wildlife pond and an old sink removed from the building now repurposed as a planter. There are plans to collect rainwater and for a day centre offering gardening activities for the community. Piggy's Hollow is a local treasure - a three-acre medieval moated site of archaeological and environmental interest. Maintenance of this beautifully wild site is another example of a thriving partnership between the council and volunteers. Beat the Street app has been installed to encourage interest from younger people. The citywide Urban Buzz projects continue to be effective, with the wildflower Beeline along Goodwood Road blooming well and many areas of Evington Park being left more natural. Evington was impressively clean, with just a couple of small pieces of newly-dropped litter spotted.

Section C – Community

Evington in Bloom is in the great position of being financially viable. A gift of £23,000 was received from a charity that folded and a successful bid for £10,000 was made by co-ordinator Helen Pettman to the Community Lottery Fund for 'Growing Evington for People and Pollinators.' This windfall has enabled the group to buy new tools, to give grants to two local schools and to reimburse volunteer expenses. It's also planned to donate £500 towards fruit trees and lilacs for The Orchard on Evington Park, again demonstrating a positive partnership with the city council. It was great to see lots of new sponsor signs for businesses who look after planters outside their premises. There are eight in total, including Nisa who have recently donated £60 for their planter; Café Vintage 186, who pay for their herb planter with hospitality and another planter that is 'Trimmed and styled by Fabio,' the local hairdresser! Year-round activities continued, despite COVID. For instance, the congregation at St Denys' Church remained active, with a Christmas tree passed on by Leicester Grammar School alongside a crib scene in the grounds and wooden Easter eggs painted by the congregation hanging in the trees. Evington in Bloom reliably receives regular publicity through the bi-monthly community magazine, the Evington Echo, which – like Evington in Bloom – is under the umbrella of the Friends of Evington.

Areas for Development

Section A:

It's great to get free plants from the council but take care where you use them. Sometimes they may not really be in keeping with the rest of the planting – for instance, French marigolds and Bizzy Lizzies bring a traditional municipal parks feel and might not look at home in perennial borders. The edging of the War Memorial bed needed to be strimmed. Remember its attention to detail that can make the difference between medal awards. When planning your route, avoid problem areas. There are several in Evington Park – small planters targeted by pigeons and squirrels; a rose bed overrun with weeds and a perennial weed problem in Burnaby Gardens, which is due a revamp. While acknowledging that volunteers have returned only recently, that the council is short of resources, and that plans are in place to tackle these issues, it would be best to steer clear.

Section B:

Watch out for attention for detail, such as grass round the base of the planters outside Carers Direct. The herb planters could do with a lick of paint. There's a substantial amount of moss detracting from the seat at the War Memorial. Take a few minutes to remove the grass between the paving at the main entrance to the church.

Section C:

Ensure you evaluate and record the economic impact and social value of all the wonderful things you are doing!

COASTAL CATEGORY

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MABLETHORPE

Award Gold

Judged on 9th July 2021

Judges: Mrs Emma Schofield

Judges Award: To the Coastal Scouts represented on judging day by Bailey, Poppy, Rylan and Sam along with local resident Reg as a team for their work on the Lowen Garden (The Given Garden) with the MIB – a feast for the eyes!

Introduction

The Mablethorpe in Bloom group are now in their 10th year and have actively engaged with a wide range of partners, endeavouring to further develop their town through shared objectives for the benefit of both residents and visitors. This small coastal town is recognized as being in the top ten of the country's most deprived areas but, despite this, it has many assets which include several Art in the Landscape installations, bio-diverse sand dunes and its stunning Blue Flag beaches. The judge's advice had been considered and consequently a well-organised portfolio with photographs that detailed the work of the Bloom group over the intervening period, alongside good evidence of plans for the future, enriched the tour which was both varied and enjoyable and covered all aspects of the work undertaken by the Bloom group and its partners.

Areas of achievement

Section A - Horticulture

On entering Mablethorpe, the roadside verge opposite the Cross Hotel was a delight and gave a taste of what was to come! The High Street was a riot of colour throughout, with a range of barrier, street post planters, self-watering recycled pavement planters/ tower displays, all in a co-ordinated colour theme (Covid Red for life, white for healing and Black hints to mourn those who the town have lost.) Trial planting had been a focus with the Bloomers growing their stock from plugs and the Town Council had similarly taken on board the varieties/ colour choice which echoed in their planters. The increased stock of perennial plants and those which offer all-year-round structured interest have reduced the amount of annuals required and form a permanent arrangement into which the annual colour themes can be infilled in the form of bedding in all the planters. The plants were chosen carefully with regard to their impact and ability to survive in the conditions which the coastal resort suffers. The Acer Campestre trees, purchased with a partial grant funding, were fully settled into their neatly manicured street plots. The revamped train planter (The Men's Shed) at the Old Station car park was overflowing with a range of herbs which the community are encouraged to pick from, and the local bees were enjoying it too!! The formal bedding at the Quebec Road/seafront junction had a real impact but it was the Town as a whole

that shimmered in the summer sunshine. The plant gardens at Linkage Green were good, considering the difficult year which the team who work there have experienced through Covid restrictions. The garden reflected their team work with MIB, who provided them with a variety of plug plants to use - the weed free mixed planting was colourful and cheerful. The garden developed in conjunction with Trefoil Guild was attractive, as were the reinstated borders in the war memorial grounds and placed florals at the foot of the cenotaph which were in keeping with its purpose. A highlight of the tour was the Lowen Gardens which the Bloom team, with the help of the local Coastal Scouts and help with mowing from local resident Reg, have taken over in the last few years and what a success! The 'Given Garden' was a riot of colour and the scarecrows added to the pleasure it gives. Queens Park area has developed well. The Crown Garden at the entrance to the park provided impact with all planting considered and healthy and the Rose Garden smelt as good as it looked. In fact, alongside the high level of maintenance with ELDC, the park looked good overall. Further development of the verge alongside Quebec Road, which has been undertaken by the CCC, now has a well-established wildflower meadow, a ship of perennials, a community chat bench and new circular flower bed – all adding interest for passers-by as they walk along it or pause for a sit down.

Section B - Environmental Responsibility

The visit started in the High Street where the judge was met by members of the BID Team, Sean and Nicola. The discussion centered around their involvement in the High Street regeneration, amongst other things, along with the Bloom Team. It was a worthwhile discussion and highlighted how much things had vastly improved in the appearance and environmental responsibility of the High Street, Old Station car park/ war memorial area, front of Co-op car park fencing/ benches and successful grants for bins with ashtrays along the High Street -significantly helping to keep the main pedestrian streets litter free. The black and gold paint choices on railings, benches and bins elevated the status of pride that was reflected around the town. The Mablethorpe in Bloom group members constantly use 'elbow grease' in their quest to keep the streets weed free. They have also introduced nematodes into the planters, which appears to be working well as there was very little evidence of slug/snail damage in any of the planters during the tour. Water harvesting and composting was demonstrated at Linkage Green/ Lowen Cinema. The water reservoirs in the existing street planters were both time and water efficient, the Bloomers watering at night to conserve resources. Also noted was the refurbishment of self-watering planters by the team at Linkage. The Judge was impressed that, through beach litter picking, the Bloomers had worked on the North Shore and, in speaking to a local business owner, had discovered that it was not human litter droppers but in fact scavenging wildlife that were responsible at dusk for getting into wide aperture bins. A conversation with ELDC resulted in bins being emptied daily in the late evening rather than the following morning and the litter problem was solved! Mablethorpe, along with Town Council support, has been awarded 'Plastic Free status'. The town took part in 'No Mow May' and witnessed an increase in the diversity of insects which visited the town. Overall, Mablethorpe was litter/graffiti free, and the local art group had displays of pictures which helped to break up the huge expanse of concrete of the sea defence wall, adding interest and colour to the town.

Section C - Community Participation

There was multiple evidence of community involvement, clearly listed in the excellent portfolio which had been shared prior to the judging date. It was good to meet some of the partners on the

tour and share in their stories with the MIB: The Coastal Scouts who contributed to work on the floral display; those in local care homes who MIB took the gardening to; individual residents' efforts were shared, even if at a distance (Reg and his mowing, Ian and his balcony garden in the High Street) and those who were unable to be present on the day were recognized for their contributions. The local church, St Marys, was a thoughtful stop off to see the Forget-me-not seed/birdbox and hear about the spring underplanting that the Bloomers had completed in the graveyard- very tranquil. Many local businesses (Co-op, The Paint Spot, The Factory Shop, Lord Bros, Gelder's) were all part of the support financially or made donations of relevant items to help MIB achieve their goals. Special thanks were paid in the portfolio to the BID Team who had helped deliver larger projects through support, both manually and financially. The Rangers too were acknowledged for the tasks that they had helped complete with the MIB. Evidence of local businesses helping with watering and positioning of containers- Lowen Cinema. Civic Pride- along with good communication is what MIB noted in their portfolio/ during the tour, all contributing to making Mablethorpe a better place for all- Town Council, Lottery funded Coastal Community Challenge, BID, ELDC, and numerous voluntary groups, individuals and clubs. The use of Facebook for MIB to communicate activities, information, and advice as well as to promote the Bloom group is well developed. The local Co-op allowed them to place an unwanted seed collection point in their store, along with posters and a social media campaign which saw donations of seeds and plants pour in for the development of the 'Given Garden'- what a success! In the portfolio, good evidence was seen of the ongoing fundraising events throughout the year, particularly enjoyable were the festive mistletoe and mince pies efforts!!

Areas for development

Section A - Horticulture

Continue to develop the all-year-round extensive planting around the town to create that memorable impression- the WOW factor! Continue to develop the well-being of established plants e.g. the Rose Garden in Queens Park alongside the perennial choices that have been placed in the wide variety of planters around the town. The ongoing development of the stumpery in the woodland area in line with suitable choices of plants for biodiversity to encourage the wildlife is planned. Perhaps develop some planters which are in keeping with the area and provide subtle colour to accompany the bench at St Marys Church, thus encouraging people to pause awhile and enjoy the serenity of their surroundings.

Section B - Environmental Responsibility

MIB should continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of the benefits of environmental alternatives to keeping pests under control, as it was very evident that what they have achieved so far (with the introduction of the nematodes) has improved the wellbeing of the plants and soil. Further development of the neglected conservation area 'the Railway Walk' is a longer term project but they are approaching it well and have already secured some funding from the Dales Trust to develop the gardens. Continue to pursue the heritage links with this area- there is huge potential to develop a space for all the community to enjoy. The planned use of solar up-lighting for the Crown Garden will again improve both the aesthetics and amount of time people visiting can enjoy the garden, as will the introduction of benches on the relawned old rose garden area in the park. Perhaps when you can re-engage with the local Primary School, an area noted in 2019 with good potential was that behind the Primary school - again it will be interesting to see

how that develops. There is still the possibility to develop further information and interest about local heritage for residents and visitors, especially around the Old Station/railway area.

Section C - Community Participation

Although MIB have big plans for larger projects, they are working closely with partners to complete ongoing smaller projects, all of which have a great impact for both locals and visitors alike. The Bloomers are well known and much appreciated in the town and there is still potential to use this to encourage people to join in with the campaign. Keep building on those partnerships and promote the good work you do further with your new signage around the town. Again carried forward from 2019 and when you are able to re-engage, the primary school is another area with big potential for the wider community benefit if parents can be encouraged to be involved. With time it will be interesting to see how the children can be more involved in the project and where the heritage fruit trees are planted. Further development between MIB and the work of the young adults at Linkage Green and the Beech House is worth pursuing as it is so valuable both for them personally and for the community. In your portfolio and /or community board/ presentation, include those before and after photos- it all helps paint a picture for the judge of your ongoing work in the community and throughout the seasons. Finally, throughout the visit it was interesting to hear and see how MIB had adapted to the very difficult circumstances brought about by all the Covid - 19 pandemic restrictions since March 2020. I am full of admiration for all that has been achieved in the town since the last judging visit in 2019. Future plans were well-detailed in the portfolio and MIB should be very proud of the difference they and their partners are making in the town as a whole. It was lovely to see local residents and visitors acknowledging, unprompted on the day of the visit, the work undertaken by MIB. The tour was well planned and executed to time. I wish to thank you all for your ongoing efforts and look forward to future visits and sharing in your continuing Bloom success!

TRUSTHORPE IN BLOOM

Award Certificate of Participation

Judged on 9th July 2021

Judges: Mrs Emma Schofield

Judges Award: For Lorraine who, as one of the TIB Volunteers, tirelessly spends hours contributing to the work of the team and creates the wide variety of beautifully decorated kneelers in the local St Peters Church which reflect so many aspects of the community.

Introduction

Trusthorpe in Bloom embraced their themes of 'Beetles and Bridges' throughout their 2021 Bloom entry. This small coastal village is recognized for being in the top ten of the country's most deprived areas but, despite this, the village has many assets which include St Peters Church and Annexe at the heart of the community, several well maintained holiday sites and is rightly proud of its stunning Blue Flag beaches. The Judge was fortunate to visit on a sunny summer's day but UK seaside weather can be varied and the Bloom group were living with the natural restrictions well. This was Trusthorpe's first time entering 'In Bloom' and their enthusiasm was evident as they conducted a tour around their village, ensuring that all who had something to share were given the opportunity to do so.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The tour started at St Peters Annexe Paddock Gardens which demonstrated how passionate the Trusthorpe Bloom Team are as the site has been the culmination of many years hard work, transforming an overgrown wilderness (old Paddock) into a community space which is enjoyed and used by many in the village. The plant quality and selection in the variety of small, themed gardens in the paddock was good overall, although not always balanced. Each plot was maintained by members of the In Bloom/ various church-linked groups. Each one was themed, and an informative leaflet had been produced for visitors to use independently. The resulting gardens reflected the Saints' national occasions or were in memory of members of the community. The tour continued into the wider community where the judge enjoyed visiting several private gardens which had provided sanctuary for the owners during Covid restrictions as many had suffered isolation. Their gardens had provided focus through difficult times: Sue's country garden and hosta display; Ian and his rose borders; Colin and his yuccas; the town crier with his riot of colour/veg in a compact space; Marion's herbaceous borders and golf-manicured lawns; Jaynes Pimms' ponies and bridge planter; Stephen and Diana's front/recycled gardens to name but a few!!! All were delightful and a celebration of many hours of hard work! The Bus Stop Garden was developed and maintained by the Bloomers. It was colourful and plants were well chosen for their tolerance of conditions- a community space enjoyed by many. The natural bird feeder station was intrinsic to the area's success. It was well stocked and was enjoyed by many visiting garden birds. Included in the tour were various caravan parks, all of which had welcoming summer bedding providing a splash of bright cheerfulness throughout the resort and were well maintained by their grounds staff. The tour ended at the Seacroft Bar, a local business whose planters around the site were excellent and gave a lasting positive memory of the village.

