



East Midlands in Bloom

Reports 2025



East Midlands in Bloom Reports 2025

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MOST IMPROVED ENTRANT

MOST INSPIRING IYN

SMALL VILLAGE CATEGORY

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SMALL VILLAGE CATEGORY

Ranby in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 11th July 2025

Judge: John Constable

Judge's Award: For the "alarm" WhatsApp number which is available to all villagers to use in case of concern or loneliness.

Introduction

The judge was met by the main Ranby in Bloom team of Cheryl Finney, Clive Hebden, Rachel Moss, Grant Rawlins and Tony Wilks. The visit took place on one of the hottest days of 2025 to date and so the generous provision of refreshments along the route by Swetha Kammili was greatly appreciated.

Areas of Achievement

Section A: Horticulture

The plants seen on the tour were generally healthy and well maintained. The pupils of Ranby C of E Primary School had planted and watered coloured pots and containers with numerous species including petunias, lobelia and African marigold which had made for a vibrant display. They had spelt out RANBY in coloured plant pots containing flowers on the fence adjoining the school - which they seemed to be very proud about. 'Eco-warriors' amongst the pupils undertook the watering during term time. The vegetables being grown in the corner by the front door were very healthy.

The gardens adjoining Old Blyth Road were tidy and well maintained by the homeowners, as was an attractive metal-framed container with petunias, dahlias and nicotiana. The grass alongside the pavement was cut by Clive - as was the playing field.

Two well-maintained raised beds opposite the village hall were watered by John and Anne who live nearby.

The low brick bed opposite The Chequers was planted with a colourful display of lobelia, geraniums, African marigolds and dahlias. The large container opposite featured a dominant sunflower surrounded by petunias and the nearby tree was neatly surrounded by marigolds and hollyhocks! Significant efforts had been made to brighten the bus shelter. Bees are kept nearby and the war memorial was surrounded by colourful planters, whilst a hebe and some lupins have been planted behind the memorial to give perennial interest. The next bus stop featured more containers on both sides with height provided by cosmos together with petunias, geraniums and trailing bugle hanging over the front. The hexagonal raised bed was mainly shrubs with some annuals, maintained by neighbours Mel, Sue and Margaret.

Section B: Environment

The canal is a major asset for the village attracting a lot of welcome and not so welcome (mink) wildlife. The Chesterfield Canal Trust do some canal-side maintenance and the Bloom group and volunteers help

when required. It was great to meet canal boat manager Joe and to learn the history of the canal and how boats used it in its heyday.

Section C: Community

It was lovely to meet both headteacher Claire before her imminent retirement and deputy head Sarah. They have both played their part in encouraging pupils to become involved with planting and watering. The village hall entrance was decorated with two colourful barrier baskets. The hall is village property, has recently been redecorated and regularly hosts numerous clubs and meetings.

Considerable efforts have been made to research the backgrounds of four men from the village who gave their lives in the 1914-18 war and who are commemorated by the war memorial. Leo Anderson, Vincent Kay, James Nicholson and Joseph Peatfield were aged 39, 19, 23 and 24 years respectively when they gave their lives. Cheryl Finney is planning to visit their graves in France later this year. Information about the men is posted on one of the village notice boards.

The testimonials in the portfolio were striking - especially from the families who have only recently moved to the village and who had concerns as to how they would be accepted.

A recently erected but long awaited village sign marks the village entrance from the SW.

Areas for Development

Section A: Horticulture

The portfolio is an excellent recent addition but contents include much of what will be seen on the tour. Consider including evidence of all-year-round displays, e.g. spring bulbs in flower etc. to help judges understand how attractive the village is at other times. Continue efforts to add height to some planted displays and to brighten The Chequers car park. Possibly brighten up the planted areas on the Chequers Wharf.

Section B: Environment

If there are any villagers with an interest wildlife or plants perhaps some recording could be undertaken in conjunction with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to understand if changes are taking place around the waterway and how any interventions are affecting plant and animal life. More evidence of rainwater capture to use for watering - perhaps an IBC or two sited alongside the playing field shed could provide a reasonably accessible source? Composting facilities in a publicly accessible site would be beneficial - it was good to see it in some private gardens.

Save some time on the judging tour by possibly arranging for a car to drive back from the canal to the top of the village?

Section C: Community

A permanent explanation of the canal history would be interesting for visitors unable to meet Joe on their visit. Either a permanent information board or use of a QR code to take mobile phone users to a relevant website? Perhaps the pub could help if it encourages visitors? Apart from the Chequers are there other local businesses who might support the Bloom efforts? Portfolio pictures showing Bloom volunteer work groups in action?

Marks: Section A: 32

Section B: 24

Section C: 26

Total Marks: 82



SMALL VILLAGE CATEGORY

Thornton Curtis Parish Council

Bronze Award

Judged on 4th July 2025

Judge: John Constable

Judge's Award: To Alix and her late husband John for providing the idea and inspiration that brought about the Station Road bulb planting.

Introduction

The judge was met by Ann Boulton, Clerk to Thornton Curtis Parish Council (TCPC), together with fellow PC members Julian Hargreaves, Carole and Ian Couch, also Dene Tyzack and Rob Clark, landlords of the Thornton Hunt Inn, and Phil Borrill. There followed a tour of the village mainly on foot and finishing with a short journey by car to Thornton Abbey railway station.

Areas of Achievement

Section A: Horticulture

Our first visit was a walk to the village pump passing several very well kept and colourful roadside gardens. The area around the pump is maintained by 14-year-old Ted Davy with an eye-catching half barrel predominantly of petunias. The roadside grass verges and hawthorn hedge were very well maintained. A Cedar of Lebanon stands in the area between Phil Borrill's garden and St Lawrence's Church. The churchyard was well maintained, a role undertaken by contractors on behalf of TCPC. Two colourful containers were positioned each side of the main church entrance with another two alongside a public seat which adjoined neighbouring housing opposite Burnham Lane. These containers were maintained by Carole and Ian Couch.

Another short walk took us past a number of roadside properties some of which had attractive wall-mounted planters, and down Station Road from where we accessed the playing field. The playing field area is maintained by a contractor on behalf of TCPC and a local farmer volunteers to maintain the surrounding hedge.

The planted containers on both platforms of Thornton Abbey railway station were full of colour and are maintained by volunteers Ian and Carole Couch as station adopters.

Section B: Environment

With the exception of the wildflowers in the playing field and some of the roadside hedging most areas were well trimmed by either contractors on behalf of TCPC or North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) There was an absence of litter.

Section C: Community

A former agricultural field owned by TCPC has been turned into a children's play area. An initial offer of redundant playground equipment from NLC started the ball rolling and a £10,000 National Lottery grant plus a Sustainable Planting Grant from NLC allowed the purchase of more play equipment as well as a wildflower mat - the results of which appear in the portfolio provided. It was quite a sight when it was in full flower. Station Road verges were planted with daffodils by volunteers. The Village newsletter "Have you heard" looks to be a very good source of local information.

Areas for Development

Section A: Horticulture

Weeds were establishing in between the stones around the pump and should be removed. The planned tulip and daffodil planting in the churchyard alongside the road has the potential to provide an eye-

catching display which, along with the Station Road daffodils, could be photographed and shown to future judges. Perhaps some areas of village land could be planted or planters positioned to make eye-catching displays for potential visitors and passers-by? The churchyard might be a good site for additional carefully positioned containers?

The use of the church as a community hub along with the pub might make it an ideal location to provide more colour?

Section B: Environment

It would be interesting to survey the natural environment and compare trends with or without interventions. For example, many communities are rotating cut areas in churchyards - leaving small areas uncut to allow wildflowers to develop. Perhaps try this around the existing area in the playing field allowing the well-established wildflowers to seed and spread? Organisations such as Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust could be sources of ideas and inspiration.

Thornton Curtis is obviously in a rural setting but it would be interesting to evaluate what the trends are for plant and animal life and if they can be influenced at all.

Thornton Abbey (unfortunately closed to the public at the time of judging) together with St Lawrence's Church and its black Tournai Marble font are two things that help to make Thornton Curtis unique; access to one or both on the tour would be advantageous.

Section C: Community

The judge's tour of the village should include areas that the general public can easily see and some appropriate signage often helps. Judges would like to meet more volunteers, or if that isn't possible take some pictures of some community volunteering eg litter picking or bulb planting, to show in a brochure or online. Perhaps the Men in Sheds group can be enlisted to help with some village projects and so included in future tours or presentations?

Marks: Section A: 18

Section B: 19

Section C: 15

**Total Marks: 52
Bronze Award**

VILLAGE CATEGORY

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VILLAGE CATEGORY

Lubenham

Gold Award

Judged on Tuesday 10th July 2025

Judges Nicholas Litherland and Liz Fairfield

Judges' Award: To Dr Peter Shelton for his fundraising from selling repaired garden tools, and to Nathan Jackson-Bream for his enthusiasm and commitment to the village of Lubenham. Their difference in ages is no barrier to becoming involved in supporting their community.

Introduction

Lubenham is a small pretty village to the west of Market Harborough within rural Leicestershire. A village mentioned in the Domesday Book today has attractive housing, a church dating back to 1109 and a thriving attractive pub. Situated within the Welland Valley, Lubenham is surrounded by beautiful agricultural farmland. There is much evidence of a thriving community here with a commitment to retaining the character of this beautiful place.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The judges met Margaret Richards at the Coach and Horses pub, which has a well-maintained carpark and an attractive seating area at the back. We proceeded on a tour through the village with Margaret highlighting the places of interest. Throughout we saw colourful planting in borders, planters and hanging baskets, all looking healthy and well managed considering the recent drought conditions. The red roses flowering against the lavender bushes at the War Memorial created a striking impact when seen from the road driving into the village. Behind this area is space allocated for composting and wildflowers. Walking towards the park we passed a well-managed group of trees where the Lubenham village sign is located. We walked across the playing fields/park heading towards the garden at Elmhirst where we viewed a beautiful and thoughtfully well-planted front garden, which enhanced the driveway to this small development of houses. The churchyard and surrounding area to All Saints' Church is well maintained with planters and a mixture of annuals and perennials within the grounds. The Village Green was neat and tidy, and some recent hedge cutting and clearing had improved the area. A new allium bed had been planted along Washpit Lane. We continued our tour viewing the Primary School's beautiful grounds and flower beds; the village allotments were all well-stocked with produce, and we saw some newly-planted fruit trees along the boundary to a newly built house, supplied by Harborough Council.

Section B - Environment

Lubenham is a well-managed village with a good understanding of the impact that climate change can have on the environment. All measures are taken to maintain and increase biodiversity, by promoting wildlife,

planting of fruit trees and wild meadow. Hedgerow maintenance, log piles, bug hotels, hedgehog houses and nesting boxes are all managed to support wildlife. Evidence of composting and the collection of rainwater can be seen throughout the village. We heard about the hedgehog trail where children looked at their footprints. There is a bee corner, and bird and bat boxes within the village. We were told about last summer's flooding within the village and the impact that it had upon the environment. This summer we have experienced a severe drought; however, the community of Lubenham are adapting to these effects of climate change with an understanding and resilience. The roadside kerbs and pathways were all clean and tidy, signage, notice boards and litter bins were clean and the village was free of litter and graffiti. A village litter picking takes place annually.

Section C - Community

The community of Lubenham is thriving due to its commitment, enthusiasm and love for its village and the public spaces within the village. There is pride within this community as can be seen whilst walking around and speaking to residents. From the Primary School to the allotments, the War Memorial, the church etc, all these places are cared for by teams of enthusiastic volunteers, working as individuals or as well-organised small groups. There is a heritage notice board and a heritage trail leaflet which explains the history of the village along with highlighting places of interest, as seen on the Blue Plaques on various buildings. The Scarecrow Committee funded the purchase of two wildlife cameras by the river. We were impressed with the edible planting and the chickens at the school, all having great educational value. The village would not be as it is today if it were not for various fundraising events. The Scarecrow Weekend along with seed swaps, coffee mornings, plant sales, village hall social events and the sale of refurbished tools etc, all bring the community together and raise much-needed funds.

Areas for development

Section A Horticulture

Keep up the good work! It has been a difficult summer with drought conditions but maintain deadheading and continue mixing annuals and perennials to reduce watering and increase diversity within the various planting schemes.

Section B Environment

All the activities undertaken within the village at present are commendable. Continue to seek advice regarding environmental issues and flood prevention from the Environment Agency. Manage a flood warning 'team' to lessen the impact of flooding.

Section C Community

All activities within the village are self-funding because of the unusual situation of the 'Village owning the village.'

However, try to look for additional sponsorship or financial support from outside the village. There may be a dependency upon Margaret Richards; try and reduce her workload and encourage others to become more involved in village activities. Encourage the Primary School to enter the EMiB School Awards, as the achievements of the children and encouragement from the staff should be recognised. It would be good to see a broader spread of ages amongst the volunteers and those involved in the village.

Marks

Section A 35 Section B 27 Section C 26 **Total marks 88**

Medal Awarded: Gold



VILLAGE CATEGORY

Newton in Bloom

Gold Award

Judged on Friday 11th July 2025

Judges: Nicholas Litherland and Liz Fairfield

Judges' Award: To the residents of Newton Solney for the pride and enthusiasm they have for their village life and their collective and individual efforts to add colour and interest throughout the village.

Introduction

The judges were met by Karen Brittan on a very hot sunny afternoon. Newton Solney is a very attractive village in South Derbyshire, sitting on the River Trent, a few miles away from Burton upon Trent. The village has a school, two pubs, a church and many attractive houses. As the village hall was having repair work carried out to the roof, we were unable to have an introduction to the village from Karen using a visual projector, so she gave us a book of photographs recording events in the village over the past year. The tour started on Main Street where Karen explained the theme throughout the village of 'Bricks and Beer' symbolising the historic significance of the two local industries.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Beer barrels are planted at various locations within the village, with annuals and perennials, along with mixed borders of geraniums, nigella, marigolds, escholtzia and other summer flowers. Hops throughout the planting areas reinforced the beer theme. A Cornus kousa has been planted on Main Street at the entrance to the village, which when grown will be a very attractive specimen tree at this location, with seasonal interest. Walking towards Sunnyside Residential Homes we saw some attractive hanging baskets on the terrace of cottages. The lawned area to the front of Sunnyside and the Higgott Almshouses has been levelled and re-laid using grant money, and there is also an arch planted with jasmine, along with seating for residents. Another new Cornus kousa has been planted, making a focal point in the garden. We then viewed Gail's vegetables and flowers; she is a resident who takes great pride in her colourful garden at the back of her property where she hosts get-togethers for other residents. The adjacent allotments were immaculate and colourful.

The judges then went on to view the Pre-School grounds, where we learnt about their vegetable growing, flowers planted in a raised bed in colours referencing the colours of the seasons, a butterfly bed, composting, rainwater collection and Forest School. The school building itself has a sedum roof.

The tour then took us round the village visiting the Unicorn Inn, walking along Blacksmiths Lane to Julia Snell's garden, full of cheerful colour and planting creating a haven for the bees and butterflies. On the corner of Blacksmiths Lane opposite the Unicorn Inn was a wonderful display of hanging baskets and planters creating a beautiful impact. The tour ended at St Mary's Church, with neatly mown grass alongside areas left uncut for wildflowers and insects.

Section B - Environment

Newton Solney is kept very neat and tidy with well-maintained paths, street furniture and signage. There are noticeboards and several interpretation boards within the village. It was good to see evidence of

composting, especially the 'Tom Dick and Harry' composts within the church grounds. Rainwater collection butts can be seen around the village.

Considering the lack of rainwater this summer the plants within planters and hanging baskets were looking healthy and the areas of herbaceous plants were well maintained. The use of selective mowing and wildflower strips within the churchyard is particularly effective, complementing the beautiful church.

Section C - Community

Taking a walk around Newton Solney there is much evidence of community involvement within all aspects of village life. The book given to the judges by Karen is a good record of all the activities carried out by volunteers, which makes the village such a thriving community. At the end of our tour, we were given delicious refreshments at the church and were introduced to members of the community. Their enthusiasm, historical interest and knowledge of their village and surrounding area was fascinating. We were made aware throughout our visit of fundraising events to support community activities, the plant sale being a particularly popular and lucrative event. The Village Show is a great asset to village life, involving folk of all ages and abilities.

Areas for Development

Section A

The planted areas and beds within parts of the village were a bit sparse, partly due to the lack of rain, but they could have been more densely planted. Consider the choice of plants for dry periods where reliance on watering would be less. Your choice of 'special' trees of interest for planting within the village was great, so consider if any other parts of the village could benefit from a specimen tree.

Section B

There is great evidence of composting and rainwater collection, but consider if more could be sited within the village, and consider approaching private properties to become involved in all aspects of conserving our environment. There is a good understanding of local history, see if you can develop this further. Are there any areas within the village that could become free from mowing, creating a wildlife-friendly environment and space for pollinators?

A local firm has proposed to fund the refurbishment of an old container as a sports pavilion and possibly establish a community orchard.

Section C

There is evidence of good communication within the village, as seen on noticeboards and in your book 'Newton in Bloom 2025.' Consider trying to involve more younger members of the community, maybe using the children's litter pick as a start. See if you could involve more business support and sponsorship to reduce reliance on council funds. It was good to see that the owner of the Brickmakers Arms had very recently improved the back garden of the pub, making it much more attractive to the village. With such a good open space within the village, maybe fundraising events could make use of this facility, if the landlord agreed?

The judges were particularly struck by the quality of the display of hanging baskets and planters in the garden at The Forge on Blacksmiths Lane, maybe they could consider entering the Front Garden category next year?

Marks

Section A 33 Section B 25 Section C 27 **Total marks 85**

Medal awarded: Gold



VILLAGE CATEGORY

Milford and Makeney

Gold Award

Judged on 11th July 2025

Judges: Nicholas Litherland and Liz Fairfield

Judges' Award: For Poyee and Rob for creating the stunning shared garden on the corner of Miller's Way.

Introduction

Milford, situated on the A6 between Duffield and Belper, is part of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. The village grew around Jedediah Strutt's water-powered cotton mill in the late 18th Century and this heritage remains an important local focus. The village is now divided by the busy A6 from Derby to Matlock and it is much to the credit of the Blooming Milford team that they are helping to maintain the cohesion of the village with planting and horticulture-related activities.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Setting out from the lavishly planted Milford Social Club, our first stop was The Triangle, a raised piece of otherwise unusable land above, and very visible from, the busy A6. Imaginatively planted with shrubs and perennials, with community fruit trees and herb planters, this is a pleasant sitting area, screened from the road but with a view of the elegant Elephant and Peacock pub opposite. Renovation this year has brought some of the older plants back under control and made space for new. Spring bulbs extend the season. Maintaining the road side of this area is a precarious business but worth the effort. Moving on to the War Memorial, planted and maintained by Belper Town Council, we were able to enjoy the colourful tubs and hanging baskets, another feature to brighten the day for drivers on the A6. We visited Miller's Way, a relatively new development of houses and flats above the river and were delighted to meet Poyee and Rob and see the immaculate and stunning garden they have created on a communal corner plot that was originally grass and shrubs. Further along Miller's Way is a walkway of houses where the front gardens have been developed as a complementary series of gravel and cottage gardens, looking beautiful in the hot summer sun.