Section B

At St Peters Annexe there were some great examples of encouragement of biodiversity through the use of wildflower areas, long grass areas, large 'bonfire' pile (hedgehog homes), bug hotels to name but a few! The community as a whole was well cared for, there were no signs of litter or sense of unkemptness in the more commercial, public, or private areas that were visited as part of the tour. There were water butts that collected rainwater at both the Annexe and at the community garden which they maintained. The work of the Bloom team is valuable and worthwhile regarding the development of the protection and conservation of the natural environment and wildlife habitats and the range of bug hotels, including the one developed from a grant from EMIB , was noted by the judge. The voles that were making their home in the dyke behind the gardens on the Main Street were an interesting wildlife addition to the tour. The members of TIB constantly use 'elbow grease' in their quest to keep the gardens weed free (twice weekly weeding and gardening rotas) and no un-environmentally-friendly pesticides or chemicals were being used. The ladybird bins fitted in well with the RHS theme of beetles and encouraged the younger members of the community to want to feed their rubbish to the bin. A new dog bin has been installed in the village as the number of dog walkers has increased dramatically this year, but as a whole there was no dog fouling/ graffiti/ flyposting problems to be seen. The street furniture around the village (bins/benches) appeared to be in good condition. The importance of bridges around the village was emphasized many times on the tour and their links to the history, work and importance to the surrounding area. This was noted by the judge, as it was clearly an important sense of pride to the Bloom group- they had even managed to incorporate the last set of wooden sluice gates into one of the Annexe gardens and there was an information board to tell the community about their importance to the history of the village.

Section C

There was multiple evidence of community involvement displayed on the In Bloom information boards in the gardens at St Peters and examples of various fundraising activities which the Bloomers had participated in to raise monies for their work. Some sponsorship was evident as the tour continued around the village, a local Bed and Breakfast on the planters at the Bus Stop Garden for example. A good range of local groups, often connected to the church, (woodwork group, floral arrangers, gardening and embroidery) had worked well together on the TIB gardens at the Annexe. Further colour was added to the Paddock Gardens at the Annexe, on the day of the tour, by the arrival of the local circus entertainers!! The sense of community was evident throughout the tour and, as the judge was informed, 85% of the local community are aged over 70 so this year has seen many confined to their homes during Covid restrictions. Many members of church-linked groups, especially the toddlers, had become involved with the Annexe gardens - judges always like to see and hear of the younger generation being involved with Horticulture and learning from the experience of the more mature members of the community. The site and project has a lot of potential to grow further. Involvement of a range of grandchildren in the planting in some of the residents' private gardens that were visited was also good to hear about. Thank you to Shirley who shared with the judge some local history insights about the village orally throughout the tour which added to the day. The use of Facebook to promote the work of the Trusthorpe Bloom group is developing well.

Areas for Development

Section A

The paddock gardens at St Peters were a key part of the tour and indeed a great starting point, however, although some areas had real impact, others needed more thought in terms of their overall design and impact. There were some areas which required some further attention to raise the standards of horticultural maintenance so that they reach a consistent standard. Perennial plant selection for all year round interest needs further consideration, although generally the summer plant selection was good. The “stumpery” area in the Annexe Garden needs careful management along with the maintenance of the wilder areas. Be aware of all relevant factors and consider, when moving forward on your ‘In Bloom’ journey, how they contribute to the entry in creating a memorable impression with the planting, with the emphasis on co-ordination and quality throughout.

Section B

The area has a lot of heritage, its links with Domesday book etc, and this could be further developed. Keep locals involved with street and beach cleans and support any efforts to reduce plastic use in the coastal campaign locally. Perhaps develop links with the numerous fisheries and explore further opportunities with them for where the Bloom Group could develop wildflower areas, recognized with signage of ‘Trusthorpe in Bloom’ to highlight the group’s work in the area. Another area with good potential was that on the site near the old mortuary. The boat planter and art works were lovely, but could Trusthorpe in Bloom develop the area and perhaps involve the local café to get involved more? There is still the possibility to develop information about local heritage for locals and visitors to add interest at this site. Local heritage and education for the wider community is a key aspect for development here to ensure that the local history is preserved. Perhaps develop stronger links with key historic places. For example, brickyard, manor house, old school and celebrate these more visually as part of the tour.

Section C

Trusthorpe in Bloom has a good story to tell and the management of the tour -keeping all within the time limit- could assist in gaining increased marks in the future. Plan your route carefully to provide key focused stops along the tour to showcase and link carefully to the three judged areas of Horticulture, Environment and Community. Use the EMIB website info to help guide you and increase the TIB team’s awareness of what the judge will be looking for, or you may find it beneficial to ask for a free judge’s advisory visit in preparation for 2022. Perhaps consider how TIB could find small community projects to make their presence felt more around the village beyond the wonderful St Peters Annexe. Raise the profile of the TIB and work more closely with some partners/ businesses to develop areas for greater impact which will benefit visitors and residents alike. Local residents had worked hard in their own gardens for Bloom 2021 and the Bloomers could make use of their skills and knowledge moving forward into more community based projects once Covid restrictions permit them to do so. The judges will look forward to seeing if you have managed to develop an allotment site near the village hall, as mentioned in your future plans. The Judge spent quite some time visiting many of the local gardens and, considering the year we have had with Covid, this was appropriate and recognized their hard work, celebrating what they had achieved in difficult and isolating times. However, in order to keep focused on time, it may be necessary to carefully consider who should be included in your future tour itinerary. Perhaps introduce a garden competition amongst residents (best back/front garden).

SMALL TOWNS CATEGORY

BARROW UPON SOAR

Award: Silver

Judged on 14th July

Judge: John Constable

Judges Award: Mr. Terry Brooks, 21 Ennerdale Road - For an immaculate and imaginative collection of planters and decorative effects, together with a commendable all year round community effort.

Introduction

I was met by Annette Richardson who has been involved with Barrow in Bloom since its inception in 2019. We had an enjoyable and informative tour visiting many volunteers at the sites allowing them to show us around their work for which they are rightly proud. I was impressed by the diversity of groups we met - The Gardening Club, Charnwood Borough Council, Wild about Barrow, The WI, Barrow Parish Council as well as some of the individuals involved - all of whom were supportive and involved with demonstrated projects. In addition, there was a developing positive relationship with the council contractor Idverde UK. The portfolio was interesting, informative, and helpful and information boards well used on the judging tour. It is an exciting time in the evolution of Barrow in Bloom with some very positive projects just started or under serious consideration giving potential future success in EMIB very possible.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The area around Deep Lock was developing, and a herb planter was in place and spring flowering bulbs had been planted - a picture on the portfolio would be useful - some potential screening for a deep "pit" adjacent to the towpath had been planted. The use of French marigolds as an associated theme from the twin town of Marans in France [French lavender was suggested in the 2019 report] was witnessed and perhaps could be developed. Plant containers in High Street, maintained by the Parrish Council were a high standard and well maintained. Jerusalem Island enhances the entrance to the town and the involvement of the gardening club with individual areas of responsibility seems to work well. King George V playing fields were well maintained - the sensory garden used recycled wood chip is maturing - some of the more vigorous perennials will soon need attention - which was planned. Mark from the Parish Council is to be congratulated for his efforts in George V fields and gardens. The WI garden and war memorial were also well maintained.

Section B

I heard of plans for wildflower areas and how "no mow May" had been observed - on the route I saw a private front garden that was being managed with wildflowers and mown strips for access. "Wild about Barrow" is another group within The Bloom umbrella and it is exciting to hear of the plans for future planting/sowing. The entire town I visited was virtually litter and graffiti free - the public seating [with one exception at Deep Lock] was very well maintained and clean. Recycled wood chip was used in the sensory garden at George V and composting was also in place with

local public houses contributing vegetable waste. Details of crisp packet and drink tin recycling were outlined - a quick visit to see the facilities would be beneficial. The introduction of bird boxes and plans for more were outlined.

Section C

Barrow in Bloom has successfully developed relations with several local community organisations and their contributions were witnessed. The garden, pub planter and tree of the month competitions were explained and are helping both to raise money for charity as well as enhancing all year round community involvement. Good use was made of information boards which assisted with explanations and allowed those involved to explain and demonstrate some of their activities. Considerable plans were outlined for areas such as Deep Lock - a partner group has been created with assistance from the Canal and River Trust and I met volunteer Brian. They have made good progress with encouragement and help from neighbours. It was very encouraging to meet Charnwood BC and PC representatives and hear of the Borough Council's positive attitude towards community project support. Plans for work at Holy Trinity church is awaiting permission to proceed and the outcome will be interesting to witness.

Areas for Development

Section A - Horticulture

The Merans garden on High Street could benefit from some enhancement - either by suitable (perhaps drought resistant species?) planting or perhaps some information about the twin town? The colour theme in planters from Deep Lock into the town centre/community library could probably have a more consistent theme?

Section B - Environment

Perhaps the canal could be used to demonstrate wildlife activity a little more - a nearby information board perhaps could also mention why it was originally established? the Deep Lock project to hide the eyesore alongside the lock might need some more reinforcing to have the desired effect? Weeds growing at the edges of roads on the judge's route are detrimental to the entry and lessen the impact of nearby colourful, very well maintained front gardens. The use of recycled water was limited and could be extended - perhaps from the library roof or the Parish Council offices? There was quite a lot of mention of recycling/composting projects - perhaps another year when cars are used a visit to suitable sites [in addition to King George V field] could be arranged? It is good to read and hear of plans for improvements based 2019 recommendations - future tours can benefit from demonstrating what has been achieved.

Section C - Community

Perhaps a more prominent permanent information board or similar could be installed to emphasise the twinning with Marans? Similarly, the fossils featured around town made an interesting theme - however I didn't see any explanation or relevant information boards?

BRIGG

Award Silver

Judged on 14th July 2021

Judge: Richard Welburn

Introduction

I was met in the Market Square of this historic market town by Sharon Riggall one of the key members of the local Bloom team. It was explained that the Bloom is supported by the local Town Council, North Lincolnshire Council, and the local Bloom group. The majority of the work relating to the entry was coordinated and undertaken directly by Bloom members with the District and Town Council providing limited support funding and staffing resources. The following tour of the Town evidenced a good mix of Council, business and local community involvement.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The overall impact and standard of the horticultural displays and amenity areas including highway verges was good. While a reasonable number of floral hanging baskets were evident in the Town Centre their impact would have been greater had they been larger in size and at a lower level. Tiered planters were planted with good quality plant material and were being maintained to a good standard. Barrier planters were used to good effect on the River Bridge and walkway. The overall impact would be improved by the use of a themed colour scheme and choice of plant material. There was no evidence of pest and disease, and it was encouraging to note the trial of Comfrey and Nettle based liquid manures as was the policy to use peat free compost. It was encouraging to note that displays were maintained throughout the year with the majority of plant material being grown in a glasshouse and poly tunnel on a donated allotment plot managed by Bloom members. All plant material viewed was of a good quality and being maintained to a good standard. Impact would generally be improved through the use of fewer plant types and their use in greater numbers e.g. plant type / colour / block planting. It was encouraging to note the future intention to use perennial plants. Consideration should also be given to the use of drought resistant plants.

Section B

The Brigg and District Veterans Planter and Nancy's Memorial was a moving highlight on the judging route. The display reflects the local connection with the armed services. Brigg Litter Busters are an active local volunteer group whose work was much in evidence as little was seen throughout the route. The Town Centre was particularly clean and there was no evidence of litter or graffiti. The shrub border outside the Allotment plot was a good example of how to use to good effect an otherwise vacant piece of ground. It was interesting to see how potatoes had been included as a way of breaking up the heavy soil in between sections of perennial planting.

Section C

It was explained that other than the Town and District Councils that the Bloom were also supported by :Brigg Rotary Club, Brigg Business Partnership, Brigg Litter Busters, Brigg WI

Planting around the Town Centre Police Station is maintained by Ann Eardley who also keeps an eye on the nearby Donkey Park together with Jane Gibbons

Promoting the Bloom takes place via community events while the Bloom has a Facebook page which has attracted interest.

Areas for Development

Significant budget savings have been made by directly growing plant material which is commendable. The focus of future work should be to continue to develop a financially sustainable campaign through continuing to encourage local partnership working, maintaining a high profile in the local / social media, and continuing to explore external funding opportunities. A forward plan could then be produced in consultation with the local community, Bloom partners etc and prioritised and resources allocated to develop and maintain agreed projects. In consideration of climate change thought should be given to the use of drought tolerant plants in all aspects of horticultural planning, minimising the use of mains water wherever possible and recycling all materials where realistic (it was noted that this year's Spring bedding material was being held on the Allotment for division and reuse next year)

KIRTON IN LINDSEY

Award Silver

Judged on 14th July 2021

Judge: Richard Welburn

Introduction

I was welcomed to Kirton in Lindsey by Dr Pat Frankish representing Kirton in Lindsey in Bloom. The tour, guided by Pat started at the Library Car Park where several colourful planted troughs were located to brighten Library frontage. It was explained that the local Bloom project was funded by the District and Town Councils in addition to local business sponsorship on a ratio 40/40/20

A conducted tour by car of the Town followed a walking tour of the adjacent Green, Memorial Garden and nearby Market Square.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The standard of floral displays and grounds maintenance was good throughout the judging route. The majority of floral displays planted borders and horticultural features are maintained by Bloom members. Plant material is sourced from a local plant nursery and new trees appropriate to the site have been provided by the Woodland Trust and have been planted within housing areas e.g. Richdale Avenue Housing Estate to add interest and improve local attractiveness. The well maintained War Memorial Garden is an attractive roadside feature as is the adjacent island shrub bed. The Garden benefits from attractive and well maintained perimeter railings and metal bench seats facing the attractive Green. Several colourful Tiered planters and lamppost planters help to brighten the Market Place.

A new flower bed has been planted in the verge at the front of GG Steels Car Sales. It is intended to replace the seasonal bedding plants with shrubs in the Autumn. Several attractive flower beds were visible on the route including outside the Doctors Surgery where the planting is sponsored by Kirton First. The planted beds at the front of the Cemetery offer a variety of seasonal bedding ,perennial plants, and mature shrubs. While the overall grounds maintenance of the Cemetery is very good ,the appearance would be helped if the Commonwealth War Graves Commission could be encouraged to synchronise maintenance to avoid different standards being evident.

Section B

A landscape feature on the B1206 road entrance to the Town incorporates a Millstone of local heritage significance while a major landscaped heritage feature known as Chirchetone located on Traingate incorporates an original potato plough being held by a metal sculpture of a farmworker. The visually attractive feature is the initiative of a local resident Tony Bartlett, who clearly has other ideas waiting to be developed to improve the local environment and is to be commended for his enthusiasm. A large expanse of grass known as The Green is managed by the charity Fields in Trust and is being maintained to a good standard together with an incorporated Children's Play Area.

It is hoped to develop a large area of MOD land adjacent to a redundant RAF Sports Hall as a future Community Wood. Development will be subject to the outcome of negotiations with the MOD and statutory bodies including the securing of sustainable funding.

No litter or graffiti was visible on the judging route with hard paved areas and footpaths being maintained to a good standard. All involved should take credit for the positive impact that this has on the attractiveness of the local environment not only for residents but also visitors to the Town.

Section C

Reference was made to future plans for the expansion of Bloom activities for example the enhancement of a large, grassed embankment on Traingate together with the Community Woodland dependant. Unfortunately, several Bloom members have recently left the Group and consequently the current priority is to manage and maintain existing features' continued support of the local councils will be essential at this stage while efforts continue to be made to engage and work together with local businesses in furthering the aims of the Bloom Group.

Areas for Development

Consideration should be given to colour theming seasonal bedding displays including hanging baskets and planters. While the quality and quantity of plants used was good the visual impact would be improved through the use of fewer types of plants and a reduced variety of colours. The selective use of dot plants in displays to add height and interest would be a positive move e.g. cordyline. Thought should be given to introducing more drought tolerant and ground cover plants into planting schemes not only to reduce water demand but also add variety and attractiveness e.g. sedums. Wildflower planting where appropriate would potentially reduce maintenance costs while being an attractive change to traditionally mowed grassed areas. There would also be a benefit to Bees and other fauna.

Consider promoting the Bloom on all planting and landscape initiatives by way of signage, logo, press release etc

LONG SUTTON

Award Silver

Judged on 7th July

Judge: John Constable

Judges Award: G.J.R Autos Ltd - For wide ranging, undaunted support for Long Sutton in Bloom

Introduction

I was met by founder member and Chair of Long Sutton in Bloom Kay Jenkinson- this year celebrating their 30th anniversary - and Treasurer, Barry Meade. I followed the LSIB watering van around the judging route - and was shown highlights by Kay and Barry as was appropriate. The highlight of the Bloom effort is undoubtedly the coordinated efforts that have gone into the hanging baskets, tubs, and planters around the centre of the town and in particular the marketplace. Judging was made a little difficult towards the end of the route by heavy rain. The entry was supported by a comprehensive portfolio explaining the ongoing support of local councils and the team of 25 volunteers and helpers from the community. Over 60 local businesses support the group's successful efforts to enhance the town.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Red, white, pink, and purple petunias dominate much of the display. In normal circumstances town centre businesses are charged £20 towards the tubs/hanging baskets outside of their premises - this year no invoices were sent out, but 2 thirds of the normal amount was raised through voluntary donation which is probably indicative of the appreciation of town centre businesses for the LSIB team efforts. Plant quality and maintenance was excellent. Theft of plant material during propagation caused a problem which has been more than adequately combatted. Particular mention is made of the "King John's treasure" display adjoining the library and the continuing cooperation with the Co-op supermarket whose community team has maintained a shady area alongside the shop adjoining a busy pedestrian walkway and car park. The nearby "Daphne's triangle" was attractive and well maintained. Responsibility for the church surround is shared between the church and the local council but the LSIB group have added 2 borders alongside the church adjacent to the West door. Junctions and approaches to the town have features which highlight the efforts of the group - directly off the A17 King John's treasure is again featured with a tub and some "anonymous" informal planting behind it. Nearby the Pop Bottle triangle features nicely at the busy junction with a colourful mural as its centrepiece. At the other side of town, the Garnsgate/Gedney road triangle quietly reminds anyone passing that the town's horticulture is in good hands. Finally, Annie's patch is looked after by a "subgroup" of Bloomers and brightens another junction.

Section B

The group has acquired a van containing a water tank, hose, and lance for regular watering - GJR Autos supports this, and watering is carried out by Barry. The containers are very well grown and are clearly well and regularly cared for. Evidence of composting was seen at Annie's Patch, Cowpers Gate residents area and the Pop Bottle junction. Some planters had been made from recycled materials. I saw the planting at Winfrey Park and heard of the wildlife present at the pond in the Shrubberies and in the area near John Swains Way. Nice use of old scales as part of the display next to the Co-op - linking the area nicely to its agricultural heritage.

Section C

The portfolio lists 30+ volunteers and helpers who are involved in the Bloom effort - money is raised from a regular market cake stall, the local district council, and donations from local businesses. The town centre planters and baskets were funded this year from reserves and donations when normally a small charge is made to local businesses. Maintenance of containers is well organised and efficiently done using the van the group has acquired.

Areas for Development

Section A

The town centre containers are a real highlight but perhaps some attention could be aimed at developing other areas and extending the town centre planting theme further? Plant choice for the shady area next to the Co-op could be modified to include more shade loving species. Sites close to major junctions probably don't want to be too eye catching but it would be good to encourage more colour away from the town centre - perhaps a front garden competition could help increase community participation?

Section B

Perhaps the area around John Swain's Way could be highlighted more - could the fact that the whole area was reclaimed in the 17th century be mentioned [perhaps a permanent information board/s?] to show how the landscape would have been and encourage more wildlife - evidence of the wildlife recording would be beneficial? - It is possibly somewhere that could become a more central part of the tour. Some areas of wildflowers - Winfrey Park or John Swain's Way or The Shrubberies might be suitable - would be beneficial. Encouragement of bird and insect life could be highlighted? Some street furniture could do with cleaning/redecorating - and Common Pit needs some attention to bring it back to its best - the benches and information board need some restoration. There was only a small amount of litter and graffiti was virtually absent. Weeds alongside roads and between paving could be removed - especially in photographs used in the portfolio (e.g., around the Parish Council Information board and between paving in Annie's Patch). Water recycling, where possible, could be highlighted and demonstrated. The large vacant building [previously The Bull Hotel?] is becoming an eyesore and a challenge for the town - unfortunately in its present condition it can only detract from the highlight of the bloom effort.

Section C

Circumstances have limited connections with schools but future involvement with the younger generation is important. Representatives of associated organisations [Men's Sheds?] and the local councils could be encouraged to join in part of the judging route to demonstrate their support. Appropriate information boards [for judges] would help explain the range of activities and enhance the positive messages from the tour and portfolio.

UPPINGHAM

Award - Gold

Judged on 16th July

Judge: John Constable

Introduction

I was met by Uppingham in Bloom Chair Pam Dalby at the Falcon Hotel and taken on an interesting town tour both on foot and by car as necessary. Uppingham is a naturally pretty town, and the Bloom Group has the support of the local public school, but it has emphasised many other aspects of the town to make the entry to the Bloom competition of exceptional quality. The heritage - both horticultural and historical - of the town and local area were highlighted. 2 separate tree trails have been created which combine the trees with local heritage. A fascinating project is being undertaken in a closed churchyard in conjunction with Rutland County Council and "Caring for God's acre" to return a designated area thereof to how it might have been in the past with less vigorous maintenance. The entry is well supported with an informative portfolio which emphasises a lot of the projects that there wasn't time to visit.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Town centre containers and other planted areas were healthy and well maintained. General planting around the town was with species suitable to the particular environment and plants were in very good health and the box bushes spelling "Uppingham" on Ayston Road were responding well to their "dressings" of seaweed extract! The arboretum was professionally maintained by school gardeners, the grass was cut but expanses of borders allowed to grow naturally to encourage wildlife - the trees were regularly inspected for their health and physical damage. The school maintained gardens outside the boarding houses on High Street West were eye catching from the roadside - closely followed by the private gardens opposite! Tod's Piece playing field was well maintained and the sensory garden, adjoining the playground and skate board course, very well established and maintained.

Section B

The churchyard wildlife and natural plant project has compared species identified in 1983 with those currently present and investigations are ongoing. The churchyard was otherwise generally tidily maintained. Bat and bird boxes are positioned along the wildlife corridor which runs through the town.

Section C

The 2 tree trails are focused on traditional older native species and designed to encourage visitors to follow routes around the town with points of interest highlighted in a booklet. At the Elms estate we met Trevor who was Chair of the residents association who took responsibility for the pond, which was central to the large, grassed area in the estate - the responsibility for the area was shared with the council and maintenance contractor. He also had responsibility for the allotments

where we also met Rick who was involved with "Uppingham Grows" and maintaining an area for community use. There is a significant waiting list for allotments and a "swap table" for anyone

wanting something tasty for lunch! The dry garden at the entrance to the car park was imaginative and well maintained highlighting supportive businesses.

Areas for Development

Section A

Whilst all baskets and planters were well maintained there was some variation in the colour theme - possibly this could be addressed? Several trees alongside the Elms estate pond need replacing and whilst they may be too distant from the town for inclusion in the current walks perhaps it would be possible to use traditional species to make a link to the town centre project? Another tree walk in the future perhaps.

Section B

The necessity for new developments to contribute to the wildlife corridors in and around Uppingham was explained by Miranda from the local/county council, they are mentioned in the brochure too - it would be beneficial if parts of the existing corridor could be highlighted on the judging tour. Rainwater harvesting was seen at the community garden, but its use could be encouraged and highlighted where present? Similarly use of recycled materials for composting and plant containers could be demonstrated during the tour. The information board, adjacent to the public footpath in the arboretum would benefit from some redecoration.

Section C

Possibly meeting representatives of associated community groups - in easier circumstances - could be a useful addition. More use of information boards to highlight aspects of the entry could assist in explanations - perhaps to illustrate wildlife in the Church yard project?

TOWN CATEGORY

BOURNE

Award Silver Gilt

Judged on 21st July 2021

Judges: Richard Stephen

Judges Award: To the Don't Lose Hope Community Garden for the amazing work carried out by Don and his team of volunteers for the health and wellbeing of the community.

Introduction

The judge received a warm welcome to Bourne from Ian Sismey who reminded the judge that it had been 10 years since his last visit. Ian's guided tour was interesting and very enjoyable as it took in the Wellhead Gardens, Outdoor Lido, Abbey Lawn Sporting Complex, retail properties and residential gardens. At the last location Bourne's Mayor Cllr. Paul Fellows met with the judge and outlined the potential of Bedehouse Bank wildflower area. Overall, this was another strong entry to this year's competition. Well done Bourne.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The judge was impressed with the high standard of open space and grass verge maintenance throughout the tour. The impact of the highly coloured floral hanging baskets (120) barrier baskets and troughs in the town centre was most impressive and are a particularly good feature within the street scene. Good to see so many shop frontages taking part including The Burghley Centre and M & S located to the rear of the main high street. Smiths of Bourne was a particularly good addition to the tour with its welcoming and colourful beer garden. As part of the tour the judge was shown a number of very good residential gardens and the recently completed landscape feature, a tribute to BRM's link to the town. Designed by Debbie Cooke, the 'Track and Rail' scheme pays homage to the town's connection with Raymond Mays and Championship driver Graham Hill and the town's railways. The Abbey Lawn Sporting Complex and recently refurbished Outdoor Lido are wonderful facilities for residents and visitors. All were being well maintained. Situated on the bank of the River Eau, the tour took in the Rotary Club 'Bloom' boat containing an appropriate selection of colourful plants. The 'Don't Lose Hope Community Garden', has developed into an amazing facility. This is a sanctuary worth visiting, full of seasonal vegetables and flowers providing an area of peace and tranquillity for the health and wellbeing of the community.

Section B – Environment

Throughout the tour it was obvious that special attention had been given to ensure that the town's street scene was looking at its best. There was no evidence of litter or detritus. The street furniture was being well maintained and the judge was informed that there was a planned program of replacement in progress. Bourne is fortunate to have an abundance of historic buildings (71 listed) and features throughout the town. e.g. Baldock's Mill, Red House, Abbey Church (of St Peter and St Paul) Wellhead Gardens and not forgetting the Town Hall and the River Eau itself. More recently the 'Track and Rail' landscape design shows how important Motor Racing and the

Railways were to Bourne in its development. The Wellhead Park open space with its manicured lawns, boardwalk, wild flower areas are a delight to walk through. The War Memorial and memorial gardens were colourful and being well maintained. Though they are a reminder of darker times in Bourne's history they are a beautiful feature for the town. Unfortunately the judge didn't get to see Bourne Wood and the Community Orchard or meet any 'of the friends' groups it was outlined in the portfolio. Bedehouse Bank is a well-kept secret for now but its potential to be a popular wildlife / wildflower feature is another asset to the town.

Section C - Community

Visiting the 'Don't Lose Hope Community Garden' was a real pleasure. This is a beautiful place where people can come and learn new skills, share experiences while pottering around in the vegetable / flower garden or 'man shed'. It is a credit to Don, the volunteers and all who take advantage of this facility. During the tour the judge had the opportunity to meet Nicola who runs the Community Café in Bourne's main street. Unfortunately the judge was unable to enjoy any of the hospitality on offer due to the Covid 19 restrictions. It was interesting to see how a couple of the rooms within the Town Hall had been converted into entertainment spaces. This is a clever use of this historic building. There was good evidence of partnership working and it was a pleasure to meet Bourne's Mayor Cllr. Paul Fellows who gives his full support to the bloom campaign. The organised community litter picks are well documented, and they do make a difference to the cleanliness of the town while supporting the hard work undertaken by Bill Paulby who spends his time growing, watering and maintaining the floral displays around the town. It was a hot day when the judge was invited to visit the Outdoor Lido. It was obvious to see that everyone was enjoying themselves. This is a fantastic well used facility run by volunteers. It was good to have the 'press' on board taking photographs but it was a disappointment that the judge wasn't interviewed on the day.

Areas for Development

Section A - Horticulture

It will be interesting to see how the new BRM Memorial Garden 'Track and Rail' planting develops over the next 12 months and to see if the level of maintenance carried out is sufficient for this important site. Consider including the Abbey Church and grounds as part of the tour next year. There may be potential to consider including a visit to an allotment and or a cemetery. Hopefully there will be an opportunity to visit a school next year.

Section B - Environment

The judge will be interested to see if Bedehouse Bank future development takes place with the possible involvement of the Wildlife Trust. The River Eau is an important feature around the town and in order to resolve some maintenance issues some partnership working may have to be considered in time for the 2022 competition. The judge was informed about the planned Abbey Church Yard and walkway improvements. It will be interesting to see how these projects develop. The judge was disappointed not to have seen / visited Elsea Park and Meadow or Bourne Wood. Perhaps one or both could be considered for next year.

Section C - Community

It would be useful if a list or partial list of participating sponsors / retailers could be added to the portfolio to give the judge an indication of numbers participating in your campaign. Consider

inviting the press / media to interview the judge during his / her visit. It has been mentioned previously about the benefits of giving a formal presentation / introduction to the judges on their arrival. Whilst this year has been a little different due to Covid 19, consider how you might address this for 2022. Whilst there was a brief mention of litter picks by 2 Primary Academies and the boat planting, there were no photographs in the portfolio of their endeavours. Some information about recycling would have been useful.