Section B – Environment

Bridge View allotments provide an attractive and peaceful growing space for the village, where much of the land is so heavily terraced that gardens can only be small. A recent initiative has rejuvenated this somewhat neglected area. Advice was sought from another local allotment groups, and many of their ideas were adopted. Dormant plots are being cleared and redeveloped. An orchard is being established on two of the dormant allotments, cleared by local volunteers and planted in memory of a keen member of the allotment society who sadly took his own life last year. The annual Apple Day event he instigated some years ago has been named in his honour. The Riverside Walk, with paths laid by the developer of the nearby houses, has been significantly enhanced by Blooming Milford. Visitors are greeted with the Spring Garden and then led in a loop to the river itself, passing a newly cleared area in which the Bloom team plan to manage trees and shrubs to a less overwhelming size in future. A linear orchard planted in 2020 is

maturing nicely and six benches have been placed along the way. The Bloom team have cleared the riverbank in front of several of them to allow a view of the river from the bench. Wildflower planting has been carried out trialling plug plants versus seed, with mixed results, but the meadows are clearly beginning to establish. An autumn garden has been dug out of the scrub and despite having been flooded in the past two years, was establishing nicely with helenium, geraniums, a selection of salvias and a crab apple. Daffodils and bluebells were planted at the same time. Bird and bat boxes have been established along this route. Coloured information boards tell the reader more about Milford and its history, and identify the trees in the community orchard. The Triangle, Spring Garden and community orchard have boards crediting local funding sources.

Section C – Community

The Greenspace project at the top of Church Steps is a hidden gem, accessed by a ladder stile over a wall. This terraced space was reclaimed from a thicket of brambles during lockdown by a group of local mums looking for an opportunity to get outside and to improve facilities for the community. This rich space includes a pond, chickens, a selection of fruit and vegetables, a maze, shaded seating, a willowam, mud kitchen, enormous bug house and a composting toilet. Rainwater harvested into an IBC and two water butts is the only source of water. There is a large area set aside for making compost. A small terrace with table and chairs overlooks the beautiful Derwent Valley. Routine maintenance is weekly. Usage includes a weekly Forest School run by Milford Primary School as well as a local special school, and it is open to families at all times. Local residents can hire the space for parties and barbecues. Funding is from a range of events held during the year and grants from Belper Town Council. This year Blooming Milford have helped secure two large wooden planters for the school with an East Midlands in Bloom grant and have helped the children plant and maintain them. A new initiative last year re-established the long dormant Milford Flower Show and it is scheduled again this year with more classes including baking and handicrafts. Judges were pleased to see entries in all three EMiB Floral award categories - from Milford Social Club, The Old Bicycle Shop and the Holly Bush Inn. The judges were also pleased to see their suggestion from last year taken up, of inviting a photographer along to record the judging day for your records.

Areas for Development

Section A

Some deadheading was needed on the War Memorial planting and the planters adjacent to the roll of honour could be more impactful, becoming a better match for the planting on the memorial itself. As Belper Town Council move towards using more perennials, judges look forward to seeing more perennials in the formal planting.

Section B

Judges were pleased to learn that Belper Town Council have gone peat free in their planting this year and that they plan to use more perennials in their future planting plans; we look forward to seeing these. Judges were interested to learn of the Cider Orchard established by the landlord of the Holly Bush Inn and would enjoy seeing it on a future tour.

Section C

Formatting problems made it difficult to read the portfolio on paper or electronically, a shame as it is a useful and well-written record of the group's activities and plans. Judges would also love to meet some of the children who have benefited from the range of activities laid on for them with a horticultural focus and to have a closer look at the allotments which are under redevelopment.

Marks

Section A: 33 Section B: 26 Section C: 27 **Total Marks: 86**

Medal Awarded: Gold



VILLAGE CATEGORY

Elsham Parish Council

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 2nd July 2025

Judges: Nicholas Litherland and Liz Fairfield

Judges' Award: To Jack Dawson, for his reliability and willingness to get involved, and for the impact his efforts have on the village.

Introduction

Elsham is a pretty village close to the Humber Estuary, in its second year with In Bloom. The team of volunteers has grown since last year and been able to take action on a number of recommendations from last year's judging. The judges were met by Sandra Van Oosterhout, Andrew Horner and Louise Price, on the first drizzly day after the July heatwave. After an overview of the excellent portfolio, the judges undertook a walking tour of the village to see the work done since last year. The success of this has edged them into the Silver Gilt category, well done.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Planting is healthy, stylish and sustainable, majoring on perennials with annuals as fillers.

The herbaceous bed at the back of the Village Hall is filling out nicely and the displays in the tubs, largely featuring perennials, are elegant and welcoming. The gravel area features a blue painted wheelbarrow and chair, making imaginative use of the items and good use of an awkward space.

The village entrance bed features a mix of small shrubs and perennials including geranium, brunnera, penstemon, phlox, salvia and heuchera. Plants funded by the council are augmented with those split or donated by Andrew and his wife Di who maintain this area.

The telephone box has had a makeover from Andrew this year, installing stronger brackets for the baskets of annuals, which were flowering well despite the dry weather. The beds around the box are being planted with perennials and are filling out nicely. Behind them the wilder areas stand out well against the neatly mown grass and attract a wide range of insects.

The crossroads beds include a pleasing mix of phormium, cosmos, dahlias, lobelia, osteospermum and antirrhinums, and were looking colourful despite being slowed down by the dry weather. A brightly painted plough donated by a local farmer recalls the agricultural heritage of the area and a wheelbarrow on the opposite corner gives height to the planting.

Ten street name planters feature annuals for colour and are refreshed with winter planting when they have gone over. Judges were pleased to see that eight-year-old Livy had planted one up near her home. Where space permits, these are set in a bed of perennials. Many of the private houses feature lovely gardens themselves, with neatly maintained verges throughout the village.

Roadside planting at Holme Farm Residential home adds colour and texture to the street scene, and Colin and Agnes Morris's front garden at Jubilee Corner is another 'borrowed' landscape for the village to enjoy.

Section B – Environment

Local street name signs include the insignia of the squadrons that were stationed locally, and a model of a Lancaster festooned with poppies in the well laid-out bed outside the Village Hall commemorates the wartime base at the nearby airfield.

New self-watering planters and freshly painted railings at Astley Corner have made a simple and dramatic improvement.

Water butts supply the beds at the Village Hall, and bug hotels are mounted on the wall there. The wealth of perennial planting at the Village Hall and around the village was clearly appreciated by local bees.

A stream that runs through the village is home to a large number of toads so a 'Toad Crossing' sign was erected this year.

We didn't visit the quarry nature reserve this time as it is some distance from the village, but the portfolio showed the work to remove tree protectors, repair a damaged picnic table and install a new bench. From the pictures the wildflowers look to be thriving.

The village was free from litter and dog fouling.

Section C - Community

The portfolio this year was excellent and a useful record of the local activities and seasonal flowering that we were not able to see on the day.

The council have worked really hard to improve and record the number of volunteers engaged in the village. Funding is via grants from North Lincs Council, and the team make good use of volunteer efforts from local businesses to carry out tasks that need significant manual input.

Litter picks in October and March included local volunteers who are not normally engaged in In Bloom, and staff from the nearby garage which generates much of the litter.

Twelve volunteers from Anglian Water helped plant 3,000 bulbs on walkways and snickets around the village, and this has been greatly appreciated by local people.

Nine volunteers from local plastic recycling company Nelipak removed the plastic tree protectors from the trees in the quarry nature reserve, which they were at risk of outgrowing, these were taken back to base to be recycled, a most satisfying win-win.

Road signs are cleaned by a local window cleaner as he passes through, the street name planters are cared for by the nearest neighbours, sharing the load around the village.

We met Jack Dawson, who joined the group this year and amongst other jobs maintains the Village Hall and Astley Corner tubs and baskets to good effect. Terry, who lives on the edge of the village, waters the baskets on the telephone box, play park barriers and the entrance bed.

A community 'help yourself' herb bed at the Village Hall even has a handy pair of scissors attached. The chives had all been cut, so someone is clearly enjoying using it.

Judges were pleased to see that their suggestion of adding entries for a Best Commercial (Holme Farm Residential Home) and a Best Front Garden (Jubilee Corner) had been taken up for this tour.

Areas for Development

Section A

The majority of the planting was well maintained, particularly given the dry spell we have had, but some deadheading was required at the Village Hall bed and the council were aware that a dead tree outside the hall needs removing. Some deadheading was also required on the barrier baskets at Astley Corner, probably due to the first rain in weeks.

Consider where else you could focus your attention, for example the play park is immaculate but a little bare. Could you add fruit trees, for example, for community use?

Section B

It would be lovely to see more information expanding on the story of the Lancaster and the street name signs, recalling the local heritage of air squadrons, and to add information boards to the wildflower meadow.

Experiments with peat-free compost have been disappointing for the group, you could talk to other In Bloom groups to see if they can help by suggesting more successful formulations.

Section C

Now that you have more momentum, the establishment of a separate 'In Bloom' group could help share the load so it does not all fall to the Parish Council, maybe reaching out to the local litter pickers for instance. Try to build on the early involvement of children and young people - maybe local Cubs or Brownies would like to get their litter picking or gardening badges by working with you, for example. Many communities enlist the help of other local groups, for example the WI, for specific tasks. Council funding is working well and is being used to good effect. Consider other sources to pursue if council priorities were to change in the current difficult financial climate.

Marks

Section A: 31

Section B: 22

Section C: 23

Total Marks: 76

Medal Awarded: Silver Gilt



VILLAGE CATEGORY

South Ferriby in Bloom

Silver Award

Judged Thursday 3rd July 2025

Judges: Nicholas Litherland and Liz Fairfield

Judges' Award: To the team who have transformed the old playing fields and football ground into a wild meadow area, turning this area of the village into a sanctuary for wildlife and the community.

Introduction

South Ferriby is a peaceful village in North Lincolnshire situated on the South bank of the Humber estuary surrounded by rural countryside. The village dates to Roman times and lies on the route of the Viking Way. We were met at the Village Hall by Ann Boulton, Noreen Cecil-Purvis and Jan Goff who took the judges round the village. We saw a very neat and tidy village with colourful displays of seasonal planters and hanging baskets throughout our tour.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Our tour started at the Village Hall where we saw displays planted by the children from the Crafty Kids group, and Sally and Julia's colourfully planted flower beds each side of the main road and along School Lane. Watering here was a challenge, but plants were looking healthy. At Prospect Villas Mr and Mrs Horwood had planted out a colourful display of annuals and perennials which were attractive when approaching the village. The bowling green was looking very neat and tidy with some mixed herbaceous beds and a memorial flower bed to remember past bowlers; all areas are maintained by the club.

A playground with multi-use adult gym equipment is well maintained. This area has recently had some attention, with pruning and tidying of the shrubbery and new planting. Within the sensory garden there is an interesting mix of plants and shrubs and a strongly scented honeysuckle. There is an emphasis on wildlife and some areas have been 'set aside' against the garden boundaries.

Old Harp Lane leads to a new project for 2025, the wildflower meadow, previously the village playing field and football ground. This area has been transformed with a mixture of native trees, hazel, cherry, birch and willow and seeded with a variety of wildflowers. The introduction of several strips of wildflower turf has been very successful giving a marvellous display within its first year. New benches were funded by a grant, and mown paths give the children a sense of adventure. On Sluice Lane we met Lesley and Lynn and admired their roadside display of annuals and perennials. Despite being alongside a busy road, and the lack of rain, it was looking colourful and well maintained – an attractive sight when entering the village. From there we visited Oxlip Cottage, home of Donny and Virginia Scratcherd, who garden the area to the front of the cottage and all along North End working with Virginia's sister, Ruth. This beautifully planted and well-maintained area of the village is a joy to see. The plants are skilfully selected for the various growing conditions and are all healthy, giving a variety of colour and textures in a cottage garden style and with a long season. The village Horse Pond was looking very attractive, also managed by the family, with a good selection of plants suitable for the growing conditions around the pond. To the entrance of the village a boat was attractively and colourfully planted with annuals.

Section B - Environment

South Ferriby is a lovely well cared for village, and the pride that the villagers have for their environment is clear. The streets and footpaths are clean and tidy and there are seats positioned round the village. The community areas, bowling green, memorial garden and playground are all well cared for. A plaque had been added to a bench in memory of Dave Mouncey who died recently. The village was free from litter, with litter bins round the village. The new community project at the old football ground has created a haven for wildlife, leaving the grassland uncut, and the introduction of wildflowers and trees has increased the biodiversity of the area. The gardens at North End, Oxlip Cottage and at Horse Pond along with many other planted areas encourage and increase the wildlife and pollinators in the village. Water butts and composting were seen, and the plants throughout were in good condition considering the unusually dry spring and summer.

Section C - Community

To maintain such a well-kept village requires much community involvement! The events throughout the year bring the community together and help with raising funds, along with support from sponsorship and local business and from North Lincs CC. The villagers use social media and the parish website to communicate social events etc. The community should be proud of the initiative to change the football ground into a village asset to be enjoyed by all. The hard work and dedication that is voluntarily carried out by the community throughout the village to improve and enhance the neighbourhood is commendable, as colourful and cheerful planting not only improves the look of the village but also creates a 'feel good' factor. A display of previous In Bloom and Best Kept Village awards are mounted on the wall at the village entrance.

Areas for Development

Section A Horticulture

The planting within the village is varied, colourful and in some areas a good mix of annuals and perennials. This could be developed into other areas of the village where additional hanging baskets and planters could be used. The success of the wildflower turf on the old playing fields could be incorporated within other areas of the village adding extra interest and biodiversity. The fruit trees planted near the bowling green could be improved with some seasonal colour which could range from spring bulbs to summer perennial planting.

Section B Environment

The enthusiasm for the newly-planted old football ground is impressive; it encompasses all aspects of biodiversity, conservation planning for the future and respect for wildlife and fauna. Hopefully the judges will be able to see the progress made on this site in the not-too-distant future. It shows what can be achieved with a clear focus. The success of this project could be applied to other areas of South Ferriby, involving younger groups within the village and local school?

Section C Community

It was sad to hear of the loss of Dave Mouncey, a long-time stalwart of In Bloom. We had the pleasure of meeting Virginia outside her home, and she expressed her concern for being unable to continue with her gardening along North End and the Horse Pond. These areas have such an impact upon the village, maintained to a high standard and with a carefully selected choice of plants, and it would be sad to see them decline due to a lack of support. Whilst there is obviously a tremendous amount of community involvement within South Ferriby it is always good to develop links with other groups within the community to encourage more support and avoid a dependence on the few actively maintaining the character of this lovely village. The Crafty Kids had set up some lovely planters at the Village Hall, could they and their parents be encouraged to take part in more village activities?

The portfolio was a helpful reminder of what we had seen, thank you. This in the future could include a few pictures of spring and autumn colour, working parties and fundraising events.

Marks

Section A 29 Section B 23 Section C 20 **Total marks 72**

Medal Awarded: Silver



VILLAGE CATEGORY

New Holland Parish Council

Silver Award

Judged on 4th July 2025

Judges: Nicholas Litherland and Liz Fairfield

Judges' Award: To Elsie Dent, for maintaining the tractor tyre planting on Marsh Lane and for restoring it after damage when struck by a car, in time for judging.

Introduction

Situated on the banks of the Humber, New Holland is a long village with a heritage of trade via its ports and railway. The relatively new bypass has relieved the village of heavy traffic. The Parish Council aim to make the village an attractive place where the local environment is treated with respect. Their work, making imaginative use of limited resources, is already making a difference with bright planting and wilder areas, and targeted activities planned for the next two years should have significant impact. On the day of judging the torrential rain soon eased off, giving way to some welcome sunshine.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The judges were met at the entrance roundabout by Parish Council Chair Louise Hudson, Parish Clerk Ann Boulton, Jon and Alison Nettleton from Nettleton Mowing and Maintenance, contractors to the council, and Parish Councillor Alan Rank. The very large roundabout was originally bare brickweave, designed for easy navigation by heavy lorries and creating a very barren and unwelcoming area, but Louise restored an old wooden boat and moved it to the roundabout with help from local people. It is planted with blue lobelia and white petunias to give the effect of waves and sits against a flagpole and a three-tier planter to give the effect of a crow's nest. Bricks have been lifted to create pockets planted with colourful bedding. The barrels originally placed on the roundabout lacked impact there and have been moved to the adjacent triangles where they make a much better splash.

Two Tommy figures stand on the verge with red, white and blue planting at their feet. The striking Queen Elizabeth Memorial bed with 'New Holland' in box hedging augmented by red, white and blue bedding, stands out well and is set off by neatly-mown grass, a bench and large square planters, significantly enhancing the village entrance.

The council are aware that even with the imaginative work they have done to date on a limited budget, the impact could be greater and have commissioned a new and larger boat sculpture from a local artist to replace the wooden one before it falls apart. The judges look forward to seeing it next year.

The three-tier planter near the station was well planted with bright annuals which were flourishing despite the recent extended dry spell. Station planting was bright and cheerful, the beds are a big improvement on the expanse of grass the beds sit in, and the troughs on the platform were well planted and healthy. Troughs at the Community Centre add colour and the bed opposite brightens a large area of grass.

Section B – Environment

A local naturalist has identified bee orchids in the verges by the entrance roundabout. The Parish Council have stopped mowing those areas and put up friendly signs to explain; they look forward to seeing more orchids in future years. The neatly mown grass now gives way to wilder planting, a good backdrop for the formal space, and is loved by the insects.

The track section of Marsh Lane is home to badgers, deer and woodpeckers.

On our stroll along Millennium Walk we had to watch our step for fear of treading on the hundreds of froglets in the grass. Kingfishers are regularly seen along the brook, and bat boxes are mounted in the nearby trees.

Wildflower mats have been planted in a couple of neglected parts of the village, adding colour and interest to otherwise dull spaces. Daffodil bulbs were planted along the main road by volunteers from the village and wildflowers are planned for Millennium Walk.

Spent plants are sent to a local recycling centre and the compost produced has proved a usable growing medium, holding water better than some commercial peat-free offerings.