OAKHAM IN BLOOM

Award Silver gilt.

Judged on 8th July

Judge: Jo Tarrant

Judges Award: For all the volunteers in Oakham in Bloom who have persevered through the Covid 19 pandemic to carry out maintenance and improvements to the town.

Introduction:

Throughout the last year, whilst in the grips of a global Pandemic, Oakham in Bloom have managed, against the odds, to create and maintain beautiful landscape features around the town. The traffic islands are a pollinators haven, with poppies and nectar-rich native species billowing alongside the highway. The town was full of colour coordinated Baskets and Planters and the Landsend border, with its brightly coloured Verbascum's was stunning, beautifully concealing the neighbouring petrol station forecourt.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The large planters dotted around the town were well labelled with "Oakham in Bloom" and the attractive colour scheme matched the hanging baskets provided by the Town Council. The judge was pleased to see the superbly maintained gardens at Barleythorpe Allotment site, these small parcels of land were packed with flowers and vegetables and clearly gave great joy to those gardening them and those overlooking the plots from the flats.

Section B

The judge was really pleased to see how much of the public open spaces, managed by the Bloom team have been put over to nectar rich, wildlife friendly planting. The library beds, whilst being full of long-lasting seasonal colour, had good height and impact, the substantial beds are also a paradise for the bees and the butterflies. It was good to see the water saving and storage at the Barleythorpe Allotment site. The new bench by the library, commemorating "The Fallen" was beautifully designed and crafted.

Section C

Oakham in Bloom are very experienced in raising their profile through publicity and seem to be increasing the group's membership most years. Even through the pandemic they have successfully kept in touch with members, through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Enabling them to rally the troops when required to carry out socially distanced plantings and maintenance sessions. Oakham in Bloom are successful campaigners in the planning department, ensuring that new developments such as Macdonald's and Aldi have a very high stand of landscaping around the new buildings and car parks.

Areas for Development

Section A

The Baskets and tubs in the town looked great, but there is a great opportunity to work more closely with the Town Council and create a sponsorship scheme for the baskets and tubs, enabling businesses to contribute to either the Town Council or the Bloom group and to widen the impact the displays across the town. Whilst many of the beds and roundabouts have been put over to long season flowering perennials, there is a need to create a structural "backbone" of planting,

that will ensure the beds and traffic islands have colour and interest throughout the year, including the depths of winter.

Section B

Oakham in Bloom have suffered, along with many other places, in having budget cuts to non-essential operational services, such as road sweeping and graffiti clearance. In recent years Councils have suffered, budget cuts, but Covid 19 has had an even bigger impact on these. A suggestion would be, to make residents aware of issues like weeds in gutters and ask them to do their bit and clear the section in front of their houses, this would also reduce the need for herbicide use by the Council. Try to consider the new marking criteria to ensure a balance on the judging tour of all the sections. Discuss with All Saints Parish Church if seating can be installed, so the lovely open space can be enjoyed by visitors. Cutts Close is a lovely town park, discuss with the Council and English Heritage if a formal path can be put in where the desire line is currently.

Section C

The Bloom group is doing really well in getting volunteers out on the ground to carry out works about the town. There are further opportunities to get volunteers to raise the profile of "The Bloom" in the Town, such as a poster campaign, sponsorship, or shop window displays. The Oakham in Bloom website needs updating and maybe more non-gardening/ environmental activities, with the youngsters, could be organised, e.g. bird box making. A sponsorship scheme of the hanging baskets would be good to raise funds and awareness of the Bloom. Hopefully now that Teresa Thompson, is working with the Town Council, the aims of the Bloom and Council can be more closely linked. An additional event that would raise funds and the profile of Oakham in Bloom would be an "Open Gardens" event suggested for next year, this may also be a way of encouraging new volunteers.

LARGE TOWN CATEGORY

BELPER

Award Gold

Judged on 16th July 2021

Judge: Stephen Dando

Judges Award: Belper Railway Station Adopters for their dedication and hard work

Introduction

The judge was welcomed by Cllr John Porter Mayor of Belper Town Council, Kathy Fairweather and members of the Parks Management team at the Memorial Gardens. Following a walk around the floriferous Memorial Gardens and the stunning Sacrifice sculpture, the tour continued with an instructive visit ably led by Adrian Rochford and Adrian Farmer to Belper Parks Local Nature Reserve. The tour continued in convey to meet Janet Honey who described the innovative sustainable drainage system (SuDS) at Strutts Community Centre which had been established by the Environment Agency. The tour continued to Belper Railway Station where the judge met Kate Pudney one of the station adopters who talked about the work of the team. The magnificent formal bed at Field Lane imaginatively designed and constructed by Stuart Hopkinson and his team was the next venue before the tour concluded with a stroll through the green flag award Belper River Gardens to observe the progress on the new Swiss Tearooms. Well done Belper

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The Memorial Gardens are a feast of colourful beds of both annual and perennial plants. The “Lest we forget” triangular bed is a delightful design comprising geranium, marigolds and senecio planted and maintained by Andrew Sanders and his colleagues in the Belper Parks Management Team. Similarly, the drinking well, war memorial and River Derwent beds are looking their glorious best. The team are gradually moving towards using more sustainable planting evidenced by the herbaceous plants in the newly developed sensory garden. Belper Town Council Parks Management Team maintain 194 colourful hanging baskets throughout the town. Sustainable herbaceous planting dominates the SuDS drainage beds at the Strutts Community Centre. Belper Railway Stations extensive planting comprises mixed borders of shrubs, cultivated herbaceous plants and introduced native species creating a stunning entrance to the town. Stuart Hopkinsons water wheel design at the Field Lane junction attracts visitors into the town just to see this amazing bed. A credit to the obvious skill and professionalism of the Belper Parks Management Team.

Section B

The stunning Sacrifice sculpture in the Memorial Gardens designed by local artist Andy Mayers honours the fourteen from Belper who died during the battle of the Somme, on Saturday 1st July 1916. The heritage of the town is also featured in the design of the River Derwent bridge and the waterwheel beds. Adrian Farmer described the heritage walking tours organised on a regular basis. Adrian is the author of the book “Belper Through Time” and is the Heritage Co-ordinator for Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site which through its website promotes the town as a tourist destination. The team plan to install interpretative boards around the town focusing on telling the

story of this historic town. Amber Valley Borough Council manage Belper Parks Local Nature Reserve (LNR) with much of the management being undertaken by Belper Parks Volunteers, part of Transition Belper and led by Adrian Rochford. Work is guided by the “Management Plan 2018 – 2023” jointly written by Amber Valley Borough Council, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and East Midlands Groundwork Trust. The current projects include the development of a wildflower meadow and opening up Coppice Brook for visitors to the LNR. Recently the beds at the Belper Railway Station cutting have been planted with wild flower plugs which are now coming into flower. Recycling is important to the town, water recycling at Strutts Community Centre, benches are being replaced with ones constructed with recycled materials and Transition Belper is actively promoting recycling amongst residents. Belper Town Council declared a Climate Emergency and is “making a number of changes to reduce the carbon footprint, to promote awareness of environmental issues and to educate future generations about the necessity of looking after our environment.” The town is generally clean and tidy. The interpretation board on the Market Place is rather tired and difficult to read, however the team plan to replace these.

Section C

The Portfolio illustrated the range of activities the team have undertaken during the year, including fruit trees for the community, Belper Apple Day, an Eco festival, Belper Wombles litter picking and “HelpReUpcycleDE56only” a community group against waste. There are examples of volunteers working on projects throughout the year. There are Sunday markets each of which has a particular focus, including “pre-loved”, a youth market and a Transition Belper market with repair and green exchange cafes. Annually 16 local gardens are opened under Belper Open Gardens with the money raised distributed amongst local charities. There are twenty community groups that have been actively involved in looking after the towns gardens, green spaces and the environment during the past two years. Belper Woollen Woods trail was planned for May and the Poet Trees in June/July. Transition Belper has an active Facebook page which promotes the environmental work in town. The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site website promotes community events and Belper Town Council website includes Belper in Bloom news. Training is provided by Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site staff to shop workers, business owners and members of the public entitled Belper Ambassador Scheme the aim is to help ensure locals and visitors alike know all that Belper has to offer.

Areas for Development

Section A

The decision of the town council to declare a climate emergency and commence the process of replacing many of the bedding plants with perennials, promoting the Friendship Orchard and Belper Beats Plastics Initiative is to be commended and the judge looks forward to seeing the results of these initiatives.

Section B

The pandemic has adversely affected much of the planned community work. Street furniture refurbishment will always be an issue in public spaces used heavily and we would have liked to hear about the refurbishment plans/ programme. With so many visitors in town all the time the focus on cleaning needs to be high as I saw some evidence of litter, albeit only small amounts.

Section C

Belper in bloom is currently well supported but it would be helpful to have details of the funding and sponsorship obtained. The opportunity to meet children from local schools and representatives from youth organisations will be appreciated.

BOSTON

Award Gold

Judged on 12th July 2021

Judge: Stephen Dando

Judges Award: The Boston Buoys Trail for interpretation of Boston's heritage and maritime connections, the imaginative use of cockle shells as a mulch and the Wildflower Meadow at Haven Bridge.

Introduction:

The judge was welcomed by Alison Fairman and members of the team at Willoughby Road Allotments. Following a walk around the allotments, the tour continued in convoy to the Memorial Gardens, Central Park, Fisherman's Memorial Area, the Mayflower Bed, Custom House Quay, Haven Meadow finishing at the railway station. At each place the judge was met by enthusiastic volunteers and despite the constraints imposed on the work of the volunteers by the pandemic, Boston has come up trumps again. Well done, Boston.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The Willoughby Road Allotments are amazing on a range of levels, horticulturally the NHS (Natures Happy Space) a time out garden developed during the pandemic is set to become a wonderful asset. Overall Central Park and the other open spaces were well maintained. Angela Evans has been keeping the "Art Deco" Garden in good order this year. The buoy garden is a new addition to Central Park with its themed drought resistant planting. There were a range of colourful floral displays around the town especially the barrier baskets at Bargate Green and Boston rail station. Some of the hanging baskets in the Bargate green area were funded by local businesses. The pollinator raised beds adjacent to the police station provide an attractive entrance route into the town thanks to the work of Kate Phoenix. Celebrating Mayflower 400 a model of the ship forms the centre piece of a water themed flower bed adjacent to St Botolph's Church designed and maintained by Bridget Sykes. This is an excellent addition to the area. Fydell House gardens are stunning and the maintenance team responsible are to be commended for their excellent work. The tour concluded with a visit to Boston Railway Station to meet Jo Andrews from the Poacher Line Community Rail partnership and Sue and Pauline, two station adopters. The judge was shown the floral displays both at the entrance and on the platform. The team have exciting plans for the development of the station.

Section B

The Boston Buoys Trail is a series of six art installations installed in 2021 to celebrate Boston's heritage and maritime connections. The judge was shown five of the six, "Flotsam" adjacent to the bus station which the in-bloom volunteers had used cockle shells as a mulch through which they plan to plant saline resistant plants; "By Sea" mosaics telling the story of its maritime history: "By Land" mosaics telling the story of the places and peoples of Boston finishing with the twins "Windward Bloom" and "Leeward Bloom". These complimented the art installations in the Willoughby Road Allotments and at the Boston Rail Station and the planned relocation of the five lamps to Central Park. The military history of the town was celebrated with distinctive plaques in the Memorial Gardens cared for by Richard Barclay. Jane Brierley described the history of the Fisherman's Memorial and Sheila Lymer outlined the plans the group have to improve the historic

Custom House Quay. Willoughby Road Allotments are managed with biodiversity and protection of the environment as principle objectives. From the wilderness areas, a Kestrel was hunting adjacent to the judging party, to the water recycling systems and solar panels on the polytunnel, materials are recycled wherever feasible. Another gem was the Wildflower Meadow at Haven Bridge, developed in conjunction with the Lincoln Ecological Society and overseen by John Bird. In Central Park the judge was shown the green waste recycling bins used to transport the waste to a composting facility. The judging route was clean with an absence of litter and graffiti vandalism

Section C

The Highlights booklet prepared by the Boston in Bloom team showed photographs of the work undertaken during the year including the replanting of the Fishermen's Garden ably described to the judge by Jane Brierley and the Pollinator Garden, the Fern Garden and Mayflower Garden and planting the display containers with seasonal bedding. Throughout the visit the volunteers highlighted the future projects planned for the town. Willoughby Road Allotments has a focus on community participation, working with the local High School on a painting project, involving the children in gardening and providing bread making and cookery events in the purpose-built community base which during the pandemic was used as a food bank and the allotment holders are encouraged to donate surplus crops to the food bank. 22% of the allotment holders are foreign nationals. In Central Park, "Boston Skate Park Jam" is planned for 15 August at the new skateboard park developed adjacent to the "By Land" Buoy Garden. All the volunteers wear Hi Vis jackets with Boston in Bloom across the back to promote the work of the group. The town arranges regular Boston History walking Tours. The Boston in Bloom Partnership has an internet presence via a dedicated website, a twitter account, Facebook page and is featured on mybostonuk.com. Boston in Bloom has attracted funding from numerous sources including Boston Big Local Community Chest.

Areas for Development

Section A

Some of the planting in Central Park was a little disappointing and you may wish to increase the planting density. The proposed development work at the railway station and in the vicinity of the bus station sounds exciting and the judge will look forward to seeing the results. The judge reiterates the advice given in the 2019 report to include a visit to a cemetery as part of the tour next year.

Section B

The pandemic has adversely affected much of the planned development work. Many of the areas for development identified in the 2019 report remain. The street furniture around Custom House Quay needs attention however the area was clean and tidy. Some of the Central Park furniture needs attention. Including a copy of the Hussey Tower and Medieval Boston heritage trail guide in the information pack is advised.

Section C

The need to have COVID-19 secure judging this year prevented the judge from meeting many of the groups that the In Bloom team work with. The advice from the 2019 report is still relevant. Continue to try to persuade more businesses to install baskets or free-standing tubs on or around their specific premises and the police headquarters to contribute to your campaign. The

opportunity to meet children from the local schools and representatives from youth organisations will be appreciated.

ILKESTON

Award Gold

Judged on 15th July

Judge: JUDITH WARNER

Judges Award: Friends of Victoria Park Ilkeston for their dedication in making the park a peaceful and enjoyable place to visit.

Introduction

The Judge was welcomed by the Mayor Cllr. Donna Briggs and Borough Councillor Officers Caroline Pollard and Richard Windsor in the Market Place where the market was buzzing with stall holders and the public. It was good to see. Unfortunately, the Judge could only meet a few volunteers although all the volunteers had obviously worked hard to give the Judge such an enjoyable experience. The floral displays were stunning, and Victoria Park was a gem. The Judge was unable to visit schools due to the restrictions this year but pictures of Chaucer school were displayed.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The Market Place War Memorial with its floral displays and planters was a splendid and welcoming display. The traffic islands were eye-catching with extremely high quality of planting as were the barrier baskets and the many tree hanging baskets and planters which were all routinely maintained, despite resources being limited. Care of these areas was outstanding. New permanent planting and landscaping surrounded by the lavender beds made the area at the South East Derbyshire College distinctive and an area to be enjoyed by the students. The Judge drove past the Fire Station planting, which looked vibrant, to the gardens at Scholars Close which were a credit to the residents. The Rutland Sports Park is a great facility including the new children's play area. It was good to visit Clarksfield Community Allotments which were obviously well used. Friends of Stanton Road Cemetery is an ongoing project of clearing the undergrowth, creating wildlife areas, and making it accessible to all. It was good to learn that wildlife surveys took place and there were several nest boxes on this site. Jean's residential garden was stunning, and the judge is grateful for her for the visit. Victoria Park is a wonderful asset to the town. Stunning classical floral bedding displays in various reds edges trimmed and long herbaceous borders all within a well-maintained grass landscape. There is also the amazing Carpet Bed, depicting the Mining Heritage of the town. It was immaculately maintained. The wildflower area in the park was a delight.

Section B

Straw's Bridge Nature Reserve is a former quarry and now boasts of lakes and wetlands, marginal planting, wildflowers, and newly planted disease resistant Elm trees creating an oasis for wildlife. The Friends Group are undertaking important work around butterflies and dragonflies. It's a calm and fascinating place to visit and an asset to the town. There were many bird and bat boxes found throughout the area. Straw's Bridge Nature Reserve has its own Facebook Page where identification sheets of birds and butterflies can be found. Victoria Park boasted of a bug hotel. There is also a compost bin in the park where waste vegetation can be recycled, together with leaf mulch is used to improve planted borders. Peat free compost is used throughout. Overall, the streets in the town were clean and weed free. There was an absence of litter, graffiti, vandalism, and no flyposting was observed. There are re-cycling collection centres and many litter bins. Street furniture is well maintained. The Neighbourhood Wardens were in evidence, and they dealt

with any litter, fly tipping, and dog fouling issues. There is also 'Pride Line' which has been set up for residents to report environmental crime in their area. The national cycle trail is well used and looked after - part of it went through Straw's Bridge Nature Reserve. Both Victoria Park and Straw's Bridge Nature Reserve have both retained their Green Flag status. A Tree Officer inspects the trees regularly and maintains a record of each tree both on the streets and the parks with the assistance of volunteers. The Judge was informed about the Heritage of Ilkeston including lace making and mining. The restored Town Hall, historic drinking trough, St Mary's Church, the old cinema, and the former Co-op building were all located off the historic Market Place. Majestic pillars from the Duke of Rutland's Estate have been relocated to Victoria Park. The Bandstand has also recently been restored. Street sign names are currently being renewed as a contribution to preserving the towns heritage. Art in the Landscape is evident in many areas. A newly erected sculpture was designed by the students at South East Derbyshire Collage representing the heritage of the town.

Section C

There is usually a wide range of activities taking place at Rutland Sports Park but sadly these have not managed to take place over the last few months although some activities have started again. Victoria Park offers community events including bowls and music in the bandstand. It is evident that there are lots of volunteer groups which have been working hard including In Bloom Group, 'The Friends' at Stanton Road Cemetery 'Friends' of Victoria Park, 'Friends' of St Mary's Church and Pride in Erewash hosting litter picks. Each year there is a gardening competition with different categories including best wildlife friendly garden. There is also a business category to encourage local businesses to take pride in their environment. Ilkeston runs a Free Tree Scheme to encourage residents to plant and care for trees. This year the trees given away were fruit trees. The Tree Warden scheme has volunteers who work alongside the Tree Warden. Courses are run periodically, the next being an identification day. Support is given to young people excluded from education called Parkside High. An allotment is currently in progress and their regular are newsletters. Businesses are encouraged to sponsor a road traffic island within the town and in exchange a small advertising board is erected. The gates at Stanton Road Cemetery were funded through the Heritage Lottery and funding is on-going with organised events. Victoria Park has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and this work was completed on 20th August 2020. The play area at Rutland Sports Grounds was externally funded and another project is proceeding. Currently a bid is being made for the Town Centre Regeneration.

Areas for Development

Section A

Unfortunately, the judge was unable to visit a school but look forward to visiting the school allotment next year and hopefully speak with the children. The Fire Station floral displays looked stunning and if possible, it would be nice to stop and enjoy their hard work. Unfortunately, the wildflower area at Stanton Road Cemetery was not at its best and maybe more species could be considered.

Section B

It would be interesting to learn more about the Weleda Garden and maybe the judges could visit on future tour and to hear about the proposals for Manor Floods Local Nature Reserve.

Section C

Whilst it was interesting to read the press releases it would be nice to see the press cuttings either as part of the portfolio or on a display board. Perhaps you could consider the local radio to cover the in Bloom judging alongside the social media.

LONG EATON

Award Gold

Judged on 13th July 2021

Judge: JUDITH WARNER

Judges Award: Erewash Borough Council for the Town Hall Grounds Landscaping and using planting to frame the original Georgian buildings

Introduction:

The Judge was welcomed by the Mayor Cllr. Donna Briggs and Borough Councillor Officers Tony Walker and Richard Windsor. Prior to the tour Tony showed photographs of various projects and activities which had taken place over the last couple of years. Due to the Covid outbreak many activities could not take place, but it was good to see pictures of the volunteers who, despite restrictions, took part in many activities. Pictures of the school were also shown as no school visit could take place this year. Unfortunately, the Judge could only meet a few volunteers although all the volunteers had obviously worked hard to give the Judge such an enjoyable experience. The floral displays were stunning. Well done Long Eaton.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The overall impression of the Judge was of vibrant planting. Many prominent road islands, parks and open spaces had planting which was eye catching. Barrier baskets and many hanging baskets were well presented and brightened up the towns network of roads. The design and plants used were appropriate to the locations. There was excellent attention to detail giving the desired result. It certainly generated a positive image. The project started last year to create and a renew the flower beds to the front of the Town Hall was now completed with delightful planting of roses and perennials with the plants being chosen for their beneficial use to biodiversity. The Town Hall was originally a Georgian building, and the new planting took this history into account in the design. West Park's Solar Garden was an interesting feature and well maintained with a mixture of planting including annuals, perennials, and small shrubs. West Park is a large beautiful open space and was well maintained. West Park has Heritage ornamental gates and a recently refurbished band stand. A Tree Officer inspects the trees regularly and maintains a record of each tree. This year there has been several new trees planted in West Park. The Tree Warden Scheme operated by volunteers also assists. The library grounds are maintained to a high standard as are the colourful floral displays. Brooklands Court Residential Care Home was also well maintained with some new planting and troughs brightening the path leading to the entrance. Some of the residents made their own contributions to the grounds. The Judge drove past the Railway Station and saw some of the planters and hanging baskets maintained by Railway Station volunteers. The tour ended with the spectacular Carpet Bed planting depicting the Royal British Legion Centenary. This area requires small low growing plants and particularly careful maintenance to ensure the intricate detail of the 'carpet' remains throughout the season. On the tour the Judge was shown some of the Heritage of the area. Long Eaton had a lace making industry and one of the workshops has been converted for use for small businesses and is within the Lace Factories Conservation Area. Adjacent, is the Cemetery Chapel which is a Grade II listed building accessed by Lime Grove.

Section B

There are several natural habitats, and the tour took in the natural habitat in the Wilsthorpe Road Allotments where now established trees and a large pond were buzzing with wildlife. The allotments could also boast of a bug hotel and a Compost Toilet. The river running through the West Park was a haven for wildlife. Perhaps consideration could be given to provide a wildflower area or corridor near one of the natural areas. Grey water recycling at West Park's splash area was innovative. Water used for the splash area is stored and then reused to water the planters and hanging baskets. There were many play areas in the parks and in | West Park was a Sun Meter which advised on how to keep safe in the sun, a sun shelter was also present together with a splash area. All these areas were clean and tidy. Butterfly gates, designed by local school children were a stunning feature at one of the entrances to West Park. The tour drove through Pennyfields Estate which was very clean and tidy, and the residents were obviously very proud of their estate. Overall, the streets in the town were clean and weed free. There was an absence of litter, graffiti, vandalism and no flyposting was observed. There was an enormous re-cycling collection centre which was well used, and many litter bins were multipurpose. Street furniture is well maintained and a few seats in West Park were recycled. Street sign names are currently being renewed as signs are looking tired. The Neighbourhood Wardens were in evidence, and they dealt with any litter, fly tipping, and dog fouling issues. There is also 'Pride Line' which has been set up for residents to report environmental crime in their area.

Section C

Businesses are encouraged to sponsor a road traffic island within the town. The brightly coloured planting represents that Long Eaton is "Open for Business". All the islands are sponsored and in exchange a small advertising board is erected on the chosen road island. There is currently a waiting list. Long Eaton had recently been successful in receiving a multi-million-pound bid to invest in a major makeover of the town including its canal area. There is usually a wide range of activities taking place in West Park but sadly these have not managed to take place over the last few months although some activities have started again such as the junior Park Run. It is evident that there are lots of volunteer groups which have been working hard e.g. In Bloom Group, West Park Friends Group, Pride in Erewash (including litter picking and bulb planting) and Long Eaton Horticultural Society who will be judging the Erewash in Bloom Gardening Competition which takes place yearly - although this year it will be by photographs only.

Areas for Development

Section A

The tour was different this year due to the Covid restrictions and so the Judge was able to only speak with a limited number of volunteers and was unable to visit the school. Hopefully these will all be back to normal next year. Although the Judge did drive around the Cemetery Chapel it would have been pleasant to have a short walk within the Conservations area which should be considered. In a future tour. Indeed, hopefully next year the Railway Station could also be visited.

Section B

Consider including a visit to Fox Covert Nature Reserve in the tour as it is so close to West Park. Corridors of wildflowers in the parks would increase diversity in time. An interpretation board at the Cemetery Chapel grounds explaining how important the Lace Workshop is within the borough's history, should be considered

Section C

To ensure the Bloom campaign continues to flourish together with encouraging local businesses to install floral displays on the outside of their premises particularly as the regeneration progresses. Try to engage with the local radio station and be present when the judges are in Long Eaton.

MARKET HARBOROUGH

Award Gold

Judged on 12th July 2021

Judge: JUDITH WARNER

Judges Award: Volunteers at St Luke's Hospital for improving the entrance to the hospital for the benefit of patients and staff.

Introduction

The Judge was welcomed by Peter Eddie and Barbara Tallis from Market Harborough in Bloom at their headquarters at Welland Park. The tour included the Union Wharf Canal and a Town Centre Walk about and a visit to the Steven Street Allotments. The Mayor Cllr. Stephen Bilbie joined the last part of the tour from the Memorial Gardens to Welland Park where the Judge enjoyed the stunning Rose Garden. Unfortunately, the Judge could only meet a few volunteers although all the volunteers had obviously worked hard to give the Judge such an enjoyable experience.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The overall impression was of many planters, triple towers and hanging baskets placed along the roads and main squares in the centre of the town which contributed significantly to the attractiveness of the town. The design and plants used were appropriate to the locations. The colours of the flowers represented songs with colour in its title. There was excellent attention to detail giving the desired result. It was fun to see the recycled chair planters at various locations. The standard of the many planters and floral displays was excellent, and all were regularly maintained. The volunteers were trying to create a different feel with the three tier planters by using climbers. The shallow and rather windy corner flower beds each side of the entrance to St Dionysius Church was planted with salvia, grasses and dahlias which looked very attractive. The Memorial Gardens were colourful with lovely herbaceous borders and well-maintained lawns. The Union Canal Wharf was a tranquil area with planters and small but beautifully maintained flower beds all looked after by volunteers. Attractive flower beds have been improved at St Luke's Hospital, by volunteers, and at the right level for patients to enjoy from the wards. The wildflowers at the hospital entrance were stunning. The Judge accessed the Stevens Street Allotments via the Cricket Club which had hanging baskets and planters all looking very colourful. The judge enjoyed visiting the Allotments which are owned by the Bowdens Charity. The plots are well tended and there is a variety of crops being grown. The Judge walked along the Millennium Walk, which had mature trees and maintained grassed areas, to Welland Park. The Park was stunning with its formal planting, wildflower area, developing mini-arboretum and magnificent rose garden. A credit to the hard work of the Bloomers.

Section B

The Stevens Street allotment was great to see and an amazing facility for those who rented an allotment. It boasted of a composting corner and some of the volunteers were Composting Champions, there was a comfrey press and an area demonstrating green manures. Local cafes donated their coffee grounds which used on the site. It was good to see an allotment run by the WI, which was set up following a mental health initiative. Everything on their allotment was recycled and came from the 'swap corner'. There was also the Freedom Support Allotments for those with learning disabilities which was laying raised beds and had created a small pond to encourage wildlife. The mini arboretum in Welland Park is looking good and the trees are getting

established. There are also bat and bird boxes with the park. The River Welland attracts a diverse range of wildlife. Market Harborough Environment Group have monthly river cleans. The town centre was clean and tidy with no flyposting, dog fouling or graffiti. The judge was shown the Heritage of Market Harborough during the tour. These included the Old Grammar School, St Dionysius Church and The Symington Bell Tower located within the Rose Garden at Welland Park. At the Bloom Headquarters there is a rota of volunteers watering and ventilating the greenhouses containing the plug plants. Peat free compost and water retaining gel is used in the baskets and planters and bee friendly controls if required. The Bloomers have recently acquired a rotary sieve to help in making fine compost. There is an established Freecycle network which is working well. The sculpture at the Union Canal Wharf was striking.

Section C

There were new planters at the Union Canal Wharf donated by businesses and many Planters in the town are sponsored. The volunteers all wore corporate polo shirts displaying the Bloom logo to promote the good work around the town. The Telephone Box had a theme of Reduce, Recycle Reuse and demonstrated how this could be achieved - the spider plants were rather fun to see. The outside contained promotions for local groups. There is a Facebook page and bulletins so all can keep up to date with activities. Events for the Big Green Week were being planned by the Steven Street Allotments. Volunteers assist with river cleaning and the Wombles organise litter picks. The information Board at Welland Park had been revamped and contained local information. and the Telephone Box which had a theme of Reduce, Recycle Reuse and demonstrated how this could be achieved - the spider plants were rather fun to see. The outside contained promotions for local groups. The Judge was impressed by the support given to Market Harborough in Bloom by the press and the local radio on judging day.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Section A

It was interesting to watch the video on the making of the railway planters by recycling the luggage trolleys trollies and hopefully these will be at the Railway Station next year and form part of the floral display at the station. It will be interesting to see more of the flower beds proposed at St Luke's Hospital. Perhaps planting some small trees could be considered to give a little shade around the car park.