Section C - Community

The Parish Council has an excellent relationship with Nettleton Mowing and Maintenance, and all parties should be congratulated on how this works to the advantage of the village, linking the volunteers with the contractor. Elsie Dent, at 90, maintains the planting in the white painted tractor tyres at the end of Marsh Lane. The week before judging these were struck by an out-of-control car which ended up in a tree, and it is much to Elsie's credit that she managed to reset the plants and keep the display going for judging.

The judges were pleased to see a 'Best Front Garden' entry from Brian Liles as well, evidence of further community involvement.

The new Head at the school has responded positively to suggestions to work on a garden and to restore the school pond.

Barton and Cleethorpes Community Rail Partnership has provided sleeper beds and plants for the station, maintained by Councillor Alan Rank.

Recruitment of volunteers is a challenge, as for many groups. Newsletters and hand-delivered flyers have so far had disappointing results. In an exciting development, however, the Parish Council is in the process of finalising the purchase of land in the village centre for allotments with good access, and power and water nearby; they believe this land was used for allotments in the past. Karen explained that six people had already requested plots and the current landowner plans to keep the adjacent area as a smallholding, restore a pond and create a wildflower meadow. This will be an important new local amenity and could even help recruit more volunteers.

Areas for Development

Section A

Many of the areas of planting are in big open spaces and can get lost against the backdrop. Consider how a planting scheme featuring more perennials and larger plants, augmented by summer bedding, could extend the season, reduce maintenance and increase the impact on the entrance roundabout, the tyres at Marsh Lane, the railway station and beds around the town.

Section B

There was some litter in evidence, it is difficult to keep this under control with a small team - could a local organisation be encouraged to organise regular litter picks, relieving the Parish Council of this headache? Some companies offer volunteer hours to local communities.

Section C

The portfolio is well written and a useful and informative reminder of the visit, giving a good sense of history and community. For future years it would be helpful to see pictures of things we were not able to see on the day, for example the winter bedding schemes for tubs and troughs, and the spring bulbs. There is some interesting history about the village; longer term it would be good to see some information boards explaining, for example, that the ferry to Hull used to go from here. Grants may be available for this type of initiative.

Council funding is available at present; it would be worth considering diversifying funding sources in case this situation changes as financial pressure on councils builds.

FOOTNOTE

A couple of weeks after judging, Councillor Alan Rank sadly passed away. He had been a key part of New Holland in Bloom for many years and was active in the group right up to his death, including joining the judging tour. He will be sorely missed locally and the judges would like to pass on their condolences to his friends and family.

Marks

Section A: 26

Section B: 20

Section C: 22

Total Marks: 68

Medal Awarded: Silver

LARGE VILLAGE CATEGORY

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LARGE VILLAGE CATEGORY

Bosworth in Bloom

Gold Award

Judged on July 4th 2025

Judges: Richard Stephen and Emma Schofield

Judges' Award:

For Bosworth Court Care Home which the judges passed on the way to the Fire Station. Their multiple railing baskets and ten hanging baskets were very colourful and caught the judges' eye. Plants were healthy and well cared for.

Introduction

Judges were met by Chris Hooker who introduced Park Ranger David Luther and Peter Bailiss also from Bosworth in Bloom group. Chris gave an interesting potted history of this delightful village drawing on its heritage, economic development and ongoing local pride of place in which Market Bosworth's Bloom commitment plays an integral role. The local community and the tourists who visit are in for a treat as Market Bosworth celebrated its 40th year of Bloom this summer.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The judging route was well considered and took the judges on a 'feast for the eyes' with pops of colour appearing throughout the village, providing impact through plant choice. The range of plants shown throughout the village was to a high standard - hanging baskets, planters and a range of planted displays consisting of predominantly annuals were vibrant and healthy. The Butterfly Sculpture of Hope was planted with a healthy display of red, pink and white begonias and was displayed alongside one of the main roads into the heart of the village. The judges met Anne who volunteers to care for this display throughout the year. Anne pointed out that polyanthus replace the begonias in winter/spring.

In the Market Place the eight containers of multi-coloured bedding plants located around the Market Place War Memorial gave a welcome splash of colour to this busy part of the village. Celebrating the 700th anniversary of St Peter's Church and Bosworth in Bloom's 40th year, the Park Street beds had a mixture of perennials, annuals and carpet bedding. This was not the usual style of floral display as in previous years, nonetheless it still provided an interesting feature. The wire horse is greening up nicely with ivy as a permanent living sculpture. It was lovely to meet Gill who herself is a Bloom volunteer and also from her nursery provides the plants for the Bloom group campaign each year. The planting out by the volunteers

and colour choice led by the Bloom group was cohesive and complementary throughout the village. There were around 120 hanging baskets on display and a further 100 planted troughs. Many residents and businesses supported the main display with their own contributions. The maintenance of the planted areas was excellent and a credit to those involved in the watering in what has been an exceptionally hot period of weather to keep plants healthy.

The successful yearly campaign by the Bloom group for locals and businesses to sponsor a hanging basket/trough/planter really has resulted in a route to remember again. The Rotary Club volunteers were out in force on the day and have supported the Bloom group with the new electric bowser which has replaced the old petrol-powered one, thanks to the generous funding from local businesses. It has been a great success and very reliable as the troughs and hanging baskets have been filled continually to keep all the plants and growing well. Throughout the walking tour many well-kept residential gardens and small businesses contributed to the floral display in the village eg The Forge, 28-30 Park Street, The Old Red Lion, The Dixie, B and B No 3, Pink Gin Boutique, Aylebrook Cottage, Dressini, The Black Horse, The Batter of Bosworth, Bosworth Court Care Home, The Bank and the police/ fire helmets planted up as hanging baskets, just to mention a few.

Within the portfolio the Bloom group shared photographs of successful bulb displays round the village. The Black Horse pub where refreshments were shared at the end of the tour showcased a delightful garden at the back that really welcomed pollinators (and human visitors) and enhanced the seating area, as did its hanging/ wall baskets – all plants were well cared for and offered year-round interest. The shrub beds and perennial planting along the frontage of the Dixie Grammar School was looking good again.

Section B - Environment

It was great to have a guided tour with David Luther to see the ongoing work he and his volunteers do in Market Bosworth Country Park and how things have sustainably developed since last year's judging visit. The 97 hectares of diverse mixed habitat are a credit to David and his team. The country park and the volunteers are a key part of the Market Bosworth tour for the judges. The country park with its Green Flag Award is an excellent facility for Market Bosworth and the surrounding area - very popular with dog walkers and for Park Runs. The facilities are excellent - the toilet block with its rainwater harvesting system, solar panels and a biological digester system all which helps to reduce maintenance. The wildflower meadow has continued to develop over the years along with the Bow Pool and Stew Ponds - all attract a diverse range of wildlife. Conservation and partnership work with and for the community is strong and is at the heart of everything (as detailed in David's talk and portfolio for the judges). It serves both people and wildlife. The various surveys undertaken by the volunteers is showing positive impact on the diversity of bird, animal and insect life seen and recorded. The beehives that have been installed are thriving and the honey, which is sold in the village, is a source of revenue for the Market Bosworth Bloom group. The new mown pathways through the pasture and the sponsored trees in the mixed avenue along with the Bloom group involvement with planting replacements lost over winter, including a Princeton Gold Norway Maple, are doing really well.

The updated play park (including the den building area) and the range of wooden sculptures in the park (Art in the Park) enhance the natural environment. Identification boards and signage could also be seen throughout the parkland to inform visitors.

The tour continued to St Peter's Church, with a well-maintained churchyard including a delightful wildflower pocket (on the unmarked graves area) amongst the other well cared-for graves. It was great to meet Jane and the church volunteers who have built on last year's work to provide the community with a place to stop and chat to others. An area of reflection/ contemplation in the southern corner overlooking the peaceful churchyard has developed nicely over the past couple of years. The raised beds were thriving and the flowers were developing well and were in the future to be cut (eg crocosmia ,dahlias, almerias)

and used for the floral displays inside the church. Spring in the churchyard sees many bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, cowslips and snowdrops in abundance.

The heritage within Market Bosworth is well documented and includes 60 Listed buildings, the Battlefield, the Dixie Family and Bosworth Hall, King Richard III plaque in the Market Place - the souvenir town trail is a must for any visitor and is an excellent historical walking trail. There continues to be good evidence of art in the landscape e.g. the Butterfly sculpture, wooden sculptures in the country park, this year's model of the 700-year-old church as part of the Bloom display, the art competition to celebrate 70 years of Scouting and a model fire engine showcased on the day.

There was no use of pesticides and the Bloom group continue to experiment with peat-free compost and its use in planters. This could clearly be seen in the difference of plant growth. Evidence of bark mulching was seen at the church raised planters, helping with water conservation.

Section C - Community

What a triumph your portfolio was again, sharing evidence of activity and colour throughout the year and echoed in the local Aspect magazine with your informative year breakdown for all the local community to read and enjoy. The Parish Council continue to be very supportive and make up a core part of the In Bloom group. Other support comes from a range of volunteers and groups, and many local residents care for planters near their homes. The Bosworth in Bloom group is well funded with an annual appeal mailing being distributed to every household. A Parish Council directory was shared with the judges. The local Aspect magazine showcased various articles that inform the community of the Bloom work, and their WhatsApp group continues to grow. It was good to meet Theo as your 'on the day' photographer. Substantial Parish Council support as well as numerous plant sales, honey sales, business and local resident donations and raffles all add to the Bloom pot of money. The Bloom group helped to organise the National Gardens Association openings of gardens in the village and so received a percentage of ticket sales. The Bloom group continues to assist with the Fire Station planting and maintenance while also helping with gardening clubs at local schools in the village. Advice to residents is freely given, along with tree planting and litter picking throughout the village. Involvement with the local Scout group involved a competition, and on the day of judging Jessica (aged 8) joined the route to meet the judges and explain her entry and involvement with a gardening bed the Scouts look after. As mentioned earlier, many residents had beautiful front gardens which the judges admired as part of the walking tour. eg 82 Egmont House, Rainbow Cottage, 88 Station Road, The Old School House. The Market Bosworth Bloom group continue to have plans for all-year-round activities and continue to build on the momentum of previous years and explore new ideas.

Areas for Development

Section A

At the Fire Station perhaps consider a more suitable plant as companion planting to the 'Hot Lips' in the front border. It needs to be more in keeping with colour scheme but consider size and form to give a more coherent display overall. Also, some work on the border closer to the building would possibly improve the overall aesthetic. Consider asking the local care home or the fish and chip shop (The Batter of Bosworth) if they would like to be considered for an individual recognition award, as their planters were delightful. Something to think about: the beds celebrating the church and Bloom anniversaries were delightful in their conception, but the lack of real plants did not give the planters the usual elevated 'Wow' factor that Market Bosworth is known for by its locals and visitors in that particular area of the walking tour (although judges understood the logic of the artificial grass).

Section B

Developing composting or water recycling in action would be good to see on judging day. If peat-free trials are proving not to yield the growth you hope for, what about development of home-grown wormery plant food or comfrey feed to 'top up' the planters over the growing season? A project for the Scouts or one of your volunteers maybe? It will be interesting for judges to see in the future the ongoing developments for the boathouse at the park and its heritage as part of David's long-term developments on the site.

Section C

Consider the re-introduction of the wheelbarrow planters for the schools and preschools etc - or perhaps a new unusual recycled planter competition. All entries could then be viewed on the day of judging as part of the route, as at the time of judging schools are busy with end-of-term commitments so it is difficult to meet the pupils. Consider how any members of the allotment mentioned on the day of judging this year may be visited as part of a future tour.

Marks

Section A: 36

Section B : 28

Section C: 28

Total Marks : 92

Medal Awarded: Gold



LARGE VILLAGE CATEGORY

Collingham in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 3rd July 2025

Judges: Richard Stephen and Emma Schofield

Judges' Award: To John for his hard work maintaining the churchyard and the incredible All Saints triangle tractor tyre raised beds and new bench area created from a fallen tree - a welcoming and sensory place designed for flood and drought resilience.

Introduction

This is Collingham's first entry into East Midlands in Bloom. Collingham is an ancient village with evidence of both Saxon and Iron Age occupation on the outskirts of Newark. The recently formed Collingham in Bloom have been very busy over the past year building on their foundation after entering the Best Kept Village competition in 2024 locally. They have created wildflower areas, rescued overgrown areas, and created new flower beds. Many of their plants have been grown from seed, repurposed or acquired locally. Collingham has a community pub, three well-used community halls, a new community park and 67 heritage buildings. Collingham Cricket Club is celebrating its 175th year and is the hub for many community events and group meetings, including Collingham in Bloom.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The core group of 40 regular volunteers, the Guerilla Bloomers, alongside the secret Guerillas ("locals who quietly get things done without fuss or fanfare") have worked exceptionally hard to create a village to be proud of. Their ongoing work has been well received by local residents and visitors to Collingham. The village signs and colourful beds welcomed the judges into the village.

The start of the tour at the Cricket Club with its abundance of hanging baskets and tubs was a great start and the cohesive planting throughout the tour was healthy and pest-free. The mix of perennials and annuals along with shrubs were all chosen and sourced from local nurseries. Throughout the judges' tour many well-kept residential gardens and small businesses contributed to the floral display in the village, including planted firefighter helmets and a small planter at the fire station. The Green had some attractive planted beds as well as seating and a couple of planted tubs.

The Cross was planted up with a managed wildflower prairie planting (sadly had gone over due to weather conditions but showcased in the portfolio), with mown paths and vibrant planters to create a welcoming space that blended history, nature and enjoyment. The drought-tolerant planting was thriving, along with a mixture of shrubs and some annuals including sweet peas to add pops of colour around the space. The judges met John, Harry, Debbie, Sheila and Elaine at Wonky Corner where the planting was very pollinator friendly and colourful with foxgloves, lupins, lavender and sedum which alongside the renovated telephone kiosk was again a colourful addition to the tour.

The very colourful raised beds maintained by Margaret, Jean, Gladys, Phil and Jean at the Poppyfields estate were attractive with their seasonal annual planting and alpines. The area is immaculately maintained and was full of colour in both the communal and private balconies and patios.

The judges were welcomed by Phil and members of the BRAGG (Beaufields Residents Action Gardening Group) and were shown their allotments. The group are also entering IYN.

The sunflowers were ready to burst into colour in many of the planters across the village. The judges' tour finished at the community-run pub The Royal Oak. Its vibrant, colourful planters and baskets out front were a sight to behold. The back garden was beautifully laid out, very tidy, well maintained including ornamental grasses, annuals, perennials and herbs, leaving a lasting impression on the day of the visit.

It was lovely to see contributions from 28 Corner Cottage, 10 The Green, the Methodist Church, The Fruit Farm, The Shed, J D Nicholsons, Hayley Jayne, 15 and 22 Cottage Lane and many others.

Section B - Environment

There has been a settlement in Collingham for a millennium and it has some interesting buildings and history. The Parish Church grounds are well-maintained and it was good to hear from the driver on the judging day some of the history about the people and places the judges passed on the tour.

Throughout the tour the areas viewed were well presented and maintained and reflected the group's attention to detail. There is an active litter-picking group and there was very little litter to be seen. Dog bins were seen throughout the village so there was little evidence of fouling on the walking part of the tour route. All signs were well maintained and clean. At the cricket club there have been bird boxes and owl roosts installed, and the grounds team's involvement with No Mow May to help pollinators was also evidenced, along with the installation of several bat boxes in the wooded area by the snicket.

At Stockhill and The Green early season crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils have been planted to support pollinators, as well as the wildflower meadow at the Cross. The bug hotel, bee houses and bird feeder/houses were all in place at The Cross to encourage wildlife into the area. At All Saints and The Fleet work continues on flood management and increasing biodiversity. It was nice to meet Rosemary who spoke to us enthusiastically about the Trent Vale Trail which connects the village and the wider landscape to two RSPB nature reserves, and the Bloom group work with them to support the rare species found there. Rainwater is harvested at a number of locations and used to water the beds. The Bloom group collect water at the railway station, The Cross and even at a volunteer's barn, and water can be drawn from the River Fleet.

Closed loop composting was evident and the Bloom use home-made compost generated at the Poor Close Allotments, as with poor sandy soil this is essential. The Poppyfields allotments are developing their own composting. Peat-free compost was used throughout the beds along with organic grass care promoted around the village. The Bloom group have given away 40,000 wildflower seeds at the village fairs and shows along with providing sunflower seeds to grow giant sunflowers to all school children and Scout groups. The Parish Council landscape contractor has supported Bloom by supplying bark mulch which has suppressed weeds naturally and helped the beds retain moisture.

Section C - Community

The Parish Council are very supportive and make up a core part of the In Bloom group. Many community groups, including D of E volunteers, are listed in the portfolio of contributing groups that add to the Bloom entry. Collingham Guerilla Bloomers, like many Collingham volunteers, are extremely enthusiastic and do lots of unseen hard work for the community and along with the Parish Councillors who have supported the recently formed Collingham in Bloom group, they have combined to develop a very good first-time entry. The key goals of the Bloom group were shared in the presentation and key to everything was

environmental improvements, community and “adding colour, life and joy to our shared space.” Many local residents care for a patch or planter near their homes and a great example of this on the tour was Wonky Corner where the judges met enthusiastic volunteers including Elaine who had contributed her time and efforts ensuring all litter bins were painted and well maintained around the village.

Meeting Dez and Rowan at The Shed and seeing their work for and with the community was particularly interesting. The Cricket Club is a hub for village events throughout the year including Collingham in Bloom meetings. Maintenance and cleaning of benches is supported by local firefighters, whilst the ‘Wombles’ are out litter-picking enthusiastically to keep the village litter free. Local businesses have been supportive and their generosity was recognised in the portfolio and as part of the presentation. The Bloom group are very involved with fundraising and they are at Collingham Show to raise further funds. The group spoke of their various fundraising events over this year and those planned for the future including the upcoming calendar with Bloom as a central theme! The WhatsApp group where all information is shared is well used to keep all information flowing and to highlight jobs that require a volunteer’s assistance and to celebrate achievements. On the judges’ tour the signage was in place to share information about the points on the tour. The Bloom group use the local Press, the Fleet magazine, Newark Advertiser and social media well to promote their work and updates are on the Parish Council website and Facebook (180 followers and increasing). Evidence of the group’s activities and the introduction of floral colour throughout the year was demonstrated in the very well-produced portfolio and through the presentation and slideshow shared at the start of the tour for the judges. It was also good to see the acknowledgements in the portfolio of the work done elsewhere by other groups that was not seen on the day of the judges’ tour.