Section B

The proposal to aim for Green Flag status for Welland Park is great. There is also a plan to change some of the floral beds to perennials as it is more environmentally friendly and reduced resources. Consideration could be given to replanting of the beds at the Cricket Club to enhance the club house.

Section C

Efforts be continued to engage with local businesses so the town will continue to look stunning for residents and businesses and Harborough District Council.

NORTH HYKEHAM

Silver Award

Judged on 13th July 2021

Judge: Stephen Dando

Judges Award: Tomas Dickson for environmental work in the Old Orchard.

Introduction

The judge was welcomed by Mark Reynolds and members of the team at Bakewell Mews, the site of the former NAAFI Distribution Centre. The tour was conducted in convoy meeting Bloom volunteers and included examples of street planters, the Sharp Walk Allotments, new developments at the Village Green and conservation work at the old orchard. The tour ended at the splendid Millennium Green. Despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic the team have successfully ensured the town is blooming. Well done North Hykeham

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Plants in the planters are provided by Pennells Garden Centre, Lincoln using peat free compost, and are maintained by the volunteers and watered by North Hykeham Town Council, a good example of partnership working. Many of the planters are commercially available tiered, boundary or ground level, however the team have constructed a number of timber planters which are attractive and fit for purpose. Plants are generally in good condition with only the occasional weed present. Bakewell Mews, Cross Roads and Nero Way planters were particularly colourful. The recent adverse weather conditions affected some of the plants however the team managed to mitigate much of the damage. The new Contemplative Garden on the site of the former toilet block was established following the successful lobbying of North Hykeham Town Council by Sue Dovey, a member of North Hykeham Bloom Team. The new planting looks good, and the judge looks forward to see how the garden develops. The Town Council is responsible the extensive parks (St. Aiden's Park and the Village Green) and open spaces, all of which are well maintained. It was nice to see the floral displays at the Harrows Inn.

Section B

The town has the opportunity to further develop the story of the town and Mark Reynolds is currently researching the history of the former NAAFI Distribution Centre, and there are proposals to develop interpretation boards at the Village Green. The attractive and informative metal arches near the Village Green have plaques celebrating the past, present and future of North Hykeham. Millennium Green is a nature reserve managed by North Kesteven District Council with Hill Holt Wood caring for and maintaining the green. Dominated by a large lake the reserve is an important wildlife area within the Witham Valley Country Park. Popular with dog walkers the lake is surrounded by a pathway which can accommodate buggies, wheelchairs and cycles. Tomas Dickson, the team's youngest member, organised a working party of local children and built a bug hotel at the Old Orchard. He is a member of Lincolnshire Rivers Trust and carries out an annual survey along the River Witham. He takes part in FreshWater Watch monitoring nitrogen and phosphate levels in the Pike Drain, Old Orchard. The team plan to install bird boxes in the Old Orchard.

Hire Bike Lincoln's hire station at Bakewell Mews allows people to hire cycles. The street furniture is in good condition and there was little evidence of street weeds.

Section C

The Hykeham in Bloom Portfolio illustrated the year-round work undertaken by the team. It also included photographs of the work at the War Memorial, Hykeham Rail Station and Park School Day Nursery all of which the judge was unable to visit due to the constraints of the pandemic. North Hykeham Town Council promotes events in the Village Green including 3 band concerts, a Christmas event and 2 funfairs annually, a great facility for the people of North Hykeham. The Town Council promotes the Hykeham in Bloom on their website and the group post on a local community Facebook page. The team maintain the planters which are sponsored by North Hykeham Town Council, Hykeham Lions, Pennells Garden Centre, Lindum Construction, Cartwright Bros and Railfuture.

Areas for Development

Section A

The inclusion of the grounds of All Saints Church would be a good addition to a future tour. The constraints imposed by the social distancing prevented opportunity for the judge to visit schools and meet the school children, view work at the railway station and a planned, rather than ad hoc, visit to an allotment site. Some of the grass verges along the route could have been better maintained.

Section B

Continue to develop the Old Orchard. The interpretation board at St. Aiden's Park does, however, need cleaning.

Improve the interpretation of the historic and environmental aspects of the town. Consider creating wildflower meadows in a range of locations, such as roadside verges, around the town. There are several companies producing wildflower plug-plants that the team may wish to contact. The difficulty with allowing purely natural regeneration is that it depends upon a local seed source. Apart from the development of the bug hotel using recycled material there was little evidence of recycling.

Section C

The team have attempted to address many of recommendations in the judges 2019 report, however there are others that could be considered. In order for you to develop your entry it is important to get more businesses on board. The Co-Op site is a prime location for developing floral displays. It is important to keep plugging your 'in bloom' message so consider using Hi-Vis vests promoting Hykeham in Bloom when working on the displays and taking photographs of the judges during the tour which could then be put on Facebook or in the Council Newsletter. It would appear your volunteer membership is around the 20 mark. Consideration should be given to working even closer with Pennells in order that you may be able to hold some of your meetings at their nursery and perhaps even be allocated an area for growing some plants for your bloom campaign. If possible, consider increasing the number of meetings you have, other groups find it helpful to have weekly coffee mornings and then dressed in their HI Viz vests will focus on a particular task. The Garden Tea Room is an amazing location, and the team may wish to encourage them to take part in the RHS East Midlands in Bloom Special Award category.

SMALL CITY CATEGORY

Sponsored by Amberol



CHESTERFIELD

Judged on 16th July 2021

Judges: Irene & Jeff Bates

Judges Award: For Edinburgh Road Community Garden

Introduction

EMiB's RHS Britain in Bloom Small City representative in the 2021 finals pulled out all the stops to show off the town to the judges on a lovely summer's day. From the view over Queen's Park from the cricket pavilion balcony to a conclusion in Brimington Circle, this was a display of horticultural quality based on community effort and cooperative work, with the local authority, businesses and so many partners working together. The cleanliness of the busy market place, where judges met the press, and the 'Flower People' was a perfect demonstration of how teamwork achieves results.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

Good horticultural practice was seen in many contexts during the visit: the greenspace and trees of Queen's Park; well-managed and productive Hunloke Allotments; carefully managed floral features at the Crematorium; community gardening at Brimington Circle and especially Edinburgh Road Community Garden, where we met driving force behind the project, James Green. The planting of the permanent beds at Brimington Circle is modern and sustainable, as is the very new raised bed feature at Edinburgh Road, where the bark mulch is doing an important job. The superb display of hanging baskets and containers at the Britannia Inn were a delight, and it was good to meet the landlord and landlady to hear about their enjoyment of these, and how they are appreciated by clients. All plants are in peat-free growing medium, and the baskets are on installed irrigation to minimise water wastage. Town Centre planted containers and baskets were in full bloom, colourful and well-maintained, and complemented by displays at the Market Pub. Differential grass cutting is in place on roadside verges in the entry and was seen to good effect as we travelled West of the town centre. We also noted new sustainable planting at the West Bars roundabout. Rose borders and bedding were in full flower at the Crematorium (where we also noted sensitive maintenance in the woodland areas)

Section B

The mural at Edinburgh Road Community Garden is quite outstanding! It sets off the garden beautifully as well as promoting biological diversity. Adjacent to the garden is an attractive area of cornfield annuals, a sight also seen on the entrance to Holmebrook Valley Park and very successfully in raised planters in the town centre. The heritage of the town was presented at the start of the visit and enabled a lovely view over the historic Queen's Park (by Barron's of Borrowash) to the spire of St Mary and All Saints Church. Holmebrook Valley Country Park, an opencast coal site until the late 1990s, is now an outstanding park containing a large community building, many sports pitches, a playground, and from an environmental perspective, swathes of natural grassland meadows which prominently displayed knapweed and meadow vetchling on the

day of our visit, with many pollinating insects across the areas. The lake is well managed and has a developing range of waterbirds, visiting and resident. The Judges were pleased to note that all plants grown for local authority container-display are in peat-free growing medium, and to see installed watering in appropriate areas. No evidence of graffiti was seen on the tour, and the level of street cleanliness – most notably in the Market Place on a busy market day – was quite outstanding.

Section C

The initial presentation in Queen's Park pavilion, which included comments from Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing Jill Mannion Brunt about the importance of Chesterfield in Bloom, gave an overview of the many groups who feed in to make Chesterfield such a positive and welcoming town. We saw a display of the Children's Painting Competition entries there (and later in banners on the Town Hall), saw examples of the many school 'wheelbarrow' gardens that were judged and heard about the increasing numbers of IYN groups now involved. We heard (and later saw on the tour) of the work taking place throughout the year to progress activities in spite of the difficulties caused by Covid-19, for example in the creation of the Edinburgh Road Community Garden. 'Bloom' banners were seen at locations throughout the route; at the town hall we were met by the Leader of the Council, Tricia Gilby, and in the Market Place by Mayor Cllr Glenys Falconer and Mayor's Consort Keith Falconer. Local press were present to meet the judges in the town centre, with video interviews going onto their website, and tour leader John Ramsey was 'tweeting' pictures of the tour as it progressed. Funding is a mix of community effort, grant applications, business support (with increasing numbers of sponsored roundabouts) and some direct local authority support, and the community effort valuations make this clearly a cost-effective partnership approach. We were told of future plans, which included the complete re-development of the sensory garden.

Areas for Development

Section A

Whilst overall plant condition was very good throughout the judging tour, we noticed that the raised beds at Brimington Circle needed water when we visited. It would be helpful to ensure that sites being visited on the judging route were checked in advance of arrival.

Section B

Consider a review of mulching for the rose beds at the Crematorium.

It would be useful to conduct a detailed survey of flora establishing in the meadow areas at Holmebrook Valley Park, and to consider the installation of signage about the flora and fauna in these areas.

Section C

There is nothing here to recommend other than to keep up the outstanding work.

GRIMSBY

Silver-Gilt Award

Judged on 8h July

Judges: Irene & Jeff Bates

Judges Award: For Grimsby Fire Station and Malley Isted, for the spectacular wild flower border

Introduction

A pleasant, bright day greeted the judges at St Andrew's Hospice, the start of this 2021 judging tour of Small Cities. The lovely, flower-filled gardens at the site were well-maintained, setting the standard for a carefully considered tour which took in the crematorium, Grimsby Institute, the Fire Station, Diamond Jubilee Wood and outstanding new landscape at St James Square, before concluding with the chance to meet volunteers at the Grimsby in Bloom Pavilion. An experienced entrant, Grimsby in Bloom continues to meet new challenges and overcome them. The Judges felt this entry was at the very edge of Gold.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

A notable strength of the entry is the maturing sustainable planting of roundabouts throughout the town. A great saving on costs and environmental impacts, with no reduction on horticultural impact. Good maintenance of grassed areas and floral beds was evident in the grounds of Grimsby Institute. 'Cornfield annual' flower mixes were seen to good effect at the Fire Station and adjacent to the GiB Pavilion, both gloriously colourful, and appropriately situated. In most situations plants were well-grown for the time of year. Although far fewer in number than in the past, barrier baskets that were seen en-route were well-developed. Domestic front gardens of high quality were on view, most notably on Westward Ho. Weeds were notably absent from planted areas throughout the tour.

Section B

Evidence of the fishing history of the town was present at numerous sites, most prominently in St James Square with the fisherman sculpture, and in Duke of York's Gardens, the anchor. At St James Square we met Project Manager Dawn Brown, who explained the stunning new landscaping (against the backdrop of Grimsby Minster) which has a range of heritage engraved in the new – and already well-used – paving. Charlotte Bowen from The Culture House told us of the upcoming Festival of the Sea, organised jointly with Walk the Plank, taking place on 17th July and making use of the town centre and particularly St James Square. Signage is good throughout, informative and in good condition. We also noted good use of seats made of recycled plastics at St Andrew's Hospice and other sites. As well as the 'introduced' cornfield annuals, it was good to see the developing meadows which accompany the Diamond Jubilee Wood, which also abounded with butterflies when we visited for the excellent presentation from Ecology Manager Rachel Graham. The River Freshney now boasts an impressive Canal-Boat cleaner, James Elliott, who has used his lockdown furlough to carry out great work cleaning an array of discarded materials from the river, with evident environmental benefits.

Section C

Community involvement is the core of your entry and was evident throughout. Particularly notable (in addition to those noted above) were the volunteer gardeners who carry out all the work at St Andrew's Hospice; the work carried out by the community group at Buffalo Bill Pocket Park

(shown to us in a presentation by Roy Robinson); Community Payback teams of 2 to 6 people carry out excellent construction/restoration work for GiB, seen prominently at the Pavilion. As well as the community garden at the Pavilion, we also saw the splendid café/tea room and meeting room, all achieved through volunteer work and partnerships. Perhaps the single most impressive aspect of the whole visit was hearing from Evie Rose, a year 7 pupil at the local junior school, about the 'Nicer and Cleaner' campaign that she has initiated, and how successful this has become, working not only in her school but also in the area where her and most other pupils live. Inspirational young people are found not only in Sweden!

Areas for Development

Section A

Continue to develop alternatives to bedding where this would be appropriate – the bed at the front of the Fire Station being a potential opportunity for this change. Try to include the town centre into the tour (only seen from a distance) and Peoples Park. These would showcase some of your high-profile areas.

Section B

The Diamond Jubilee wood is an impressive project and could be given greater prominence in the judging tour.

Section C

The very attractive portfolio gives a useful outline of future plans, showing that Grimsby in Bloom retains all the necessary enthusiasm to grow on your already excellent work. There is an opportunity here to show how the funding for your efforts is gained in a more structured format.

LOUGHBOROUGH

Judged on Thursday 15th July 2021

Judges: Jeff Bates & Irene Bates

Judges Award: The Mountfields Allotment

Introduction

Despite the limitations of the past year, and the sad loss of Marion Smith, much valued Chairman of Loughborough in Bloom, the campaign continues as strongly as ever under a united team of local authority, contractor idverde and many groups and volunteers working together for Loughborough in Bloom. This year marks the 800th anniversary of the Royal Charters which granted permission for the market and fair to be held in Loughborough. Judges were treated to an intensive tour of Loughborough's finest aspects including impressive allotments, a nature reserve, several IYN groups and concluded with the vibrant and colourful Queen's Park.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The scene was set from the start of the tour with the delightful John Storer House Garden displaying a colourful array of cottage perennials including a splendid flowering yucca in the middle of the border. The impressive Mountfields Allotment site was delightful, particularly the "Seaside" plot, a therapeutic garden for dementia sufferers designed to mimic being beside the sea. The Stipa, annuals and perennials planted alongside the sandy paths, beach huts and the sweet shop perfectly contributed to the atmosphere evoked. The vibrant annual planting at 154 Forest Road is a fitting tribute to Harry Cook, and continues to be lovingly maintained by his wife Pat. No one can fail to be impressed by this while manoeuvring the roundabout or just strolling past to enter the tranquil Forest Road Green Belt throughfare. It was pleasing to see several well planted and maintained roundabouts and hanging baskets in the streets surrounding the city centre. Traditional bedding areas at Queen's Park were of an excellent standard and included a mixture of many traditional and colourful annuals including feathery cosmos, highlighted with dark Pennisetum to add contrast and structure. The bandstand was encircled with colourful hanging baskets containing orange begonias and cascading lime green foliage of Lysimachia.