Areas for Development

Section A

A quick note to mind the time on the actual day of judging in line with the coverage of area, meeting volunteers etc so as not to go over the allocation. It will be good to hear about the new community garden and HQ planned for the centre of the village where the Bloom group can grow the future Bloom projects in a sustainable way. The Bloom group mentioned their learning curve in what has gone well and what they will consider using plant-wise next year – the wow moments need to be considered in line with the commitment to sustainable perennial planting. Right plant in right place, build on your excellent start this year! It was noted in the portfolio that you have aspirations to introduce some planting at the Pinfold and perhaps there will be an opportunity for the judges next year to see how Collingham Station has developed.

Section B

Do the Parish Council have a written environmental policy which the In Bloom group adhere to, respecting wildlife and the environment wherever possible in their projects and a key part of village life - perhaps something to consider? Water conservation could be developed further by adding water butts at the Cricket Club for example, there are plans for two to be installed at Poppyfields. Perhaps consider carrying out some local or national surveys of wildlife eg big bird/ butterfly counts - it would be interesting to learn of the outcome of such surveys and how results may influence future practice. Collingham has a rich and interesting heritage some of which we learnt about from Nigel during the tour. eg former Telegraph Exchange. Perhaps a Heritage Trail could be devised for visitors and residents so that this element of Collingham can be enjoyed by all.

Section C

The Bloom group have a range of plans for further community projects working with more groups such as the Nut Orchards, the fire station, library, Memorial Hall, Poor Close Allotments, the school garden and Rio

Drive Millennium Garden- all exciting projects that in the future may well become part of the Collingham in Bloom tour. Consider working with other groups such as local history/ heritage groups to produce a town trail or information boards that would guide visitors round the village and celebrate the rich heritage. You have mentioned the allotments as part of the tour and their contributions it may be worth considering including them as part of future judges tours? You have your emblem for the Bloom group so why not have some small plaques made that can be sited on the raised beds etc just to alert others who may not know about the Bloom work in their community. Consider a competition for the schools and preschools etc eg wheelbarrow planters or perhaps a new unusual recycled planter competition. All entries then could then be viewed on the day of judging as part of the route.

Marks

Section A: 31

Section B : 24

Section C: 24

Total Marks : 79

Medal Awarded: Silver Gilt



LARGE VILLAGE CATEGORY

Wrawby Parish Council and Friends

Silver Award

Judged on 9th July 2025

Judges: Richard Stephen and Emma Schofield

Judges' Award:

For Wrawby Parish Councillors, for their leadership and unwavering support for the Wrawby in Bloom group and their community.

Also noted in particular is the work of Jamie on the uniquely designed bug hotel with green roof and water butt, along with Angie in the development and maintenance of the Tunnel Road corner planters.

Introduction :

This is Wrawby's first entry into East Midlands in Bloom. Wrawby is a village in North Lincolnshire . It appears as 'Wategebi' in the Domesday Book and the name is thought to derive from the Old Danish meaning 'Wraghi's farmstead.' It is noted for England's only remaining postmill and now for its Blooming efforts in 2025! Wrawby in Bloom started only in 2024 and after a history of beds round the village being maintained by a dedicated and hardworking Parish Councillor and his wife there is now a gradually expanding group of Bloomers supported by the Parish Council.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The core 12 regular volunteers have worked exceptionally hard to develop and expand the existing planters. They have designed and built new raised beds and benches and created a small community orchard containing a variety of fruit tree species near the play area at the Village Hall site. Evidence of the group's activities and colour throughout the year was demonstrated in the portfolio and through a slideshow shared before the judges' walking tour. The Parish Council were successful in gaining a grant to establish sustainable planting in all the planters and so a carefully devised mostly perennial planting scheme was established which the judges had the pleasure of seeing. eg Village Hall, Tunnel Road, Brigg Road, Vicarage Motors. Several thousand bulbs have been planted all over the village along the main roads (A18), on the verges and in the raised wooden planters and these gave a super spring display. On the tour the raised beds provided a feast for the judges' eyes including giant sunflowers that were waiting to burst into colour. The allium seed heads showed the considered underplanting of bulbs. The density, variety and quality of the plants used in the planters was high and the colours were well co-ordinated throughout the tour. It was interesting to see that a diary / sketches had been kept of what was to be planted and where. Just down the road from the Village Hall, the 'assisted living' bungalows had put on a wonderful and colourful display of planted-up pots and troughs which contributed significantly to the street scene of the village. Meeting the volunteers at various points to share in their enthusiasm and knowledge about the planters they care for was a delight. The Bloom group explained that they had very little horticultural experience, but my goodness they have learnt quickly and taken good advice! All plants appeared to be healthy and bug free. The herb planters were developing well in the play area and are being used by the community. The orchard trees were healthy and maturing.

Section B - Environment

The Bloom group strive to source locally wherever they can, or from sustainable sources when they cannot. The topsoil that filled the raised beds came from the Scunthorpe United pitch after a recent re-turfing operation, and all compost used is peat free. On the village allotments the group have their own polytunnel, planting area, composter, wood store and greenhouses – a hive of industry throughout the year! All wood used to build the planters and benches has been sourced from sustainable plantations and from local stockists or donated for re-purposing. There are also beginnings of a sustainable watering plan emerging with a water butt cleverly hidden in a bug hotel, with the rainwater gathered by guttering from the roof. The bug hotel also includes a green sedum roof, which is proving its worth for water retention and is thriving. All plants used in the planting scheme were locally sourced to reduce Carbon footprint and the group are taking cuttings and potting on for future years. This includes the planting of wallflower seeds which are growing in readiness for planting out in the allotment greenhouse. The playing fields adjacent to the village hall were well maintained, as was the carpark and the building itself. The Parish Church has a closed churchyard. Located outside the entrance were three nicely planted, colourful boxes, and the grounds appeared to be well-maintained. Some plants are grown from seed in peat-free compost but most watering for planters comes from domestic water supplies or the helpful village farm shop or village hall. There was a recycling bank seen at the village hall in the car park and plans to develop some wildflower meadow planting in the community orchard area. The entry signs for the village were well maintained and had planters underneath to greet visitors and locals as they come into the village. Wrawby was very well maintained as a whole and there was no sign of litter. The number of dog bins also reflected the cleanliness of the village, which is very popular with dog walkers. The 'Happy to Chat' benches near the garage and across the road with their associated planters were well maintained and used. They co-ordinated well with other planters on the verges nearby and the plants were well visited by bees and butterflies on judging day. Meeting the volunteers at Wrawby Mill was both interesting and informative and a key part of the heritage of the village.

Section C - Community

The judges' tour was well planned and considered. It should be noted that the Parish Council are very supportive and make up a core part of the In Bloom group. Other support comes from residents, volunteers and the wider community. As previously mentioned, the Parish Council was successful in gaining a grant to install a number of raised planters to establish a regime of sustainable planting round the village. Also, the judges were informed of grants that had been obtained for the play equipment by the village hall. All the planters have been made by the community and have been built for purpose. Once these planters were installed many local residents came forward and volunteered to care for planters near their homes. The children from the local primary school (Wrawby St Mary's School) have assisted with planting (herb beds in the play area, the community orchard and two planters in the village centre) along with volunteers from the Village Hall committee. Local businesses have been supportive and are acknowledged on Parish Council noticeboards and in the portfolio in a Roll of Honour. There is an active group of litter pickers that cover pretty much all the village and do a fantastic job. It was noted that a number of properties along the tour had provided significant contributions to making the village look so good eg Assisted Living Bungalows, 2 Barton Road End (lovely frontage) and Forget-me-not Cottage to name a few. It was nice to see that the Jolly Miller pub was contributing to the village scene with hanging baskets and planted pots / troughs. The various memorial benches or trees planted by members of the community have been sensitively incorporated into the areas maintained by the Bloom group. An Open Gardens day is planned for 2026 and the development of a planted area adjacent to the ever popular Wrawby Mill will add to its already attractive setting. The popular 81st Annual Wrawby Horticultural Show is taking place in August this year and the group will be promoting itself there. Social media along with regular listing of and adverts for Bloom events in the village alongside articles in the village magazine (Wrawby News), on noticeboards and on the PC website are all used to good effect to inform the community. An ever-growing active WhatsApp group is thriving. Even an announcement of the judges' visit

was seen on the noticeboard as they toured the village! The Wrawby News also stated clearly on the front page when the judges were coming and asked readers to take steps to help the village look its best. Again, congratulations to the Wrawby News for supporting the 'Bloom' campaign by taking photographs of the volunteers and the judges on the day at the Jolly Miller. The Bloom group stated: "These are early days for our group and it's been a steep learning curve for many of us but very worthwhile and well received within our community." The pride they have in the place they live was evident.

Areas for Development

Section A

Consider entering more of the EMiB special awards next year. You have several candidates seen by judges on the tour that may like to be judged for their hard work on their horticultural contributions, both business and residential. The Bloom group mentioned their learning curve in what has gone well and what they will consider using plant-wise next year – the 'wow' moments need to be considered in line with the commitment to sustainable perennial planting. Right plant in right place, build on your excellent start this year!

Section B

The large village playing field next to the Village Hall - could there be any development of wildlife areas at its edges and at the back, with maybe bat or bird boxes being located in the trees? There was a rough grass strip which split the two parking areas by the Village Hall - could this become a wildlife corridor and No Mow May area? It is probably an area that is very difficult to mow anyway. Contact with your local Wildlife Trust may help with this. It would be good to see the results of wildlife surveys conducted by the children at the school and to compare the impact these changes may have, to share with judges in the future. Water conservation could be improved by adding water butts at the Village Hall; there were several downpipes that could be adapted. The bug hotel design as seen on the tour was a real triumph - could one of these be developed elsewhere? Consider mulching the raised beds to aid with water conservation and to keep weeding down. Perhaps a local tree surgeon may be able to supply? Street furniture and signs were generally maintained well but don't forget the bus stops! Also you have many points on a small village map as seen on the judges' tour and there were some very historic buildings/road names (Brick Yard) that could be highlighted as a village heritage walking tour. Wrawby's rich heritage could be further expanded upon within your portfolio (St Mary's Church – Saxon origin; Kettleby Manor House – Henry VIII; rumour has it that Wrawby had its own gallows etc). Have the Parish Council considered writing an environmental policy which the In Bloom group adhere to, respecting wildlife and the environment wherever possible in their projects?

Section C

Perhaps consider devising a Wrawby In Bloom logo which could be developed into a sign that could feature on planters etc round the village to highlight the hard work of the Bloom group. Perhaps fundraise for this and run a local competition? Signage crediting local businesses on planters is always appreciated and might encourage new sponsors. Consider working with other groups such as local history/ heritage groups to develop a town trail or more specific information boards. You mentioned the refurbishment of the play area including seating, planters and equipment – the judges look forward to seeing this area develop. Look to other members of your community in the assisted living bungalows or care home who may wish to be part of the Bloom and who may contribute to the tour with their front gardens or other skills. Are there any young Bloomers from a preschool, Scouts, Brownies, Guides etc who could help with a particular project? Expand in the portfolio next year your all-year-round activities and presence at village events eg the Agricultural Show.

Marks

Section A: 32 Section B: 19 Section C: 20 Total Marks: 71 Medal awarded: Silver



LARGE VILLAGE CATEGORY

Weldon in Bloom

Silver Award

Judged on 8th July 2025

Judges: Richard Stephen and Emma Schofield

Judges' Award: For the delightful floral display seen at 5th Avenue Hair and Beauty Salon. Their troughs and hanging baskets were eye catching and colourful both at the side and front of the premises. Plants were healthy and well cared for with no sign of pests and disease.

Introduction

Weldon is a suburban village on the outskirts of Corby, Northamptonshire, and was originally part of Rockingham Forest. The local Cricket Club is the hub for many group meetings including Weldon in Bloom. The judges were met by Colin and members of the Weldon in Bloom team at the cricket clubhouse where they gave their presentation over a cup of tea. Building on last year's first-time entry the volunteers have continued to develop the scope of their activities and progress in enhancing their floral displays, whilst developing their wildlife areas, increasing their volunteer numbers and carrying out work suggested by the judges to enhance their village.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The Bloom volunteers have worked hard over the year and grown from seed, repurposed or acquired stock from elsewhere. Many of the perennials or mini plugs for annual plants have been grown by the volunteers and then donated to the 'Bloom' polytunnel located on the allotment. The group described this as a "major plus." This base has proved a huge success, becoming a practical meeting place and a perfect location to carry out their work as a team. They have this year increased the number of raised planters round the village, following a colour / planting theme (snapdragons, rudbeckia, begonias, lavenders and all underplanted with spring bulbs). The plants seen by judges in the beds and planters gave a good overall impression as did their health and quality. The planter outside the Primary School was a welcoming pop of colour at the entrance. The Village Green is a large open space with mature trees and this year has been underplanted and extended with shade-loving wildlife friendly woodland plants such as foxgloves and an array of spring bulbs. Clematis has been added to grow along the railings and penstemons planted by the concrete posts to soften the look. Wildflowers were planted around the tank in commemoration of VE Day 2025 but in autumn the tank structure will be removed and a memorial tree planted. Plants seen throughout the tour had been chosen to attract butterflies and bees. The self-watering planters purchased with sponsorship from local businesses were in full colour, including the newly-installed three large linked planters near the village shop, replacing a bus stop area. This was planted by the Bloom Group and looked particularly impressive. It was unusual to see the stone 'threepenny' planters outside the local shop, quite nicely planted with a few herbs. No Mow May is observed, and there were some unmown pathways throughout for walkers. Weldon is one of a few areas of the UK that is home to meadow saxifrage and

hosts a range of orchids including bee, pyramidal and spotted. The ongoing Gandy Field project was seen on the tour but again is worth a credit in the report as it is maturing into a spot to be proud of, and the maintenance of it for the locals is a credit to the Bloom team. What was an overgrown public footpath is indeed a colourful and 'friendly' area for all to enjoy. The sensory garden has a wide variety of healthy plants and continues to develop, and the area also has two willow tunnels which are becoming established. Sunflowers grown from seed by local schoolchildren have been planted along the fence line and a wild area on the other side of this narrow strip to encourage insects. The Gandy is a well-used thoroughfare and has become a popular route home for schoolchildren and dog walkers alike. The rejuvenated concrete planters showcased some healthy herbs available to the community. Evidence of activity and colour throughout the year was demonstrated in your portfolio, on the display boards and at the presentation.

Section B - Environment

There has been a settlement in Weldon for over a millennium and it has some interesting buildings and history. Weldon is mentioned in the Domesday Book and has a rich heritage including the Cricket Club which is a key part of village life and the oldest cricket club in Northamptonshire. It was great to hear some of the history and pause on the tour at some of the buildings eg the Roundhouse, a focus for the Bloom group for 2025 and which has benefited greatly from their attention. The small garden by the doorway, a filled colourful planter, along with the relocated information sign was a celebration of the work the Bloom group have completed to enhance pride of place in the village. There was an information board seen as the judges toured the Pocket Park, a natural beauty spot where the pond sees much biodiversity including dragonflies. Marsh marigold and irises are encouraged and are naturalising well. The dedicated work to control and eradicate the Himalayan balsam is a commitment that is worth noting. The churchyard, along with Pocket Park nearby, have a designated Biodiversity Action Plan from the Wildlife Trust and numerous bird and bat boxes are sited there. Volunteers have planted a wildflower area at The Leys, a carefully managed area where wildflower seed planting has been carried out. For the community spaces the Parish Council employs a parish caretaker one day a week for grounds maintenance, grass cutting and watering around the village. Overall, the village was well presented. There is an active litter-picking group and there was very little litter to be seen. Having originally been a part of Rockingham Forest the landscape retains many areas of woodland and wild spaces including The Leys and Hills and Hollows. This is managed by Weldon in Bloom. The Willowbrook running through it is delightful and is home to an abundance of wildlife including red kites. The Parish Council have a written environmental policy which the In Bloom group adhere to, respecting wildlife and the environment wherever possible in their projects. Composting was carried out at the Bloom allotment HQ and evidence of reuse and recycling for materials and rainwater collection was evident. All compost used for planting is peat free and a local tree surgeon provides free bark mulch.

Section C - Community

The Parish Council are very supportive of Weldon in Bloom and make up a core part of the In Bloom group. As a place it is a busy and active community. Many local residents care for planters near their homes, watering etc, and sponsorship signage was evident. The pupils in the village school particularly the Eco Warriors support Weldon in Bloom as volunteer gardeners - visiting the allotment, planting up and caring for the school entrance planter. It was great to meet Leo and Grace who have grown sunflowers seen round the village. The Parish Council have also forged alliances with local building contractors to ensure the village extends its green spaces as new housing is built. They also consulted with the Bloom group on planting choices on the new roundabout on Oundle Road. Local businesses have been supportive and sponsorship is acknowledged in the portfolio, Parish Council Instagram and Facebook. The Fourteen Bridges circular walk in Weldon is new addition and is proving popular with the local walking group, residents and visitors. The cricket club continues to be a hub for village events including the fête and

Weldon in Bloom meetings. Christmas lights decorate the Village Green each December amongst the bushes and trees. The Bloom group are holding, for the second year, a gardening competition for Best Front Garden and a Wacky Planter, and this is well promoted on signs in planters round the village. It was good to see photos of the winning entries from last year in the portfolio. Continued use is made of the national Community Payback scheme, with participants carrying out a range of jobs under the watchful eye of the Bloom group. The War Memorial, Village Green and Triangle are used for village activities throughout the year. It was good to see some very good residential gardens throughout the tour eg 7 School Lane, Old School House, the Groundsman's house adjacent to the cricket ground itself, and not forgetting The George pub had a couple of nice hanging baskets.

Areas for Development

Section A

The Bloom group mentioned their learning curve in what has gone well and what they will consider using plant-wise next year – the 'Wow' moments need to be considered in line with the commitment to sustainable perennial planting. Right plant in right place, build on your display this year! During the tour the Bloom group highlighted plans for replacement of some key beds using salvaged wood; again the judges look forward to seeing the outcomes. At the Cricket Club the large raised bed at the gate was sadly, due to a variety of reasons, not looking as well as hoped. Consider your judging route carefully, as the route began and ended at the Cricket Club - first and last impressions are always important. Some of the planting that had been attempted under trees had not been as successful as you had hoped. Perhaps some of these areas should be left as part of your stunning bulb displays in the spring and you can look at using those plants elsewhere.

Section B

The wildlife areas at The Leys and Hills and Hollows have so much to offer. It would be good to see and hear about any national butterfly/ bird survey results if they have been carried out, and if not maybe local school children or youth groups could be involved in producing some information on behalf of the Bloom group. Although most of the areas the judges saw were well presented and maintained there were one or two neglected areas that the Bloom group should consider addressing eg the wooden platform near the pond.