Section B

There was evidence of biodiversity and sustainability throughout the tour, e.g. wildflowers in previously bedded areas at the Loughborough University grounds and around the war horse at Queen's Park. The tranquil Forest Road Green Belt throughfare is home to bird boxes, bug hotels, heritage apple varieties and a useful interpretation board; woodchip is used for mulch and the area is used for nature study by children and local schools. Stonebow Washlands manages natural grassland very effectively amongst which fragrant meadowsweet was thriving and the area was alive with butterflies and pollinators. Volunteers at Glebe House have constructed swift boxes to be installed at Emmanuel Church and other sites for a project initiated by Idverde and the RSPB. A solar powered swift caller will attract potential nesting birds. Use of recycled materials was evident, including at Mountfields Allotment, the Old Rectory Garden, Fearon Hall and Thorpe Acre Green. Men and Women in Sheds were also working together and using recycled materials for their projects. Most areas were litter and graffiti free and there was no evidence of dog fouling. Benches were well maintained and of note were the Ladybird book benches installed around Queen's Park. Litter picks are encouraged by the council who provide litter picking equipment and take part in the Great British Spring Clean campaign. Charnwood BC and Leicestershire CC are now

working towards reducing the use of herbicides and there is currently consultation to review the use of glyphosate.

Section C

There is an incredible amount of community spirit in Loughborough, shown by the dedication of the many and varied groups of volunteers of all ages. At Thorpe Acre Green we met representatives of four out of the 32 Loughborough 'It's Your Neighbourhood' groups that have entered this year. There was great enthusiasm shown by everyone present, who through their photographic displays showed what they had achieved during the last two years. We heard of 'Sally the Covid-19 Snake' made out of painted pebbles by children, and saw recycled containers filled with cheerful annuals that brightened the area. Raffles had provided some money towards a new anti-vandal notice board and Village War Memorial, and bulb planting had taken place. Businesses are represented on the Loughborough in Bloom Board by the Love Loughborough BID and the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and commerce Sylvia Wright told us of the planned events later this year for the 800th anniversary of the Royal Charters and the business involvement in the town centre. BID ambassador Ioni Ashford explained how they support businesses together with CBC and this year an extra 235 eco sustainable hanging baskets were provided by local businesses and the BID. The Tenant Garden competition organised by CBC is another way the community is involved and press and publicity via the Loughborough Echo and other media promotes the Bloom campaign exceptionally well.

Areas for Development

Section A

Due to restructuring work in the city centre, it was not possible to see the planters, hanging baskets etc. but we were told how these have been beneficial to footfall and businesses. Hopefully by 2022 work will be finished to enable viewing of these areas again. Hanging baskets along Epinal Way are no longer considered viable. Could an annual seed mix alongside verges be incorporated to reinstate some colour for the summer months? Some struggling trees were seen in Queen's Park, hopefully these will be reinvigorated or replaced when resources allow.

Section B

There is already much evidence of biodiversity and conservation of the natural wildlife habitat so continue with this. It will be interesting to see the results of the swift box project over the coming years. At Stonebow Washlands it might be helpful to provide poo bins and remind dog owners of their responsibility in an area with wildlife which includes nesting birds.

Section C

There is no doubt that the last two years have been very difficult due to the pandemic and a 'restructured' way of judging was unavoidable. Now that it has been tested, it is felt that possibly fewer judging stops might be beneficial, should it be necessary to judge again in the same way. Thank you to Nicola Clarke and Sarah Ritchie who valiantly kept the judges moving along the route. Communication and awareness is second to none, so we can only say very well done Loughborough and keep up the good work!

OADBY AND WIGSTON

Gold Award

Judged on Monday 12th July 2021

Judges: Jeff Bates & Irene Bates

Judges Award: Julie Richards for the South Wigston Community Garden

Introduction

Pride of the Borough Oadby & Wigston, is just that – the pride and enthusiasm of this voluntary group to tackle all obstacles and improve their local environment is remarkable. Largely self-funded, they have achieved so much over the last two years despite being virtually under continuous lockdown due to the pandemic. In ‘safety bubbles’ litter picking, bulb planting, watering, fund raising and much more continued. The whistle stop judging tour included the Memorial Peace Park, Framework Knitters, South Wigston Community Garden, Aylestone allotments, Brocks Hill Country Park and Wickham Road Green, ending with a guided walk of Leicester Botanic Garden.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

After a welcome in the tranquil Peace Memorial Park, it was pleasing to see the new carpet bedding here commemorating lives lost during the last hundred years. The area was planted with a lovely combination of perennial plants such as roses, lilies, lavenders etc. Next to the Framework Knitters Museum is a quiet haven of a cottage garden, with planting largely in keeping of times gone by. An old farmyard trough was seen planted with herbs in the nearby Pinfold corner. The South Wigston Community Garden has been newly transformed and made a welcome splash of colour in the park. The vibrant planting at Nova Laboratories is a delight for all who work there and the local community to see. At Wigston Police Station newly planted commemorative troughs helped to make the area feel more welcoming. Colourful barrier baskets and hanging baskets were seen on Bull Head Street and along London Road. Many well maintained and colourful gardens were also seen during the tour. The Pride of the Borough group have purchased eight additional planters since 2015. Outside Epic Accessories the pale granite planter had been nicely planted with geraniums and petunias by the volunteers and is kept watered by the business, as are many of the other planters in the town centre.

Section B

Local heritage was amply illustrated by the Framework Knitters and Pinfolds which were the results of the ‘Enclosure Acts’ of the 18th century, affecting both villages of Oadby and Wigston. Photographs of new Pinfold seats were seen in the portfolio, and a new memorial seat with matching waste bin was evident at the Peace Memorial Park. A new NHS blue rainbow bench had been installed outside the Police Station. The re-purposed benches (formerly church pews) at Nova Laboratories were splendid. Excellent information panels were seen at Brocks Hill Country Park to instil awareness of the environmental importance of biodiversity. Several areas of meadow grassland were evident and the Park’s community orchard, maintained by volunteers, organically grows many traditional varieties of fruit.

Aylestone Lane Allotments make their own compost which adds to the success rate of fruit and vegetables grown there. The extremely well advanced sweetcorn plants seen here were the envy of the judges! At Leicester Botanic Garden an area of grass had been left unmown and it had

inadvertently become a haven for natural wild flowers and pollinating insects. Areas visited were clean and weed free. Regular litter picks are made by the Oadby & Wigston team, and the South Leicestershire Litter Wombles also help. Judges were informed that Oadby & Wigston Borough Council are introducing electric vehicle charge points to cut carbon emission, and some were passed on the route. In addition, Oadby has joined the Plastic Free campaign launched by the local Rotary Clubs, to rid the community of single-use plastics.

Section C

From the start of the tour, it was evident that Oadby & Wigston take great pride in what they do. Judges were discretely followed by a press photographer, Georgia throughout the route. No doubt some of the photos will be used to promote next year's campaign. The group have their own corporate identity of cheerful sunflowers which is highly visible in the bunting, signage and promotional literature. Through the comprehensive portfolio we learn of many community activities including monthly work groups focussed on litter picking and raising awareness on anti-social parking on grass verges through the Take Pride Project. This is the seventh year of supplementary bulb planting organised for groups of all ages but due to the pandemic over 4,000 bulbs have been distributed to groups and individuals to make their own local planting decisions this year. Recent emphasis has been placed on Home-Growing and this has taken place in back gardens as well as allotments. At Wickham Road Green judges were greeted by several IYN groups who enthusiastically showed what they had achieved through verbal accounts and photographic board displays. New Neighbourhoods have also been included this year. Funds for the Pride in the Borough Oadby & Wigston group largely come through the Membership/Loyalty Card Scheme, which continues to thrive despite the setbacks of the pandemic. Communication is made through conventional & social media channels and is working very efficiently.

Areas for Development

Section A

These are exceptional times, but it would be nice to see more of the floral features or displays around the town centres. If your local competitions take place such as 'Front Gardens' maybe some of these gardens might be incorporated onto the judging route next year?

Section B

For all sorts of reasons, it has been extremely difficult over the recent year to maintain the services we have been accustomed to, but some graffiti was noticed while passing through the main shopping road. If judging returns to 'normal' next year, this is something to pay attention to. You mentioned the reluctance of Leicestershire County Council to act against anti-social parking on grass verges. Judges feel this is a serious issue in so many places now, and it would be a feather in LCC's cap if they were to take a more pro-active stance to assist you. This precedent could be followed by other councils throughout the East Midlands and maybe even further, to reclaim the Good from the Bad and the downright Ugly!

Section C

The community involvement here is second to none! So many groups have been involved in so many worthwhile projects, that it was hard to take everything in, in such a short space of time. Should it be necessary to judge again in the same 'socially distanced' way, it is felt that possibly fewer judging stops might be beneficial and some of the information given by individuals could

have been added to the portfolio or given as an additional handout. If possible, it would be nice to see some children's involvement.

This is an impressive entry, Well done Oadby & Wigston

SCUNTHORPE

Silver award

Judged on 9th July 2021

Judges: Irene & Jeff Bates

Judges Award: For the grounds of the Cemetery and Crematorium

Introduction

A lovely morning greeted the judges at first-time entrant Scunthorpe, for a tour taking in parks, the cemetery/crematorium, new landscaping underway in the town centre, and the vast swathe of cornfield annuals planted along the A18 central reservation. The tour began 'unaccompanied', seeing some of the new roundabout planting on the A1077 on the way in. A visit to the revitalised Sheffield Park was an interesting 'work in progress' before we concluded in the lovely Kingsway Gardens. This entry into EMiB shows great promise and the judges expect to see the next Award level being reached in 2022.

Areas of Achievement

Section A

The tour focused on key areas of open space in the town, where we saw bedding displays which used a mixture of seasonal and permanent planting, done effectively. We also saw the small nursery area in a separate corner of the Woodlands Crematorium grounds where many of the plants are grown, an unusual and very positive approach these days, and enabling you to guarantee that all your plants were in peat-free growing media. The treescapes in Kingsway Gardens, Central Park and the Crematorium were outstanding, with Catalpas about to burst into flower, Liriodendrons, Liquidambars and splendid conifers. Permanent borders were generally well-mulched using wood-chip created 'in-house' by the tree team. Although not visible at the time we heard of the many thousands of English bluebells planted in suitable areas of parks and the crematorium. At this location, we also appreciated the excellent mowing, set high enough to allow an excellent display of pollinator-friendly plants such as clovers and self-heal, with bees and butterflies everywhere. Particular note should also be made of the quality of grass maintenance in Kingsway Gardens, where Marvin's mowing was appropriate, innovative, and environmentally very sensible

Section B

The new development in Church Square (adjacent to the Visual Arts Centre, formerly St John's Church) is nearing completion, but will undoubtedly enhance the setting and the heritage of the town with impressive use of ironwork around the beds. Heritage was also glimpsed on the tour route with sculpture in one of the parks. As well as the extensive use of 'cornfield annuals' on the trunk road these were also seen to good effect in Sheffield Park. We also noted a large green roof at the PODS, adjacent to the lovely pond bordered with excellent, native marginal planting. Bird and bat boxes were seen in woodland areas in the parks and crematorium grounds, and there has been extensive planting of native bluebells in appropriate areas of parks, crematorium etc in the past year. The tree-planting programme over recent winters is also very impressive.

As noted already grass maintenance is impressively sensitive in the Crematorium grounds; many plants are grown in-house, in peat-free growing medium, and little evidence was seen of litter or dog-fouling en-route.

Section C

We heard of the involvement of many volunteer groups in your entry, e.g. the Broughton Bloomers, and the Building Better Opportunities group, and that volunteer involvement from the latter is equivalent to 50 hours a week through the year. It was also good to know that Community Payback teams have been gaining experience in the horticulture industry with their involvement in the Crematorium grounds and cemetery.

Areas for Development

Section A

The judging tour covered the public realm, largely as managed by the local authority. On parts of the route we saw evidence of good domestic front gardens but were never able to see these close at hand. This also applied to business areas and smaller community spaces. In the portfolio, mention is made of Lindsey Lodge Hospice, which might well be worthy of visiting. Review the tour route for next year to allow a wider cross-section of these areas to be viewed. Plant condition was generally very good throughout the area, and it was pleasing to see the renewal work that you are engaged in at Sheffield Park. Here though it was evident that tree-staking of newly planted areas was inconsistent and would benefit from review. It was good to see use of geo-membrane in recently planted borders; try to ensure that these are topped with an appropriate mulch prior to judging.

Section B

Make use of the opportunity provided by your portfolio to show 'out-of-season' evidence, e.g. the displays of bluebells. There was limited emphasis placed on the heritage of the town, which should be more prominent in the entry given how well-known the industrial heritage is. Whilst graffiti did not appear to be a major problem, it was very evident on the St John's Market buildings.

Section C

The judges hope that – if normal judging processes are possible next year – the route will include the opportunity to meet and speak to some of the community groups that support your work, and to visit sites where they are involved. You should also make use of the portfolio to inform of support, funding from outside sources etc that help to ensure the long-term success of your impressive work.

SCHOOL'S REPORTS

BLIDWORTH OAKS PRIMARY SCHOOL BLIDWORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Judge's Discretionary Award: Best Fruit and Vegetable Garden

Judge's Overall Comments:

Alongside the Covid situation that we have all had to cope with over the last 18 months, I was delighted to see that your school garden is once again up and running, not having been used fully for the last couple of years because of the building work that has been going on. I am also delighted to see that you have started to develop an orchard. I note that the children are involved in the planning and running of the garden. This is very important because they will then take "ownership" of the garden and it becomes a pleasure rather than a chore. You are growing a good range of vegetables including cucamelon and harlequin carrots, were these the children's choice? Do the children have the chance to look through seed catalogues, where they will be able to see the wide range of vegetables available nowadays? Seed merchants will only too please to provide you with catalogues.

You mention that you have water butts around the site including two that harvest water from neighbouring houses. What a brilliant idea! Plants prefer rain water to tap water that has chemicals in it. When you were last judged, in 2018, there was mention of compost bins. If you haven't been able to maintain them over the last 18 months I hope that you are now in a position to get them going again. This is an important part of gardening, recycling the waste plant material, not just off the garden but if possible, from the kitchen as well, and returning it to improve the soil and provide food for next year's plants. Having your own compost is good as it reduces your costs and the children get to understand the importance of recycling, particularly in a garden, in relation to soil improvement. You may also be able to get green composted waste from your local or county council to help improve the soil. I enjoyed reading the children's comments. I don't know too many gardeners who enjoy weeding, but judging by the number of children who do, your garden must be pristine. I particularly enjoyed the comments from Jasper, Jack, Jacob and Tegen, such 'green fingered' enthusiasm and long may it bloom!!