Water conservation could be improved further by adding water butts at the Cricket Club or at the new development next to the Village Stores. Also consider using mulch on the more exposed beds to help water retention and to help keep weeds suppressed. Street furniture and signs were generally maintained well but don't forget the bus stops! The concrete planters on High Street are distinctive and significant in their heritage, however you might consider relocating them to a more suitable location where they might be more appreciated. Maybe there is an opportunity to highlight these unusual planters and other things referenced on the tour with interpretation boards to inform visitors and locals about the many historic buildings and the village's history eg former Rope Walk along Corby Road, former brewery.

Section C

Consider entering more of the EMiB special awards next year - you have several candidates seen by judges on the tour that may like to be judged for their individual hard work on their horticultural efforts. The Best Front Garden, Business and Pub / Hotel should be considered for 2026. The school can be entered in their own right and receive recognition in the School Celebration in June. The judges look forward to seeing the One Stop Shop contributing to the village's floral display next year. You have your Weldon in Bloom logo now, so perhaps you may wish to develop this into a self-promotion sign that could feature on planters etc around the village to highlight the hard work of the Bloom group. Consider fundraising for this and run a

local competition? Look to your other members of the community, are there any groups that could further support the Bloom and may wish to be part of Bloom 2026? They may wish to contribute to the tour with their front gardens or other skills that could be used. Are there any young Bloomers from a preschool etc that could help with a particular project, or Scouts/ Guides and Brownies ? Expand in the portfolio next year your all-year-round activities and presence at events in the village as a Bloom group and your fundraising activities / presence at events etc.

Marks

Section A: 26

Section B :22

Section C: 22

Total Marks : 70

Medal Awarded: Silver

SMALL COASTAL CATEGORY

(SPONSORSHIP AVAILABLE)



SMALL COASTAL CATEGORY

Trusthorpe - 'Remembering our History'

Silver Gilt

Judged on 8th July 2025

Judges Nicholas Litherland and Malcolm Fisher

Judges' Award: To Diana Povah for her drive, commitment and enthusiasm towards the residents and village of Trusthorpe and excellent support and leadership of the Bloom Group.

Introduction

Trusthorpe, a small coastal village between Mablethorpe and Skegness, is a popular area for holidaymakers. The judges met Diana and some of the team of volunteers who run the Trusthorpe Clangers in Bloom at St Peter's Church Annex. After welcome refreshments we were given a review of the activities of the Bloom Group and presented with the very well-produced portfolio which emphasised the great sense of community spirit and pride within the village. This became very apparent later when speaking to the residents. Through Diana Povah's enthusiasm the village has a year-round calendar of social and fundraising events.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The tour of the village began at St Peter's Annex near the church, where Diana introduced us to the team of volunteers responsible for maintaining this themed area of individual gardens. The gardens portray many aspects of village life within Trusthorpe. We saw the gazebo 'Celebrating food and friendships that flourish through gardening,' surrounded by beautifully flowering tubs and hanging baskets of annuals including geraniums, petunias and pansies. The Remembrance Garden, Coronation Corner and a new woodland walk were amongst many areas of interest. These individual gardens highlighted much of the community's engagement within Trusthorpe. This area was planted with a mixture of annuals, perennials and small shrubs. An interpretation board telling the interesting history of the 'Last of the Lincolnshire Sluice Gates' was particularly interesting.

The Judges 'opened' the new Education Centre, a recent community project creating a place for learning for all in the community. We then walked towards St Peter's Church where paths had recently been restored with help from a cash grant from the Theddlethorpe Nuclear Project, making them safer for pedestrians. The church grounds were well maintained, with planters containing cheerful annuals and perennials which brightened up the area. There was also some underplanting of bulbs for a welcoming spring display. Flower arrangements were seen within the church along with a 'Britain in Bloom Coastal Village' display portraying recent awards.

A short walk took us to the Main Bridge Triangle which was a lovely area of planted containers with colourful annuals and perennials. Although some plants are bought from a local supplier, grown in peat-

free compost, all the geraniums in a range of colours are grown by the Bloom Group. When entering the village, visitors see a magnificent lavender in full bloom attracting many insects and butterflies, a well-maintained lawn and a neat and tidy bus shelter.

Trusthorpe Springs holiday sites showed many displays with tubs, planters and beds of colourful annuals at the entrance to and throughout their parks. These showed a well-thought-out use of annuals for both colour and design, and considering the shortage of rainwater this spring and summer all plants were generally looking healthy and cared for.

Section B - Environment

Throughout the tour of Trusthorpe the judges were made aware of the clear understanding that the various groups within the village have for the care of their environment. There was evidence of composting, rainwater capture and wildlife conservation initiatives, including bird, bat and swift boxes etc. During our tour we saw neat and tidy lawns, well maintained kerbs and footpaths. Benches, signs and noticeboards were clean and the village was free of litter. As well as supporting local wildlife with bird and bat boxes, there are some wildflower areas and good use of pollinator plants, amongst many activities to encourage biodiversity in the area.

The removal of reeds around the Lakeside site, part of the Springs holiday estates, has provided a wonderful opportunity for several species of wildfowl to take up residence. This site also provides space to produce its own compost which is used throughout the other sites, showing a commitment to the preservation and conservation of the local environment.

Section C - Community

There are so many activities within this village that contribute to making this a thriving community. Fundraising and particularly the Theddlethorpe Nuclear Grant and community dedication have enabled several projects to be completed this year including the construction of the Education Centre at St Peter's Paddock and repairs to the paths around St Peter's Church, as well as the decorating of the Bell Tower and the rebuilding of the Bell Tower window.

A bird box competition encouraged residents of all ages to create their own box, and a Snowdrop photography competition was well supported. Looking through the booklet given to the judges, this month-by-month record of village social and fundraising activities gives evidence of the year-round social life of Trusthorpe residents, ably supported by the Bloom Group.

There are informative interpretation boards throughout the village explaining the historical and environmental importance of the area. The community is represented through a variety of local groups and organisations covering all ages. As well as the fundraising activities there is ongoing support from a range of businesses with sponsorship of the planters at the Triangle site and also some local authority funding.

Areas for Development

Section A - Horticulture

Although the floral displays at Trusthorpe Springs and the Triangle were impressive, would it be possible to see more planted area within the village? Have you considered a Best Kept Garden competition? Are there allotments to visit, and is it possible to get more involvement with young people or local schools?

Section B - Environment

The new development at Lakeside is impressive and more such innovations would be welcome. Could more wildflower areas with a range of mixed planting be created to further encourage biodiversity? Could an area within the churchyard be developed in this way?

Section C - Community

The commitment involving the community is evident. The only comment is the apparent shortage of younger people taking part. More activities with schools or young persons' groups could be encouraged.

MARKS: Section A 29

Section B 23

Section C 25

Total 77

URBAN COMMUNITY CATEGORY

(SPONSORSHIP AVAILABLE)



URBAN COMMUNITY CATEGORY

Scartho in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 4th July 2025

Judges: John Constable & Elaine Atkinson

Judges' Award: To Scartho Wombles for helping to keep Scartho a litter-free area.

Introduction

The judges were met at the Rose and Crown public house by Lee Robinson and Alan Tregunno (chairman and vice-chairman respectively of Scartho in Bloom) on a warm sunny day. It was gratifying to hear that the Rose and Crown allowed users of the adjoining recreation field free use of their carpark.

Areas of achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Trees had been planted in the winter of 2024-25 near the Rose and Crown entrance to the playing fields. Each has its water sack and animal proof fencing and looked to be establishing nicely. The planting was supported by councillors Ron Shepherd, Ian Lindley and Dan Humphrey after a council survey established that the green canopy area was too low. Additional assistance was provided by All Things Good & Nice, the Co-op and local schools.

The planter and the areas around both village halls, including the border adjacent to the smaller village hall, and the churchyard, were very well maintained by Corrina and Steve Coulson. The grass verge alongside Church Lane had been planted with tulips - donated by Darryl's Shed.

The Methodist church on Louth Road maintains its own front garden and is planning increased involvement in SiB (Scartho in Bloom).

The traffic island is maintained by the council. It is planted with many grasses and features a "Lest we forget" soldier silhouette. The triangle on the Ferriby Lane approach is similarly maintained and contains a pleasing mixture of compact low- growing evergreen shrubs.

Section B - Environment

The meadow has had footpaths cut through it since last year, following the tracks that people have made. SiB maintain the pathways through the meadow whilst the council cut the main recreational field.

Yellow rattle was introduced which will help restrict the vigorous grass species and assist more attractive traditional species to flourish. Wildlife surveys within the meadow are planned for family and children's groups. A £4,000 grant was obtained towards planting of wildflower seeds in the woods, together with English bluebells, as well as adding bird and owl boxes. Bird and bat boxes have been installed in the woods.

The area between the smaller village hall and the churchyard is being developed to encourage wildlife with a stumpery, composting area and a new pond under construction by Corrina and Steve. Bird boxes and bug

hotels are in place here, too. The Glebe is an area alongside the churchyard that is left to grow wild, being cleared annually, while a footpath alongside it is kept clear and remains in daily use. The mound is a raised area at the bottom of the churchyard which has been left to grow wildflowers. Four IBCs have been installed in the community garden to capture rainwater. Judges noted an absence of litter and detritus throughout the tour.

Section C - Community

The grass meadow is at a relatively low height allowing young children to run around without losing sight of their accompanying adults. The small woodland area is quite light and open with clear footpaths encouraging community use.

Cubs and Brownie groups are being encouraged to undertake wildlife studies and litter picks alongside the Scartho Wombles. SiB has organised a Best Front Garden competition, now in its third year, and has six entries this year with all entrants receiving a prize.

Scartho has two well-used village halls with the smaller of the two surrounded by a sizeable grassed area suitable for outdoor community events. Lists of activities in both halls appears on the nearby noticeboard. Footpaths alongside and through the churchyard are well maintained. There was a church on the site 1,000 years ago and parts of the old building remain.

Jason Threadgold funeral directors sponsor SiB and provide water for nearby planter watering, as does the nearby Scartho Dental Practice. Behind Swales butchers, and owned by them, is a community garden which is being redesigned at a time when the long-time volunteer gardener has had to reduce his involvement. It is a valuable secluded tidily-maintained space where locals can sit and relax.

There is good evidence in the portfolio of past and planned future events, together with names of many supportive local businesses.

Areas for development

Section A

The planned survey of species on the meadow area between recreational field and woodland will help understand how successful the sowing of wildflower seeds has been and help to plan future interventions; future judges will be interested to hear about that. Perhaps a tree species information board could be provided. Some pictures of the woods and other areas in spring and autumn will help to give an all-year-round impression.

It will be interesting to see how Izzy's ideas are incorporated in the community garden. Pictures recording any changes will help judges visualise what changes have been made.

Section B

Recording of species and numbers will help understand how interventions such as encouraging wildflowers and the bird boxes has affected numbers - Lincolnshire Bird Club or the Wildlife Trust would be probably be good potential partners with that.

Apart from the community garden more evidence of rainwater capture and use would be appropriate. Some information boards about the history of Scartho would be interesting.

Section C

More direct contact with the infant and junior schools would be a welcome addition for judges to see their involvement with local projects and learn how they are used in their curriculum studies. It was good to see a list of the year's events and what is planned for 2025/26. Pictures of volunteer activity as well as 'before and after' shots will help future judges visualise what has been achieved.

Marks: Section A: 33 Section B: 23 Section C: 24 TOTAL 80



URBAN COMMUNITY CATEGORY

Friends of Evington – Evington in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 3rd July 2025

Judges: John Constable and Julie Walker

Judges' Award: To Addy Tyler (litter champion) and the Evington Litter Wombles

Introduction

The judges were met by an enthusiastic team of Helen Pettman and Chris Hossack plus Rob Watson from the Evington Echo. We briefly met Cllr Zuffar Haq who represents the Ward and has provided help and support to the group. The tour, led by Chris, was predominantly within the designated Evington conservation area.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

Evington in Bloom has a new sponsor, Ginns and Gutteridge funeral directors. The company has given a grant for plants and also allows staff member Sarah Brookes to take time during her working day to plant and tend four large planters and three smaller ones outside the branch and nearby. The planters contain an attractive and sensory assortment of plants planted informally and with thought for nature, including lavender, cosmos, dianthus, poppy and verbenas. The company also sponsored a spring display.

All containers and hanging baskets seen by the judges looked healthy and well maintained. Containers outside the library, watered by library staff, gave a good impression, although the containers adjacent to the entrance containing very healthy vegetables hadn't attracted the interest from schools that was hoped for. The balloon flower and canna combination in the container outside the estate agents had real potential, as did the pearl millet/cosmos combination seen elsewhere.

Ground planted beds were looking as well as could be expected considering the dry weather conditions. The war memorial bed has been planted with traditional annual bedding for the last time, with a plan to replace it with perennials in the future.

The Cedars pub has a range of attractive displays including hanging baskets with annual bedding and a large raised bed with lovely bee-friendly planting.

One of the highlights of the judges' tour was the walk through the Arboretum which has many excellent specimens, is well maintained and is an exceptional community asset.

The judges enjoyed seeing the immaculate bowling green and enjoyed judging the members' hanging basket competition.

Section B - Environment

Piggy's Hollow and the Arboretum provide a valuable home for much animal life. We were told about muntjac and badgers, and on cue a red kite arrived. The overgrown centre of Piggy's Hollow is partly cleared annually allows the badgers to stay in situ - although their recently acquired liking for tulip bulbs is not good news for admirers of a potential spring display! There are a number of information/interpretation boards round the route providing interesting local information. The condition of planters was variable - the more recent additions and older but very well maintained examples really enhance the display whilst a more tired appearance can detract from the quality planting and conscientious watering efforts of volunteers.

The judges were pleased to meet the inspirational Addy Tyler, who co-ordinates the work of the 20 Evington Litter Wombles. Addy repaired an old trolley that had been fly tipped and now uses it on her litter-picking rounds.

Section C - Community

The Evington Echo clearly provides a wealth of local information and, as Rob Watson explained in the presentation, passes news to the 6,000+ recipients.

It was great to meet Sarah Ingram from the City Council Parks Team who liaises with the various teams of employees and volunteers working in the area and is clearly doing an excellent job despite limited resources.

It was good to see 'Evington in Bloom' posters and banners in high profile sites, as well as sponsorship signs on numerous planters.

Areas for Development

Section A

Judges were told about 800 daffodils bulbs planted several years ago and the annual display of snowdrops and aconites around the churchyard. Photographs of this would enhance the portfolio. Burnaby Gardens to the back of the hall was disappointing with box blight and a general lack of maintenance - perhaps worth including on future routes if improvements can be made?

Section B

The continued difficulties finding sites for water recycling were mentioned in the presentation and whilst composting was mentioned there were limited sites highlighted on the tour. Whilst the plants were well maintained some of the planters could do with brightening up (for example those to the side of Nazar BBQ)

Section C

The portfolio supplied is very interesting and it was helpful to receive it in advance. It might be improved by reducing the number of images and improving their quality so that detail is more apparent. The Patch Walk is a great idea but an example of some highlighted concerns that have been addressed would send a good message. It would have been nice to meet a few more active volunteers en route or see pictures of them volunteering, particularly multicultural groups and young supporters. The area behind Evington Hall would make an impressive before and after story.

Marks: Section A: 32

Section B: 23

Section C: 23

Total: 78



URBAN COMMUNITY CATEGORY

Littleover in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 7th July 2025

Judges: John Constable and Andrew Constable

Judges' Award: For the Friends of Littleover Parks who in conjunction with Derby City Parks work to maintain and enhance the parks in Littleover for the benefit of the community.

Introduction

Judges were met by Jan Jackson, Jane Arguile and Glenda Howcroft at the Littleover Grange Hall Community Centre. There they saw a display and listened to an introduction outlining some of the history of Littleover, its Bloom entries and some of the projects it has been associated with over the past 17 years. Jan outlined the background to this year's theme - Celebrating 200 years of the British Rail passenger service - and highlighted some of the community and business involvement that has contributed to this year's entry.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The Carlisle Avenue garden, shown to us by Dawn Gee, was well maintained with mainly perennials, shrubs and spring bulbs. The containers around the entrance to the Methodist Hall were shown to us by Jane Austin. They are maintained by Guides and acknowledged the Bloom railway theme. The border of castor oil plants alongside the Methodist Church looked very healthy.

The containers and hanging baskets around The White Swan really brightened up the area and were grown by Brendan Donahue, the landlord, using purchased plug plants. St Peter's Churchyard is maintained by volunteers including churchwarden Chris Jones and Julia Cross, a member of the Creation Care Group. The practicalities of handling Himalayan balsam, a non-native invasive species, were explained by Ali Davies-Marsh of the Friends of Littleover Parks at Sunnysdale Park/nature reserve.

Finally we visited the centre of Littleover where containers and baskets were colourful, well-grown and maintained. Generally hanging baskets were obtained from a garden centre and watered by the council, whilst several businesses had their own, with the Half Moon public house, alongside Burton Road, being eye-catching. Several local businesses assist with supply of water for watering by Bloom volunteers. The central display, featuring the railway theme, was very well maintained by Ian Samways.

Section B - Environment

The Guides used plants purchased from the Scouts' plant sale and planted in peat-free compost. The use of recycled plastic bottles for seed germination was interesting. A bird box at the Methodist Church had been used to rear a family of blackbirds this year. There was an emphasis on peat-free compost, and Brendan at The White Swan explained how their basket compost was recycled/re-used as much as possible. The grassed areas of St Peter's Churchyard were cut by those involved with Community Payback and also parishioner volunteers who leave parts of the remaining area uncut until the autumn to encourage wildflowers to proliferate. The aim to encourage an increase in wildlife is being monitored with the help of

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. There are several tree species and there is evidence of hedgehogs. Footpaths were clean and well maintained. The standing dead tree is good environmental practice.

The Derby Parks team retain responsibility for grass cutting at the eight sites round Littleover. Recording of wildlife numbers is undertaken by the Friends in conjunction with East Midlands Butterfly Conservation and Derbyshire Bat Group.

There was a reasonable absence of litter on the tour - the Littleover household recycling rate is 47% compared with 39% for the rest of Derby.

Section C - Community

Carlisle Avenue was an area that suffered significant crime and loutish behaviour around 25 years ago and since then the local community has come together to improve it. The work in the garden and grass cutting, now in its tenth year, is all undertaken by local volunteers who also liaise with the local council to lock the local park every evening. Money has been raised locally to purchase plants as required, and the soldier silhouettes were donated by neighbours of the garden. The metal bench was made by a local community group as was a similar bench in the centre of the village.