We hope that next year in 2022, when hopefully the judges will be able to visit, we will see how your orchard and garden have developed further alongside other areas of your school grounds. As a school judging team, there is nothing we enjoy more than being able to come into schools to meet and talk to the children in order to gain a real insight into the gardens development. However, we appreciate and recognise your efforts to enter EMIB schools desktop competition 2021 during this most challenging of school years.

Congratulations in your achievement of the East Midlands in Bloom School's

Best Fruit and Vegetable Garden award 2021.

JUDGE : Mr Malcolm Brown (and the EMIB Schools Judging Team) DATE: 28/6/21

CAMBRIDGE PARK 16 – 19 ACADEMY GRIMSBY

Judge's Discretionary Award: Gardening for Wildlife and Environmental Award

Judge's Overall Comments

Alongside the Covid situation, that we have all had to cope with over the last 18 months, we at EMIB have recognised that you all at Cambridge Park 6th Form Campus, have endured a personal and professional loss in Allyson, a valued Horticultural staff member. Therefore, it was a wonderful to see that your school garden has continued to Bloom and that in your entry you mentioned the planting of a red Conteaater (Cornuba) Tree in her memory! Your entry for the Wildlife gardening award was a credit to you and the student's continued hard work and clearly built on elements suggested by the previous school judge in 2019. My report is based mainly on the evidence submitted in this year's entry and acknowledges the challenge of the many restrictions to normal school life throughout the last 18 months due to the Covid -19 pandemic. Your team commitment to garden organically in Horticulture is to be praised and noted. It was pleasing to learn that all your special educational needs students involved in the Horticultural course, have taken an active role throughout the year encouraged by the enthusiasm and knowledge shared through your teaching Kim.

The development of the bog garden, built and planted by the students for wildlife alongside the new herb bed, which is tactile for students and ideal for the wildlife has been a real focus. The construction of a bug hotel from pallets and recycled tins has developed their understanding of care, maintenance and sustainability. Their 3m x 3m plot with wild seeds for butterfly and bees has clearly been enjoyed as explained in the student's write ups you provided. Being part of the team has meant a lot to the students and from their written reports it was evident how proud they were to have made the bird feeders and wild feeders around the grounds for the resident robin and Squirrel Nutkin! Perhaps consider some annual surveys or night camera recordings with the students on those wildlife visitors to the grounds, this may inform any further developments of habitats required for visitors both daytime /nocturnal. Your grounds are certainly developing to provide a sustainable future for wildlife on the Cambridge Campus.

In the wider school garden during the past year, the students have built 9 more raised beds for the fruit and vegetables. They have been responsible for growing potatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, butternut squash, pumpkin, peas, beans, leeks, onions beetroot, leeks, strawberries, rhubarb, fruit cane and fruit trees. Wow! It was good to know that the fruit and vegetables are used for tasting with the students and for other students working in the catering department. This journey from plot to plate is important in developing the students understanding of where their food comes from. Great to hear about how you sustainably sell any extras at a low price to community and staff and so fund your next crops!

The effective water collection in butts and its use stood out in your report and it was interesting to read how you use nettles in water, which infuse for feeding the plants and egg shell ground into the water for the tomatoes. The holiday maintenance for the plant's wellbeing is well considered as the plants and vegetables in the holidays are watered on a voluntary basis amongst staff – a great team effort! Your wider community also becomes involved with the school as you use a tonne of horse manure from local stables to rot for following year along with free mulch which you use to suppress the weeds. I enjoyed hearing about your commitment to looking after the

beds outside the campus so everywhere looks good for the community. All these environmentally sensitive and sustainable growing practices with the students actively learning in and about their surroundings is planting the seeds of a possibility of a future for them to use the skills they learn in a future career and a growing personal enjoyment of the outdoors.

We hope that next year in 2022, when hopefully the judges will be able to visit, we will see how your wildlife area and garden have developed further alongside other areas of your school grounds. As a school judging team, there is nothing we enjoy more than being able to come into schools to meet and talk to the children in order to gain a real insight into the gardens development. However, we appreciate and recognise your efforts to enter EMIB schools desktop competition 2021 during this most challenging of school years.

Congratulations in your achievement of the East Midlands in Bloom School's Wildlife and Environmental Garden Award 2021

JUDGE : Mrs Emma Schofield (and the EMIB Schools Judging Team) DATE: 28/6/21

HOLBEACH PRIMARY ACADEMY

Judges Discretionary Award: The use of the school grounds to enrich the curriculum 2021.

Judge's Overall Comments:

My report is based mainly on the evidence submitted in this year's entry and acknowledges the challenge of the many restrictions to normal school life throughout the last 18 months due to the Covid -19 pandemic. Where there is little mention of a particular section, e.g. 'Evidence of wildlife observation by pupils' I have given the same mark as in 2019. Where there is no evidence due to not being able to visit the school and talk to the children, I have marked the section as 'Not Applicable'. Areas of Achievement I am especially impressed by the extensive use of the school's outdoor environment for learning in a wide range of subjects. Written evidence and clearly labelled photographs show the learning intentions for each activity and the happy faces of the children in the photos show they are really enjoying their experience. They also show how well the children are fully involved and are concentrating on their learning. The emphasis in your competition entry on the importance of looking after each other is highlighted in the section about children caring for the school's chickens and ducks as well as the visiting sheep and lambs from a local farm. In these uncertain times, the development of children's knowledge and understanding of the needs of others, whether animal or human is surely more important than ever, and I commend the staff for concentrating on this aspect of learning. The children's scientific knowledge and understanding of animal life cycles is also successfully developed through observing and handling the ducks, chickens and sheep. I am pleased to hear that Gardening Club activities have continued throughout the school year and the photos showing enthusiastic children sowing seeds, planting petunias and keeping flower displays watered are a delight. Recycling and reusing objects and materials for planting and enhancing the attractiveness of outdoor spaces has continued to develop. Well done. Here at East Midlands in Bloom we very much look forward to Holbeach Primary Academy entering the Best School Garden Competition in 2022, when all being well a judge's visit will be possible and progress from the 2019 visit will be evident. The main areas to consider in 2019 were the use of down pipes to incorporate water butts around the school building, to develop a leaf mulch composting area, further develop perennial and long term all year round gardening and continue to provide a range of habitats to encourage wildlife. We hope that next year in 2022, when hopefully the judges will be able to visit, we will see how your school grounds and gardens have developed further. As a school judging team, there is nothing we enjoy more than being able to come into schools to meet and talk to the children in order to gain a real insight into the garden's development. However, we appreciate and recognise your efforts to enter EMIB schools desktop competition 2021 during this most challenging of school years.

Congratulations in your achievement of the East Midlands in Bloom School's Award for-

The use of the school grounds to enrich the curriculum 2021.

JUDGE: Becky Mayfield (and the EMIB Schools Judging Team) DATE: 30th June 2021

FLORAL AWARDS

FRANK CONSTABLE MBE AWARD FOR BEST FRONT GARDEN

Sponsored by the Constable Family

MR CAPP 18 ALMOND GROVE BRIGG

Mr Capp winning garden from 2017, 2018 and 2019 year's Brigg Town Council Gardening Competition. He is a great resident and a fantastic gardener, people come from all over the North Lincolnshire to see this blooming marvellous garden and comment of his variety of different plants which have a beautiful scent with a range of different plant following at different times. He has a wide range of bee friendly plants which are combination of many colours and rich textures, both giving height via the delphiniums and Lupins this balance is complemented with the use of structures that have been carefully placed. A combination of Planters and low level gardening have been planted en mass to stunning affect keeping colours. There is a careful selection of plants for all seasons.

BEST PUB/HOTEL

Sponsored by The Arts Department



THE FALCON HOTEL UPPINGHAM

There is textural planting with multiple shades of green throughout the garden. Frothy pink roses climb up the cottage wall. Tones of purple and pink intertwine the scheme. Low stone walls leading to the garden bedrooms provide pockets of seasonal planting. The resident hippo decorated by local artist in a floral theme sits in a sunny spot amongst the lush planting. Hanging baskets provide seasonal changes in colour and form. There is a secluded garden with striking lush planting surrounding a formal patio area for seating and functions. The buildings surrounding the garden are exceptional quality, housing a function suite and bedrooms in a cottage style. The cottage garden type planting compliments the setting. There is a waterfall surrounded by ferns and seasonal planting and a quiet seating area provides a shady spot under a mature willow. There was no sign of any weeds throughout the garden, which was maintained to a very high standard. All plants, shrubs and trees are healthy with no pests visible. There was minimum pots used in the garden, so reducing the need for compost. Hand weeding with no use of pesticides.

BEST RETAIL/COMMERCIAL BUSINESS

Sponsored by The Arts Department



NOVA LABORATORIES OADBY AND WIGSTON

The colour scheme is designed to create visual impact as visitors enter site and uses a broad colour spectrum and a mix of annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees, including evergreens. Scent provided

by nemesias, salvias, begonias and yuccas. Replanted throughout year to maintain seasonal interest. Benches provide opportunities for employees to relax. Open aspect results in windy site on a corner. Shelter provided by hedging around site and hardy varieties of shrubs. Upon entry to site, attention is drawn to the focal, architectural plants in pots. Interest provided by a variety of leaf shapes / textures and complementary colours. Lawns edged weekly with hand-held tools. Hand weeding throughout entire site minimises use of herbicides. Plants are individually selected from a variety of local sources. Constant renewal with fresh stock to ensure quality. Plants fed prior to planting and throughout season. Focusing on good plant health avoids use of pesticides. Peat-free compost used throughout. Pine nuggets are used as mulch on front beds for presentation purposes; bark mulch used throughout rest of site. All green waste is composted at local dedicated sites. Nature of business precludes on-site composting. Pests and diseases managed by selective pruning.

DISCRETIONARY AWARDS

LEAST LITTERED

MABLETHORPE

This seaside resort was litter free from the top of the high street to the seafront promenade. The beach was immaculate too! The Bloom Group organise regular litter picks in the town and Beach cleans and are supported by many community groups (surfers against sewage, schools and scouts to name but a few) and residents in their endeavour to be litter free. They participate in the annual Keep Britain Tidy Campaign and use social media to promote this high standard of cleanliness in the town. The dunes are cleaned regularly all which helps the resort maintain its Blue Flag Status. With Town Council support they were awarded alongside neighbouring Sutton on Sea 'Plastic Free status'. Smart new litter bins, with funding from BID, enabled them to alleviate the problem of unsightly discarded cigarette ends especially in the high footfall areas of the town – no cigarette ends were seen on the judges visit and there were plenty visitors and residents out and about! A key litter success was the rubbish that was found at the North end seafront area which was thought to be the result of tourists leaving it about, however after monitoring by a local business owner and the Bloom group it was discovered to be the result of scavenging animals at dusk who raided the wide aperture bins. In consultation with ELDC a change to schedule meant the bins are emptied in the evening rather than the following morning and litter problem is solved!

HORTICULTURE EXCELLENCE WITHIN PARKS

Sponsored by GE Views



VICTORIA PARK ILKESTON

Victoria Park Ilkeston has some magnificent floral beds in the centre of the park. The beds are of various reds and include begonia, salvia, geraniums and dahlias and blend together beautifully. The edges are crisp and well maintained and the design follows the original Victorian beds. Each end of the formal planting are large circles of box with herbaceous planting in the centre. A perennial flower beds edges the pathway. Lawns are well maintained, and verges weed free.

BEST NEW PERMANENT LANDSCAPE

Sponsored by The Arts Department



LONG EATON

Long Eaton Town Hall was originally built in 1778 and was designed by Joseph Pickford. The Hall is Grade II* listed and until recently was hidden behind tired shrubberies. The new design frames the original building and help reconcile it with a modern glass-fronted side extension. It consists of a traditional planting design of topiary and white roses to the front of the Georgian building, moving

round to a more modern scheme of grasses and perennials in front of the extension. The works also included mass-planting of spring bulbs in the lawns and the installation of an interpretation board.

BEST WILDFLOWER/CONSERVATION AREA

WELLAND PARK MARKET HARBOROUGH

Welland Park Market Harborough has a stunning wildflower area. It contains 25 species of wildflowers including yarrow, columbine, borage, cornflower and corn poppy – all being native. The wild flowers are growing in an open sunny area well looked after with many insects frequenting the flowers.

BEST FLORAL ENTRANCE –

HILTON

This is given to any community in the region and doesn't need to be taking part in the competition, usually seen by a judge as they travel around during the judging period and nominated at the judges meeting in July, this year this award goes to Hilton.

BEST SPRING BULB DISPLAY

Sponsored by Taylors Bulbs



THE WAR MEMORIAL EVINGTON

The War Memorial was bought through public funds in 1918. It moved to a more visible part of the land donated to the people of Evington and was laid out by following Gertrude Jekyll's designs. It was refurbished in 2014 through Evington in Bloom and Park Services with grants from Heritage Lottery and LCC. Now, (as part of the environmental project to encourage more bees and other pollinators particularly early on in the season when there are less flowers around,) the formal and informal areas have been planted with spring bulbs.

THE DOUG STACEY YOUNG PERSONS AWARD

EVIE ROSE GRIMSBY

Evie Rose(10) attends South Parade School in Grimsby. She helped set up a group called Next Gen which is a group created by primary school children on Grimsby's West Marsh, who want to grow up in a much cleaner, safer environment and start their own revolution!

The children have already made a difference in their community, and this is now a project backed by North East Lincolnshire 'Enough is Enough' Action Group and North East Lincolnshire Council's (NELC) Environmental Education Team. They invite local schools, organisations and children from

across North East Lincolnshire to join their crusade to improve ALL of our lives. Whilst adults are encouraged to support the fantastic work already undertaken and planned for the future, young people will ALWAYS be at the centre of everything they do. Evie is a driving force behind this and has encourage everyone to 'tidy their front' to ensure that our streets are clean.

I feel that Evie is a worthy nomination for this award.

EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM COMMITTEE AWARD

ADAMS MILE, LUBENHAM

Adam was a boy who was killed on the main road when cycling to school in 2006. A charity was set up and £140,000 was raised and for 15 years have worked hard to create a safe route between Lubenham and Market Harborough to enable children to walk or cycle to school in safety along an old railway line. Land has had to be bought, even going to the secretary of state for a map modification. There is a proper surface with signposts, finger posts and gates in place This is a fitting tribute to Adam and the tenacity of all those involved to keep battling through the officialdom to achieve their outcome