At the Methodist Hall where the Scouts and Guides meet, we met Jane Austin who is involved with the Guides. We saw some of the results of their efforts with planted containers, and it was nice that the railway theme was used with the incorporation of a luggage trunk on sack wheels. It was good to hear that there is a possibility of re-connecting with the allotment group. Bonsai and Fuchsia and gardening clubs meet at the community centre. Wreath-making and Christmas decoration workshops were held.

The Friends of Littleover Parks group has 150 volunteer members who contributed over 2,000 volunteer hours in 2024 helping with the maintenance of Littleover parks. There was a WI three-tier planter in the village centre, and it was good to see pubs and a funeral parlour brightening their premises. A list of supporters was included in the portfolio.

Areas for Development

Section A

The portfolio should focus on areas connected with the current year's entry.

Perhaps the most impactful planter/container in the centre is the three-tiered WI planter: consider other ways to emphasise planting with height and colour in the village centre. If displays peak too soon for judging, create a collection of pictures to show judges what they missed! Would a colour scheme for the village centre help locals appreciate the influence and impact of the Bloom group?

Section B

Judges were informed about recycled railway sleepers, rockery stone and compost: show evidence on the tour or in the portfolio. We were told about rainwater harvesting but didn't see it: if it isn't on the judging route or accessible, pictures would be valuable. It was pleasing to hear about cleaning of street signs but 'before and after' pictorial evidence would be beneficial. The area around the St Peter's Church sign and entrance walkway and some of the hard landscaping in the centre could be tidied. It would be interesting to hear from the Friends of Parks how their work has affected animal and plant species.

Section C

Provide a plan of the judging route: this is valuable to judges and helps to recollect their visit whilst report writing! There were sponsors' names alongside "Littleover in Bloom" labels on some planters but more labelling of the containers even if just with "Littleover in Bloom" would help to publicise the considerable efforts undertaken on behalf of the village. The use of social media/local radio/newspapers wasn't mentioned and would be worthwhile if not already being done. Try to work with local schools, and a visit would be useful if possible.

Marks: Section A: 30

Section B: 22 Section C: 23

Total 75

SILVER GILT AWARD



URBAN COMMUNITY CATEGORY

Woodgate Residents Association

Certificate of Achievement

Judged on July 3rd 2025

Judges: John Constable and Julie Walker

Judges' Award: To Woodgate Community Centre for the wonderful displays of planters and baskets.

Introduction

This is the first time Woodgate has entered the East Midlands in Bloom competition. The judges met with Geoff Forse and Sally Skyrme at Woodgate Community Centre which is the centre of current activities. Geoff is a long-time resident and the treasurer of Woodgate Residents Association, while Sally has arrived recently and has enthusiastically become involved in the enhancement of Woodgate's environment and community life.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Judges were shown well-planted tubs and hanging baskets that had been supplied from the community centre and were predominantly maintained by Geoff and helpers. Plants were obtained locally supported by a local council grant and included trailing red begonias, fuchsias, bacopa, silver cushion bush, lobelia and yellow bur marigolds providing a real contrast. Two plant beds had been created at the entrance to the local King Tyres depot and were being watered by them. A large eye-catching "Woodgate" mural runs opposite the community centre and adjoining it were several planted tubs and a raised planted area. Planting in these containers provides more height with grasses and purple top vervain amongst others. Another smaller mural appears at the community centre entrance, enhanced by a number of well-maintained planters.

Section B - Environment

The Woodgate area of Leicester has suffered from industrial decline in recent times. Most of the area that judges were shown was late-19th century terraced housing alongside connecting and through roads. The community centre is clean and well-maintained and the exterior alongside Woodgate is immaculate, with smart new 'Woodgate' lettering installed to raise awareness of the centre. The community centre has solar panels installed and there is a Lottery-funded water recycling plant installed, although currently 'out of order'.

The adjoining River Soar has been poorly maintained and immediate access to or deriving any benefit from it environmentally is a major challenge.

Planter and hanging basket plants were obtained from a local garden centre. The hanging baskets have water reservoirs and 14 are on drip-feed watering. It is intended to overwinter plants where possible. There is a Woodgate Wombles litter picking group.

Section C – Community

The community centre appears to be thriving and offers a range of activities for all ages and cultures. The 75 hanging baskets had been planted up in a sheltered area to the rear of the community centre by Geoff and four colleagues and grown on hanging from specially constructed rails. Baskets had been provided free of charge to 40 houses and provided an impressive display alongside the community centre. There are two volunteers who undertake non horticultural work. The local children's adventure playground had two planters outside its entrance and two quirky planters upcycled from tumble dryer drums which had been planted by the children and watered by playground staff.

Areas for Development

Section A

The raised beds in the play area could be planted and maintained if a suitable volunteer could be found, perhaps involving the children so they "take ownership"? The play centre staff have plans to enhance the play area by the entrance, too, which would make a visible difference for everyone entering and leaving. It would be a good idea to start gathering photos and information for a portfolio to show the judges next year, concentrating on things that you are unable to show during their visit – for example, Spring displays, and photos of volunteers helping with planting activities.

Section B

When redevelopments take place encourage planting of suitable tree/plant species to help to reduce the vehicle noise and absorb vehicle emissions.

Litter is quite a problem. Consider working with the local school to run a 'Keep Woodgate Tidy' poster competition to encourage pride and respect for the area.

Section C

Local councillors hold monthly surgeries at the centre and so enlisting their further help and support for future plans should be considered. Contact the local primary school/s to support their curricular activities relating to plants and their functions.

The judges would love to meet more volunteers along the route!

Marks: Section A: 24

Section B:11

Section C:14

Total Marks: 49

SMALL TOWN CATEGORY

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SMALL TOWN CATEGORY

Uppingham in Bloom

Gold Award

Judged on 11th July 2025

Judges: Jeff & Irene Bates

Judges' Award: Residents adjacent to Tod's Piece for enhancement using potted plants to the fronts of their properties, benefitting owners and also park and footpath visitors.

Introduction

An introduction to the tour began with an overview of activities in the past year from Sarah Medley at The Falcon Hotel. The judging route was confirmed and a map supplied. The tour then followed, showing the ability of the group to achieve wonderful enhancement of this historic town by appropriate use of plants in many different contexts. A well-balanced tour was mostly on foot, and even though the temperature was very high, the judges enjoyed every moment. The tour ended at the Cricket Ground, with light refreshments to which all participants in 'Uppingham in Bloom' had been invited.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

A well-planned tour of the town showed off high-quality growing in many different areas, from allotments to parks, but most noticeable was the impact of tiny front gardens and the use of containers in the many alleys, on paths immediately outside homes and outside businesses. The Bloom team had planted numerous hayracks on appropriate walls, with Baines Corner an excellent example. An unusual new contribution was seen in Mercer's Yard, where huge permanent planters were planted mainly using perennials, including bamboos and grasses to give height and structure.

Tod's Piece showed new tree planting and the developing Sensory Garden, with all now enhanced by the contribution of residents placing containers of plants, often perennials, outside front doors and along walls, making this a most welcoming scene.

A walk through the arboretum showed trees that were labelled and well cared for, part of an extensive tree trail through the town. The main grassed areas in between are not intensively maintained, making the experience very relaxing.

Leighfield School was visited, where children were making good use of the Forest Garden; their 'kitchen garden' was seen on the way, where a range of edible crops have been grown as well as some flowers. At the allotments the judges were shown the new community plot, with a pond. This area was previously disused and now adds greatly to the overall area, where flourishing crops of fruit and vegetables were seen across the whole site.

The Uppingham topiary was visited. At the side of a busy road, but where traffic is often not moving as traffic lights are nearby, perfectly-trimmed Buxus sempervirens spell out the name of the town.

Uppingham School frontages are perfectly complemented by immaculate clipped yews, underplanted with annuals and perennials in well-considered colour schemes.

Section B - Environment

With much of the town having little opportunity or space to undertake permanent planting, the Uppingham team has not stopped Section B being a great strength of the entry. Measures put in place to overcome lack of 'open ground' include a change to species used, with evidence of a backbone of perennials, often covering the full breadth of the seasons, to provide food sources for insects as well as reduction in the need for plants to be raised under cover for seasonal bedding and the costs required. Excellent examples were seen at Dairy Corner, in Mercer's Yard, outside Rutland Antiques, in the entrance to Tod's Piece and on the verge outside The Wisterias.

The Arboretum is being sensitively managed, with grass cutting now reduced to one or two cuts per year, and increased insect and bird activity a clear consequence. A change in mowing schedule has also been agreed with the County Council to reduce the frequency of cutting in the closed churchyard, with a first cut in late summer and a tidy-up at the end of the year. Verge cuts have been changed to enable more bulb planting to be done and for the bulbs to thrive.

The judges visited the composting site in Uppingham School grounds, where all green waste, not only from the vast area of the school playing fields, lawns and decorative areas, but also all waste from Uppingham in Bloom, is processed and composted for re-use wherever needed. In total 900 tonnes were processed in 2024, meaning a substantial reduction in the need to buy materials as well as preventing the need for waste to be disposed of.

Signage throughout the town is in excellent condition, little if any evidence seen of spontaneous plants (weeds), no graffiti, dog-fouling etc. Long-term litter was not evident, and the work of the Wombles (the litter-picking group in the town) ensures that transient litter – inevitable in such a busy town with a major crossroads in the centre – is soon removed.

Water collection is evident in all possible locations and mulching is extensively used to keep soil in peak condition.

The visit to the allotments, mentioned in Section A above, showed the new pond and other features specifically developed to enhance biodiversity at the site.

Section C - Community

The judges cannot overstate the evidence of this during the tour. It feels that every house, street and business is not only aware of Uppingham in Bloom, but also supportive of their work. Alleys are all colourful, done by the residents and businesses but clearly gaining from the advice and support of Bloom. Examples were repeatedly seen where one house or business did something positive, such as putting out appropriate containers by the house or business frontage, and within no time all the neighbours did likewise. It was pleasing to see that there was a good mix of seasonal colour and perennials used.

Business support is immense, mainly in the form of positive involvement. There are also many sponsorships – far too many to list here – but all given prominence in the portfolio and annual Bloom report. The judges did look in some detail at the 'beer garden' of The Exeter Arms, which is best described as a wonderful garden, adjoining a pavement on a main road, with parasols, tables and chairs attached. Not just colourful annuals, but many perennials and all placed according to the environment and aspect in which they are located.

The Bloom group have supported work at Leighfield School, where the established 'kitchen garden' has now been joined by a Forest School area, where the judges were pleased to meet the teacher and a number of young people enjoying the plants and the opportunity of learning by doing, as well as the physical benefits of outdoor activities.

Uppingham School has already been mentioned several times, and the transport between locations was via a school minibus, together with a driver from the grounds team and Keith, deputy head groundsman,

accompanying us throughout the tour as he has significant involvement in the management of the Arboretum as well as all areas of school grounds that are outward-facing, notably along Stockerston Road.

Areas for Development

Section A

This is a case of 'keep doing what you are doing' as every aspect of this section shows excellence. Some areas of planting are quite recent, and thus not yet properly established, but maintenance is very good and success is clearly on the way.

Section B

The Arboretum is perhaps ready for signage to be renewed and odd benches were seen that need repainting.

Section C

Nothing to recommend here – Uppingham in Bloom is an outstanding example of what a huge and positive impact 'The Bloom' can have on a community when it acts at all times with a 'can do' approach.

Marks: Section A: 37 Section B: 26 Section C:29 Total 92 Gold Award



SMALL TOWN CATEGORY

Edwinstowe

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 2nd July 2025

Judges: Jeff & Irene Bates

Judges' Award: To the Edwinstowe in Bloom team, especially at the Allotments, for their 'Drop-Spot' initiative to provide locally-grown produce to the Food Bank.

Introduction

At the Cricket Club, a PowerPoint presentation from Jo Aylwin covered the past 12 months of work by Edwinstowe in Bloom. The tour was mostly on foot covering all aspects of the Bloom criteria. The focus in 2025 was to commemorate the centenary of Thoresby Colliery, and this was seen in numerous ways during the visit. History abounded on the tour, with Blue Plaques in various places. Flowers along the High Street were in excellent condition, community involvement was strongly evident, and innovation was notable at the Allotments. A hectic tour on a hot day concluded with refreshments back at the Cricket Club.

Areas of Achievement

Section A: Horticulture

Excellence was on display at the Allotments, with quality produce grown across the site and at the Edwinstowe in Bloom plots, where plants for use in the town are raised, a very innovative irrigation system was seen, solar-powered and with drip-lines to minimise wastage. Here also the Drop-Spot operates, where every week surplus produce from across the whole of the allotments or from home gardens can be left for collection by the local food bank. Raised beds are present at different levels to enable access for those with reduced physical abilities. From here the tour went through much of the central area of the town, where floriferous hanging baskets (maintained by the local authority) were seen in numerous locations. Good work was seen at the Fire Station, and by the Bloom team at entrance signs into the town on the main roads.

Very positive contributions were made by businesses, with Fables Coffee House, Central Tyres and The Lansbury all seen on the tour (the Craft Centre was intended to be visited but unfortunately was closed and so was only glimpsed through the gate).

The garden at the Thoresby Colliery Memorial Garden was well-maintained. The adjacent Scouts area showed some good work underway in both horticulture and recognition of the history.

Section B: Environment

Linda's Meadow was a main feature in this section. A 'neglected verge corner' is being gradually converted to a wildlife haven of grasses, annual and perennial native wildflowers. This is work in progress – not helped by the extreme weather conditions present since March – but is already showing signs of success. Here, and also at sites including the Allotments, Scouts area and St Mary's Church, are bug hotels, hedgehog homes and other features to improve local biodiversity.

Rainwater harvesting is evident at the Allotments and businesses including Fables and The Lansbury.

All the 'Bloom' signage, commemorative plaques, street furniture etc. viewed was in excellent condition. For a busy location with much through traffic the route was also very clean and litter-free. Art in the landscape was also evident in many areas, including Linda's Meadow. Good use of mulch was seen in most areas, notably so at Fables where the slate used complemented the planting style and accompanying plant labels (itself a very positive contribution).

Section C: Community

Community involvement shone throughout the visit. All generations are involved, business involvement is excellent, local authorities support your work. The opening presentation covered the past 'Bloom Year' and it is clear that your work never ceases. Communication is excellent across all categories; business and local authority support is strong; all ages are active. In the final gathering back at the Cricket Club the judges met representatives of the litter-picking group who co-ordinate their all-year-round work with Edwinstowe in Bloom when needed.

Areas for Development

Section A

The difficult season has made this year a particularly challenging one, moving from waterlogged to drought, but there is scope to improve some areas where planting is not yet fully established. Maintenance is generally good and a consistent focus on mulching where this is not in place would be beneficial. There is also some 'street gutter weed' in areas along the High Street which detracts a little from the overall impression.

Section B

A strong section overall, and judges commend your work across this area. One idea that may be worth considering is the closed cemetery at St Mary's Church, which is all close-mown (though does have snowdrops and primroses in winter/early spring). There may be scope to discuss changing the mowing regime to enable some grass areas to grow and become meadow, and after addition of Yellow Rattle seeds, perhaps adding native perennial meadow flower seeds and plug plants to create a habitat to further support your efforts with bug hotels, solitary bee nest sites and hedgehog houses across the town.

Section C

Nothing to add – an entry that is excellent in all aspects of this section. A splendid tour (but do pay attention to timekeeping) where community involvement and spirit abounded throughout.

Marks: Section A: 32

Section B: 25

Section C:27

Total 84 Silver Gilt Award



EAST MIDLANDS

SMALL TOWN CATEGORY

Repton in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 1st July 2025

Judges: Irene & Jeff Bates

Judges' Award: To the children of St Wystan's School for the displays on the High Street.

Introduction

Repton Village, although a small town in terms of population, prides itself as the historic capital of Mercia. The pride of the residents was evident as seen by the beautifully maintained hanging baskets and wonderful frontages of so many of those who clearly enjoy where they live. Much credit is given to Owen and Helen who are the prime movers of this 'Blooming entry' and have engaged so many people to the 'In Bloom' campaign. The judging tour commenced at the Village Hall and ended at the allotments which were a joy to see on a balmy sunny afternoon.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

Judges were welcomed with light refreshments at the Village Hall, where Owen and Helen Jowett and Councillors Steve Hardwick and Mary Hurren were met. Outside the Village Hall café are immaculately maintained borders of perennials in subtle colours, mainly silver and yellow, including achillea, eschscholzia and stachys. These are a credit to Pauline from the Maple Tree Café and appreciated by all who visit. St Wystan's schoolchildren were keen to talk about the lovely displays of perennials and annuals in containers, large and small, which were an eye-catching frontage to the school with no garden space. Many of the children showed knowledge of the plants and their observations and quotes were displayed on laminated cards outside the school. The large metal cut-out colourful dinosaurs on the wall added to the background and street scene.

At the Repton Cross, a Grade 1 Listed historic monument, planters of colourful annuals were placed around the octagonal base. At the crossing point were two stone troughs with a display of red and white plants and at strategic areas such as by the entrance of St Wystan's Church, metre-square self-watering planters gave a welcoming impact. These were planted with vivid reds, oranges and yellow of begonia and a central spike of canna to add height and interest.

The contribution of various businesses was evident throughout the tour, but notably at A. Moss Family Butcher where there was a splendid display of colour in two barrels, four hanging baskets and three window boxes on the first floor. All were on a watering system and were immaculately maintained, a real credit to the owners. Cheerful baskets of scarlet begonias hung at the bus stops and other containers were dotted along main roads. Wooden troughs brimming with cosmos, dahlia, geranium, lobelia and grasses were outside the entrance to Repton School, planted and maintained by students. The parish council provide and water the many hanging baskets throughout the main streets. All were well maintained and healthy. The cloister garden is a peaceful, serene green area largely of shrubs and perennials and this led to the cricket ground which had a stunning bedding display of dahlias. Along the High Street were many houses and small businesses who took pride in ensuring a good display at their frontages; Tudor House, The Bulls Head, Mulberry Beauty Salon, Sweet Pea Cottage, Mercia Court, the Repton Clinic, Numbers 55, 60A and 55 are just a few of those seen.

Section B: Environment

St Wystan's Church dates back to Anglo Saxon times and within the grounds is a 'Quiet Garden' that contains grasses and perennials next to a bench where visitors can sit and contemplate. Wendy and Helen took judges to view the War Graves area in the churchyard where many prestigious people are remembered. The parishioners mow the grass and two "tidiers" assist in this area. Repton is very proud of its ancient history and the Anglo Saxon crypt at the church was remarkable to see and hear about. It was also fascinating to hear of the Viking excavations in this area. An informative noticeboard near the cloisters has a town trail map of where visitors can view important and historical buildings of Repton. Street furniture and bins are generally good and everywhere was litter-free and with no evidence of dog mess. St Wystan's Arboretum was established in 2011 in a quiet green area of Repton and contains various different trees purchased by residents in memory of members of the community. Otters and carp have been seen in the brook nearby. The 2022 Jubilee Arboretum is also nearby.

Repton Parish Council allotments at Monsom Lane were a sheer pleasure to see. Around 31 plots, some split into half size, are available and all were well used and maintained. Woodchip is provided by a local arboriculturist, a new £1000 polytunnel from funding has been constructed, and the orchard area was abundantly laden with cherries, apples and pears. Many other trees and shrubs, some exotic, had been planted in this area. A composting area and rainwater harvesting butts were evident. Allotment holders were seen picking the fruits of their labours and one allotment holder keeps chickens. It was noted how important allotments can be for physical and mental health.

Section C: Community

Repton has a vibrant community with many activities and events throughout the year. The Village News local magazine advertises the 'Repton in Bloom' campaign. There is a Repton Festival, Repton Open Gardens, NGS gardens, a summer barbecue and many other seasonal events. Groups including Repton WI, a Dementia group, History group, Scouts, Cubs and others were noted from the portfolio. It was good to see many businesses joining in to support the campaign through their floral displays either in the front gardens or with planters, tubs and hanging baskets. Plans are afoot to use Facebook to communicate with Repton Bloomers.

Areas for Development

Section A

There are so many excellent frontages of houses that it almost feels like there is a competition here! Why not encourage more to join in? Maybe produce some stickers for 'Repton in Bloom' to show involvement in the campaign. A few empty hanging baskets brackets were seen, notably at the Red Lion pub, which would benefit from floral enhancement and make it more welcoming. A few other empty brackets were seen dotted round the village that could also be put to good use. A. Moss butchers was of such a good standard that it should be entered into the EMiB Floral Awards as a commercial entry. The 'Hydro' planters had spaces on them that might benefit from a logo or sticker to promote either Repton in Bloom or a sponsor. Consider an autumn bulb-planting day to increase year-round interest. Are the large tubs planted out for the spring/ winter months?

Section B

In St Wystan's churchyard is there scope for leaving a small section unmown to encourage biodiversity? Studies could be made to see what wildlife there is in the area. Is there an area for composting here which could later benefit the community? Also consider where rainwater harvesting might be an option, particularly as droughts may become normal in the future. Has anyone made any bird/bat boxes that could be placed in strategic areas of the town? At the Arboretum it would be good to see the trees labelled. A little gutter and base of walls weed was noted, which should be addressed. It was good to see the

noticeboard showing the trail of important places of interest, but it only showed one side of the leaflet. Could the history group be involved in providing more information for visitors and locals alike?

Section C

At the various local events, is there scope for promoting Repton in Bloom and encouraging more of the community to join your very worthwhile efforts to get your town blooming? This could be in the form of leaflets or more information in the local magazine. If there is evidence of any other year-round activities it would be good to see photographs; e.g any spring/autumn planting; any fundraising activities, litter picking events etc. At some point as your group becomes more established, you could produce a small portfolio of no more than eight pages that show what is happening at other times of the year and also list the sponsors and people who have contributed. There are art groups – perhaps a little competition for a painting of Repton in Bloom, in any way they choose to interpret it. Hopefully your Facebook group may become established next year which will help with the campaign.

Marks: Section A: 31 Section B: 23 Section C:25 Total 79 Silver Gilt Award



SMALL TOWN CATEGORY

Long Sutton in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 10th July 2025

Judges: Irene & Jeff Bates

Judges' Award: To Jonathon's Team of Basketeers for keeping the all the baskets blooming!

Introduction

On a very hot afternoon we were greeted by Kay, Christine and the team at the Library and were shown a display of year-round work that had been achieved by the Long Sutton in Bloom volunteers. This is "The Town that says it with Flowers" and this dedicated and long-running group did not disappoint, with a tour partly on foot and the rest by car. The numerous hanging baskets in the main street, the planters, the sponsorship scheme and the work of "Men in Sheds" along with other groups all combined to make this a memorable judging tour.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

A good number of hanging baskets line the main street and are watered and maintained by an organised team of volunteers and one paid person who waters the hard-to-reach baskets daily. Pink pelargoniums, scarlet begonias and blue lobelia were the main theme with cannas in many of the planters to give additional height and structure. The square planters at the war memorial were immaculately maintained in this difficult area which is prone to traffic mishaps. The window baskets at the House of Glow were very eye-catching with rows of window boxes brimming with pink and red pelargoniums and cerise and salmon geraniums. The pump was surrounded by colourful planters and further along the road were large tiered fountain planters. The eye-catching Tradesman bicycle was enhanced with a colourfully planted pannier basket and cheerful barrier baskets along the railings behind added to a charming corner display on the corner at the junction of the Market Place and London Road.

The residents of Spring Gardens showed great examples of both annual and perennial planting in their gardens and it was pleasing to see the newly painted recycled drainpipes filled with a mixture of annuals and perennials which brightened up the area by West Street carpark, making it a pleasing place to sit for shoppers and passers-by. The plants here are planted up with spring bulbs for year-round interest.

St Mary's Churchyard hosted barrels planted with vibrant reds, cerise and maroons, a path lined with hydrangeas leading to a large welcoming basket tree by the entrance. Thousands of crocus bulbs have been planted in the churchyard for a spring display.

The LSiB team do their best to brighten up any area they can, with a prime example being the small London Road garden, previously a disused gap by the road and now cleared and revitalised with a central bench on recycled slabs brightened up by colourful plants in a barrel and shrubs pruned back to enable passers-by to sit and rest. An unusual and quirky backdrop is the image of a shed adorned with flowerpots; actually a shower curtain, but it works extremely well.

Section B - Environment

The Shrubberies is an area of trees and meadow, now rare in the Fens here and run by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, but also let to a local farmer for grazing and hay, which was being cut and baled on judging day. The acre of trees planted over 35 years ago is now a haven for butterflies and birds which have been studied. Some native plants have been donated and two hedges have now been laid by a professional and two volunteers.

Peat-free compost is purchased, and fertiliser has been donated for the hanging baskets. Bee and bug hotels are evident especially in the Common Pit area where there are also benches newly restored by the Men in Sheds with the help of the Parish Council. These are highly valued and used by the locals who find it a restful place in which to sit and watch the water birds on the pond (which was somewhat depleted due to the dry hot weather this year). The Men in Sheds add a vital contribution to the recycling efforts and have made manger-type planters out of decking material, visible in several areas of the town, in addition to restoring the Tradesman's Bicycle and the recycled drainpipes used as planters.

A walk along John Swain's Way leading to Hoddings Way led to a view of the allotments and the eco houses across the field and showed how seriously sustainability and biodiversity are taken by LSiB. A delightful visit to the Rainbow Nursery illustrated how youngsters were being taught at an early age to value this ethos. The children of the three groups that use the area have grown strawberries, vegetables, marigolds, sunflowers and other pollinator-friendly plants. Bee/bug hotels were evident and even a local hedgehog has been seen in the area. Work has started on revitalising Annie's Patch and the Pop Bottle Bridge bed which has been aided by the Co-op task force.

An informative interpretation board and a noticeboard showing the Long Sutton trail was seen in the Market Place. It was pleasing to see a new sensory garden being developed in the town playing field and it was commendable to see that the stump of a large tree had been put to imaginative use, a huge owl sculpture having been created. The town itself was clean and tidy, helped by a team of 'Wombles' and James Bailey who every day has wholeheartedly thrown himself into the task of clearing any litter that appears.

Section C - Community

It was evident through the display boards at the start of the tour at the Library what a great bonus to the town the Long Sutton 'Bloomers' are. They showed all year-round involvement, planting, tidying, the local quarterly newsletter to inform residents, and details of a Facebook page to inform residents what is happening.

The Men in Sheds produced memorial plaques that were allotted to individual planters. These could be sponsored for £50 and this has proved to be very popular, raising £750 this year. The central hardware shop donated an entire window to showcase the work of the LSiB team and to encourage new volunteers. The Parish and District Councils are very supportive as are the many businesses who give financial support and the people who voted via the Tesco blue tokens scheme. The tour was admirably rounded off with refreshments and seasonal scones, which were very welcome.

Areas for Development

Section A

This has been an exceptionally difficult and challenging season with the drought and hot weather, and it is good to see that sustainable perennial planting is now being encouraged.

Maintenance is generally good and a consistent focus on mulching where this is not in place would be beneficial. If funds allow, consider replacing some of the hanging baskets with self-watering ones which would require weekly, or in hot dry periods, twice weekly watering. A general note across all sections of the report: review the current marking of EMiB and update your sections to correctly align with those now used.

Section B

There was a little 'street gutter weed' in a few areas, and in St Mary's churchyard there were enormous thistles amongst the hydrangeas which require attention and detract from the overall scene. Could a group of parishioners be persuaded to take on this task? Consider leaving part of the 'closed' areas to be left unmown to encourage biodiversity – paths could be cut through to allow access. Are there areas where composting could be encouraged and then later used for the community? Likewise, consider where rainwater harvesting might be an option, particularly as droughts might become the norm in future years. There is a further bench in the Common Pit Area that can be "renewed." It is hoped further progress will be made in the Sensory Garden, Annie's Patch and in the Pop Bottle Bridge Garden.

Section C

Undoubtedly the "Bloom" spirit is very strong in this community and its longevity is highly commended. Everyone plays their part and does whatever they can. As is common in many entries, it would be good to encourage others and younger members to become involved. Try to keep attracting new members by contacting other organisations in the area, to explain what value your group gives to the community and how important it is to keep it going. You might also consider keeping an eye on the timekeeping of the judging tour and tightening up the route. Your fundraising this year is commendable and we are certain your group will keep going from strength to strength.

Marks: Section A: 29

Section B: 24

Section C: 25

Total: 78 Silver Gilt Award



SMALL TOWN CATEGORY

Darley Dale in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 2nd July 2025

Judges: Jeff & Irene Bates

Judges' Award: To the members of Oddford Allotments for their productive and environmental efforts across the site.

Introduction

At the Whitworth Institute, Christine Goldsack gave an overview of the year's activities and future plans, before outlining the tour that was to follow. Many members of the Bloom team were also present. The tour then began, initially in Whitworth Park where new beds and border renovation was viewed, and then mainly as a car trip with stops at important places. Two allotment sites were visited, Valley Lodge Care Home, a walk past the Swale and through the meadow at Audley St Elphin's, before concluding at the remembrance garden at St Helen's Church for refreshments. An enjoyable tour, thank you.

Areas of Achievement

Section A: Horticulture

The renovation of the long border in Whitworth Park is progressing well, as are the new island beds, with perennials being the focus of all new planting to better manage costs and also to improve soil management and the carbon footprint. This is work in progress, but it appears to be appropriate and well-considered. Valley Lodge Care Home, though not on public view, has a garden in the courtyard which enables residents to be actively involved in growing flowers, fruits, herbs and vegetables, taking place during the judges' visit and clearly benefiting all, as those not able to 'join in' did have lovely views from their rooms. Darley Dale in Bloom team members are actively involved in the activities at Valley Lodge to support their efforts. From there the tour moved to Oddford Allotments, where productive growing was evident alongside some very attractive re-wilding. Roadside beds along Greenway Lane and on the A6 were seen, again gradually moving to more perennial planting. Verges have also been planted with a range of appropriate bulbs, recently supplemented by 5000 purple crocus. The final stop was at St Helen's Church, past the ancient yew (2000 years or more) and a walk in the beautiful remembrance garden, well-maintained and with some very splendid trees and perennials appropriately sited in this quiet, relaxed space with dappled shade.

Section B: Environment

The tour saw very little evidence of litter or detritus, and given that the town is cut in half by the busy A6 this is a considerable achievement. Neither dog-fouling nor graffiti was seen. Street furniture was in good condition throughout, newer examples being made from recycled plastics by local company TDP. A more relaxed approach to verge management is being used away from the main road, with native meadow perennials looking very attractive and clearly benefiting pollinators. The judges also noted significant improvements that have been made to make compost from green waste, with community volunteer David Gray doing splendid work in this respect. As mentioned above, the area in the allotments that has been 're-wilded' is colourful and full of pollinators, to the benefit of all the other allotmenters on the site.

The walk past the Swale and through the meadow, with some native tree planting on the margins and the addition of appropriate fruit trees to develop a small orchard, was a complete delight. The Swale is a flood-prevention feature, but also an additional habitat, already benefiting wildfowl and amphibians as well as numerous birds, small mammals and insects. The meadow, a sea of Lady's Bedstraw on judging day, was spectacular. The site manager, who led this part of the tour, also carries out regular surveys of what is flowering, what birds and insects are present and other relevant aspects throughout the year to enable appropriate management and future developments to continue the enhancement of the site.

Section C: Community

The initial briefing gave the judges clear evidence that 'Bloom' is not just for summer, but a continuous, year-round activity with many volunteer hours involved. The support of the local council is good and partnership working is beneficial, best seen in the Whitworth with the changes to planting schemes. Good relationships exist with businesses such as Forest Garden Centre and Audley St Elphin's, also the allotments and church. The Bloom team has many 'members' with diverse talents being used effectively.

Areas for Development

Section A

Continue with the developments in Whitworth Park, perhaps taking into consideration the future size of some of the woody plants on the relatively narrow 'long border'. Also continue with the changes recently made to verge beds on the roads, which are not yet established but clearly a sensible approach.

Section B

This section is a strength in terms of local identity, pride of place and the natural environment. The focus for the coming years should be to continue with what you are doing, as it will benefit the environment, the residents and the many people who pass through – and may well break their journey to spend time in the lovely Derwent valley setting.

Section C

Year-round activity is very evident and a great strength of the entry. The existing team members are able to participate in areas to best use their skills. Strong engagement with local business is clear. The single omission is involvement of young people. There are schools in the town and no doubt groups such as Brownies, Guides, Cubs and Scouts amongst others. Make some contacts and see what can be part of future planning.

Marks: Section A: 30

Section B: 25

Section C:23

Total: 78

Silver Gilt Award

TOWN CATEGORY

(SPONSORSHIP AVAILABLE)



Broughton Town Council

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 30th June 2025

Judges: Richard Stephen and Caroline Pollard

Judges' Award: To Vee Harness and the hedgehog project which works to provide a safe environment in the old cemetery for the release of hedgehogs into the wild.

Introduction

The judges were welcomed by Town Mayor Councillor Louise Price and Deputy Mayor Councillor Vee Harness at the Phil Grundy Centre where they were given an informative presentation about the group's activities over the past 12 months. The relaxed tour of the town, led by Ann Marie Taylor and Brian Turner, demonstrated how incredibly busy the group have been. The fruits of the In Bloom group's labours could be seen throughout the route: good levels of horticultural achievement; a passion for the history of the town plus a clear commitment to community involvement and giving wildlife a helping hand.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The judges were shown displays of planting in hanging baskets and raised beds. These were strategically positioned round both the town centre and the outlying residential areas and gave the whole area a well-cared-for appeal. Overall the quality of the planting and the plants themselves was pretty good across the tour. Some of the most colourful planting could be seen outside the Library and the Village Hall which displayed hanging baskets, raised beds and troughs. The community 'herb garden' (raised bed) seems to be working well as residents are encouraged to 'pick a small handful for your recipe.' The Wishing Well, very well constructed, with a couple of nice hanging baskets also looked good and added interest to this area of the town. Other well-planted boxes, some 27 in total, were located in some of the residential areas such as Mill Lane (two-tier), Greyfriars Road, Windsor Way, Westminster Road and many more. The telephone box located on one of the residential streets had been beautifully planted inside the box itself.

At Broughton's new cemetery, an arch with adjoining raised beds has been recently constructed, in time, as the plants mature, this should become quite a feature. Along the entrance drive several well-planted raised beds were on display

Section B – Environment

Maintenance of sports grounds, the churchyard, cemeteries and other open spaces was impressive. No litter was seen throughout the whole tour - testament to the efforts of the local community. The 'Broughton Wombles' group, who have an impressive 156 Facebook members, who litter-pick the main access roads into Broughton and the surrounding areas. They also undertake 'plogging' (litter picking and jogging) to improve the environment and raise awareness.

The history of the town was a key topic of the tour and it was good to visit the Grade II Listed war memorial and hear about plans for its future refurbishment. Peter Clixby gave a fascinating talk about the

history of the town, supported by a number of 'found' objects that have been unearthed over the years. These are now on display in the library.

Environmental initiatives at Broughton allotments, such as the compost-making facilities and the newly installed solar-powered composting toilet, were excellent. The relaxed maintenance of the closed cemetery, with its sweeping pathways between areas of longer grass and wildflowers, made this a hive of bee and butterfly activity, aided by the recent addition of bird boxes, bug hotels and hedgehog shelters. St Mary's Church has been laid to lawn in large parts and is being well maintained. There are also dedicated wildflower areas within the grounds (planted by volunteers) and around the perimeter. The In Bloom group are clearly considering the environmental consequences of their work. They are using an increasing ratio of perennial to annual plants without sacrificing impact and there were many habitat improvement efforts such as owl and bird boxes. Many wildflower areas are being, or have been, established round the town and the group are clearly learning about what works and where.

The judges look forward to seeing the future development of the new tree and hedge planting at the Phil Grundy Centre- an asset to the local community for generations to come.

Section C - Community

The judges enjoyed meeting Margaret (near Greyfriars Road) and hearing about how the local community are committed to planting and maintaining the raised bed features around the town. Outside the village hall the judges were shown the Wishing Well charity initiative (the charity nominated is changed every six months so that many local charities benefit from the money thrown into the well – also barcode donations), a raised bed maintained by the Mother and Toddler Group and a community herb bed. It was good to see that the Red Lion's floral display contributed to Broughton's tour.

There is clear evidence of planning for the town's future, particularly in the use of locally and nationally available funding to provide impressive new 3G sports facilities, tree and wildflower planting schemes and a new community centre.

Areas for Development

Section A

The larger raised planter features, such as the two-tier one at Mill Lane, had greater impact and it would be good to see the smaller ones in other locations developed into these. Consider taking the judges to see the grounds of the local residential home and school, in addition to pointing out or stopping en route at good examples of front garden planting.

More horticultural impact could be added to key areas, such as the village hall/ library and local shops. It was disappointing to see that the Today Local, fish bar and the adjoining beauty shop were not, at this point, supporting Broughton's efforts to brighten up the town. Larger or a greater number of hanging baskets, particularly the self-watering ones which the group are currently considering, would add to the aesthetic appeal of the town, as would increasing the planting features at the Red Lion pub. There is opportunity here for more baskets on the fences and frontage of the pub.

Section B

Generally the street scene infrastructure such as seating round the town was very good but consider small touches such as painting the metal bollards outside the library which would make a difference to the overall appearance.

Local awareness of the town's heritage appears to be good, with publications and displays at the local library, consider additional formal interpretation boards at the church and closed churchyard which would add to visitor and resident appreciation of the historical importance of the town. Continue to improve habitat creation- the local surrounding woodlands offer ideal opportunities for this. The addition of bat boxes could be considered.

Section C

The group are working closely with the local Brownie and Beaver groups, but could they re-engage with the local school if at all possible? There is so much for young people to learn at the community allotment site in terms of horticulture, growing food and the benefits of wildlife habitat additions.

It would be good to meet more community members, such as the Wombles and young people/ children - if possible on the judging route rather than after the tour.

Keep trying to engage local businesses such as the fish bar as these are key locations which make such a difference to the aesthetic appeal of the town.

Two copies of the portfolio should be available for the judges to take away as this helps the judges reflect later on what they have seen. Try to include more photographs of horticultural interest throughout the year, such as spring bulb displays. The diary of events available on the day was good but could this be condensed and presented as part of the portfolio which judges take away? Are the group engaging enough online? Consider Instagram/ posting videos of your events and improvements.

Marks

Section A: 32

Section B: 24

Section C: 23

Total Marks: 79

Medal Awarded: Silver Gilt



TOWN CATEGORY

Horncastle in Bloom

Silver Award

Judged on 7th July 2025

Judges: Richard Stephen and Caroline Pollard

Judges' Award: To The Wong Day Service and their representatives for the ongoing planting and maintenance of Hamerton Gardens.

Introduction

The judges were met at the Joseph Banks Centre where they were given an informative video presentation by Jane Hickling before being escorted by Lyndsay Farrell and Stuart Goodall on a tour of the town. The attractive market town of Horncastle is clearly benefiting from the hard work of the In Bloom group, town council employees and members of the local community. There is a lot going on in Horncastle - from funky veg kits to a huge planted horse cart - and the judges look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength in the future.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The judges were shown hanging baskets and a large number of planters at various locations round the town. There were excellent hanging baskets to be seen outside the Admiral Rodney Hotel (will they enter the Floral Awards next year?) and good planting to the front of Fone Doctor and the Horncastle Florist. There were also good planters outside Magpie and hanging baskets on The Kings Head. In the Joseph Banks Tribute Garden there was horticultural diversity with an emphasis on botanical education. The judges noticed a fantastic herb bed outside the private housing complex and adjacent to Old Paddock Court - it was alive with insects! Be(e) sure to point out such features on the route. The large horse cart, beautifully planted at West Street junction, was impactful and a credit to the hard work of the community. Here there are attractive raised planters containing both perennial and annual plants and new seating. Small 'problem' areas on the route had been treated to new planting, such as on Church Walk, and there were some lovely planted-up former cattle troughs with two new shrub beds in the Old Cattle Market area. The addition of the large scales was a nice touch. There were planters and troughs in Wharf Road, barrier planters on the bridge at 'the Duck Steps' and a number of other locations.

Section B – Environment

One of the highlights of the tour was the recently installed Horncastle Heritage Trail - a series of 20 boards offering a fascinating insight into the history of the town. Elsewhere history was celebrated at The Pig Pen and the Old Cattle Market. The biodiversity planters are a great idea, alive with pollinators, and the group are making their own self-watering planters. Along the route the judges were able to see one of the original water pumps that provided water to that area of the town.

The tour took the judges past a number of wall-mounted 'blue plaques' reminding people of Horncastle's rich heritage, eg Hangman's Cottage (M Marwood) and his infamous 'Long Drop' experiments; the Roman Wall and the death mask of Tiger Tim. Like many towns, Horncastle has suffered, and still does suffer, from flooding from time to time. A plaque on the wall marks the height of the great flood of 1960.

The judges met John and Sharon at the community allotment and orchard and learnt how excess food grown in their wheelchair-accessible beds is given to the local foodbank. The orchard, with its heritage varieties, was sponsored by the community

There are nine rewilding areas across the town and the judges saw good evidence of mulching and composting facilities. In the peaceful grounds of St Mary's Church there was a wildflower area and plans for more seating. It was good to hear that the group are committed to using peat-free compost. The seating areas and carvings installed as part of the Horncastle Riverscape Enhancement Project were excellent (Heron, Dragonfly, Ducks and Fish). The In Bloom group have been taking part in workshops with East Mercia Rivers Trust with an emphasis on removing invasive species from local watercourses. The judges were able to view a number of examples of art in the landscape. Apart from the carvings outside Tesco there was a nod to Horncastle's famous Horse Fair (formerly the largest in Europe) on Jubilee Way with the black sculpted outlines of several horses depicted in the open space. There were also sculptures at the Pig Pens and a colourful mural outside the toilet block.

Section C - Community

The group are working with children from three local primary schools and this year every pupil has received a 'funky veg kit' to take home. The judges met Partnership and Engagement Officer Colleen from the East Mercia Rivers Trust at the delightful location of the Duck Steps. Here there are newly installed planters and bins, and the judges heard about how the Trust is working with Horncastle in Bloom to improve the area.

The Bloom group organise a local garden competition - it would be great if more businesses could display hanging baskets and planters as this would really add to the attractiveness of the town centre. Could the police station get involved too? At Hamerton Gardens the judges met Sarah, Victoria, Mark and Chris and heard about how The Wong Day Service tend the beds in the gardens. It was good to see that there were contributions from The Ship, Bar Unico (gardens) and the judges loved the planted up boots and shoes outside Grace's Boutique. There were lovely window troughs outside 'The First Shop' and a number of floral contributions from residents, such as at 24 South St.

Areas for Development

Section A

The large planters in the area of the Water Mill Basin would benefit from some height adding to the planting scheme. Perhaps some ornamental grasses or cordylines could achieve this. More trailing varieties could be used in barrier baskets. Increasing the planting outside of businesses would really complement the impressive array of historic buildings in the town centre. Perhaps other businesses would join in with the planted shoe/ welly idea seen outside one shop? It was noticed that a number of shops had brackets for hanging baskets but these were not being used.

Section B

Some lampposts and bins needed attention. The pagoda, whilst being a good source of local information, would benefit from some TLC, as would the horse sculptures. A thorough litter pick of the route beforehand would create a better impression. It would be good to hear more about how the town deals with litter generally.

Section C

If possible, it would be good to meet some of the children from the local primary school or visit the location of their gardening club. The growing facilities at The Wong Day Service were mentioned - could the judges be shown these?

Marks

Section A: 28 Section B: 24 Section C: 20 Total Marks: 72 Medal Awarded: Silver

LARGE TOWN CATEGORY

(SPONSORSHIP AVAILABLE)



LARGE TOWN CATEGORY

Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers

GOLD AWARD

Judged on 30th June 2025

Judges: Liz Alun-Jones and Griselda Kerr

Judges' Award: For Barbara Tallis, former Chairman, for her continued help to Bloom with plant propagation, plant procurement and planting.

Introduction

Market Harborough, situated halfway between Leicester and Northampton, has for the past three years been named as one of the best places to live. It is a lovely town on the River Welland with ancient buildings, a beautiful High Street, excellent communication links, enjoying now, as it has for centuries, a vibrant community. The judges were met at Welland Park where Angela Randle, the new Bloom Chairman, and Peter Eddie, its Project Manager, provided an overview of their work and facilities. The collective input of their 45 volunteers contributes about 4,000 hours per year.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The presentation makes it clear that winter refurbishment of planters, the preparation of seasonal inserts for planters, for winter bedding, winter care of beds (edges and mulching) and year-round plant care, pruning, seed sowing, propagation, potting on, bulb planting, feeding and watering is organised on a well prepared weekly rota. This results in lovely seasonal colour. The racks of cleaned tools in the volunteers' tool shed are a model for all gardeners to follow. It is clear from examples such as the storage of their bulbs, of compost preparation and from the extensive number of healthy plants in polytunnels that the interest of this Bloom group in good horticultural practice is very high.

At our first stop, at Union Wharf, we saw shrubs and perennials providing interest all through the year (roses selected for good hips, for example). These, with the annuals, were beautifully healthy. (We were told that Ann feeds her hydrangeas with a combination of yoghurt and water - clearly effective!).

At the Ridgeway Primary Academy, we were shown a now well-developed sensory garden, greenhouse and attractive small potting area all much enjoyed by the school. The beautiful garden designed by Peter Collings with groundwork done by a local developer provides a wonderful opportunity for horticultural understanding by the children. The planting round the new eco hub was also very sensitively achieved. The new planters, the octagonal bed at The Old Grammar School, in The Square, around the St Dionysius Church entrance and at the War Memorial held well-maintained planting with an interesting and successful plant selection (chosen by Richard Moss, designer for the Council) giving a united whole but with each area having its own character. Notable were the delicate tall Nicotiana 'Whispers' and clever use of a purple millet (*Pennisetum glaucum* 'Purple Emperor'). These and other plants that are required in bulk are bought from a peat-free nursery or otherwise grown by volunteers.

At the station, the homogenous look of the very healthy 17 railing planters is excellent with good use of creeping zinnia between the petunias. The planters looking like miniature train wagons on restored EMR station trolleys was an ingenious idea and the troughs of succulent planting intriguing. The line of Amelanchier (seen in full flower in the presentation booklet) planted in the relocated town centre blue planters is excellent. The Little Bowden Bowling Club has a beautiful mix of shrub and perennial planting in the patio beds and in the attractive mix of perennials and annuals in the hanging baskets. Michelle and her ten volunteers do all the cuttings and seed propagation. The whole bowling green area is beautifully cared for, with the surrounding hedge underplanted with shade-loving plants. The maintenance of the bowling green itself should become a textbook for all bowling greens.

J. Stamp & Sons, the funeral directors, have created a place of peace partly by allowing a yew hedge to grow huge enough to hide the next-door Aldi. Elsewhere the use of a variety of green hedging creates interesting shapes and textures. The garden where families can gather is being extended and here, we had discussion of how to manage the left-hand bed, the advice being to widen it for perennials.

In Friendship Park the judges met the Council Chair Peter, John, Russel and Richard Moss. In 2023 the ground was radically cleared and 40 volunteers planted 10,000 bulbs whose blooms this spring were triumphant. Much progress has been made since then with the hard landscape, and now the park awaits the installation of a sculpture designed as a Corten steel column with the word 'Friendship' in many languages to replace the aerial mast and its machinery, currently an eyesore. As a temporary measure buddleia has been planted around the mast to provide for pollinators and some green screening. It will be very interesting to see the shrub planting chosen for this garden when the buddleia is removed.

The Memorial Garden had welcoming perennial verbasicum at the entrance and good underplanting of the 70 Queen Elizabeth roses (the nepeta needed to be cut back to achieve a second flowering before it goes to seed). Along the River Welland there was a notice with a QR code about wildflowers. Sadly, these were past their prime. However, in Welland Park we saw excellent bee-friendly perennial planting round the tennis courts and the lovely fresh and vibrant, traditional display beds celebrating 90 years of the park. We completed our tour at the Rose Garden where the roses were not looking their best because of flooding earlier in the year and then because of these months of drought. The box, too, had suffered from the prolonged wet after which disease had predictably set in. This area, much heralded with its splendid centrepiece, the old Bell Tower from the Symington's Corset Factory, was still struggling to recover.

Section B - Environment

Our tour was beautifully litter and graffiti free. A young volunteer called Robert should be congratulated for his effort at litter picking. We noticed no weeds in the squares or indeed on the streets we visited. The 100 old blue planters in the town centre are being replaced by stylish wooden planters. They and all the barrier baskets now have in-built reservoirs, greatly reducing time spent watering from water butts and bowsers. The pleasing and evidently increasing use of pollinator-friendly perennials is reducing the cost and time taken to prepare annuals. Old compost is reused where appropriate, leaf mulch is made, no peat is involved and if suitable, old trays and pots are used as ballast in planters. At the Primary School every class pledges to do something environmentally supportive – for example litter picking, planting, maintenance or recycling. This instils in the children an awareness of their environment and pride of place.

The Railway Station watering contractor comes once a week to fill the reservoirs of the planters on the platform railings, on the refurbished old station trolleys and down the line of 15 blue planters relocated from the town centre. This, though having to be costed, gives Bloom time to prioritise other objectives. At the Little Bowden Bowling Club sustainability is key: grants from Harborough District Council and Market Harborough & Bowdens Charity have made possible the installation of solar panels and energy efficient radiators; hedge cutting is carried out after the nesting season; no chemicals are used and weeding is done by hand; the shed has been donated by a member; recycled slabs (mainly collected from skips) were used to make the new patio; plants are donated largely by members. Planters have been made using free

pallets, as have three living walls in the new herb garden where there are six water butts, seven compost bins and a composting area. The club's environmental management is superb.

At J. Stamp & Sons water butts and composting are in evidence and it is pleasing that stone masons work on site, thus minimising the carbon footprint of headstones and other memorials.

A sense of place and belonging is what makes Friendship Park so vital to those accommodated in the high-rise buildings around it – those who live there have no garden or outside space to meet and relax in the company of others. In addition to horticultural work, a brick wall has now been replaced by railings, a welcoming arch is over the gateway, seats are in place, bat and bird boxes have been placed in the trees, the path has been made wide enough for wheelchair users and pedestrians to walk side by side, and it is beginning to be used as it was intended – for friendship in the neighbourhood. Now clean of litter, graffiti or vandalism it is starting to fulfil the purpose Peter, Chairman of the Council, identified for it when he responded to complaints of antisocial behaviour in the area. He followed with a petition and has since pushed it forward to great effect. We look forward to future reports.

In the walk down to Welland Park there is good signage and, despite a difference of public opinion over neatness or habitat, it is good to see that 'habitat' has won. Amongst the considerable reeds and 'Ripples' there have been sighted both otters and Kingfishers.

Section C - Community

Communication, Education and Awareness could not be more clearly demonstrated than in the fully solar-run Eco Hub which the schoolchildren (and others) use at the Primary Academy. With an excellent child-friendly screen showing its energy use, it is an enviable class interactive space. Great fundraising has been done to achieve this most successful hub.

The presentation brochure prepared for the judges makes it clear that the collaboration of communities and individuals coming together to make a difference in sustainability, climate change and pleasure in the environment is very real – the outcome is a Sustainable Harborough Community supported by educational courses. There is even a Community Fridge from which people give and take (provided food is unopened and within best by date) which raises awareness of food waste and landfill.

Media coverage is excellent, having had some BBC coverage and much from Harborough FM news. Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers site receives over 1,200 hits in a month.

Considerable and successful work continues to be done to achieve support and funding with 60% received from the Council and 40% from fundraising events (eg plant sales) and donations. Almost all individual sites on the tour had fundraising initiatives, for example £700 raised from local businesses surrounding The Friendship Park. At the station Kaye, the Community Engagement Manager, facilitates funding from EMR and Community Rail Network and organises an Action Day to do weed clearing with the 20 Network Volunteers and the 18 Station Adopters. It is clearly a happy team. With amazing dedication, the volunteers work on Sunday mornings when the station is being repaired. The involvement of Bloom is well-communicated with noticeboards including at the station, in the Market Place, and on signs in Welland Park. Market Harborough's wartime heritage is displayed on a sign near The Memorial Garden. Little Bowden Bowling Green has two Welfare Officers who look after members and their families, they fundraise for the local church, offer opportunities for students to learn to bowl and they intend to buy a walking frame for the disabled, suitable to run on the bowling green.

The judges were pleased that the suggestion made last year to enter a best front garden and the Three Swans had been heeded, as both had excellent displays and have been put forward for awards this year.

Areas for Development

Section A

MHiB might consider a more robust planting scheme in some of the beds at St. Luke's Hospital where pollinators can have a longer season – the use of perennials rather than wildflowers may be the answer however beautiful (and ephemeral) the wildflowers are earlier in the season.

It would be lovely to see more 'street trees' in the hard landscape of the town centre to offset pollution and provide shade.

The Rose Garden in which flooding appears to be an increasingly common occurrence and which this year has, in addition, been baked in the summer heatwave has clearly undergone huge difficulties. The underplanting of the roses which has begun but not yet completed, will help as would a deep mulch of manure or compost on to the existing soil in thoroughly wetted rose beds. This should remove the necessity to change the soil. The box hedging needs urgent attention appearing to have both box blight and the caterpillar scourge. Consider using the biological insecticide DiPel against the caterpillar moth and the removal of all growth affected by box blight down to the lowest new growth or just above root level, cleaning secateurs between each plant, establishing good air flow beneath the hedges by clearing out all detritus and then, following the precise instructions, applying something like TopBuxus Feed. It would be sad to lose the box which only last year was remarked upon by the judges as so healthy and well clipped.

Section B

It may become necessary to provide from time to time some gentle intervention to the reeds in the River Welland to enable the river to flourish and not become an eyesore and a receptacle for litter.

Section C

It will be wonderful if the vacancy for Youth Leader on the Bloom Committee is filled by next year's tour. The line of Amelanchiers at the station is stupendous – some underplanting of perhaps a pale yellow trailing perennial such as Waldsteinia ternata which would gradually spread to hang over the edge of the planters picking out the yellow band of EMR colour (author's note: I have not tried this plant!). Consider next year varying the order of the tour. Perhaps the Hammond Arboretum could be visited. It would be good to see the composting area.

The tours of 2024 and 2025 appear to be very similar.

Welland Park is very beautiful and is the obvious starting point, but the planting in the park including the 90 Celebration beds was given minimal attention by the judges because of the time spent in the final visit to the Rose Garden. Here much needs to be achieved before it re-earns the 'Wow factor' it deserves. Until it has, perhaps it should not be the last stop of the tour.

Marks

Section A:	36
Section B:	28
Section C:	29

Total Marks: 93
Medal Awarded: GOLD



LARGE TOWN CATEGORY

Historic Newark in Bloom

SILVER GILT AWARD

Judged on 3rd July 2025

Judges: Liz Alun-Jones and Griselda Kerr

Judges' Award: To Vivienne Hallecom and her team for their innovative, beautiful and healthy planters on the station platforms where herbs, vegetables and fruit are grown. All are well labelled to encourage the public to pick what they would like to sample whilst waiting for their train.

Introduction

The judges were greeted at Sconce and Devon Park in Newark-on-Trent by Kay Bellhouse and many enthusiastic volunteers from the newly relaunched Historic Newark in Bloom. Their focus is on building a community under the umbrella of Historic Newark in Bloom through communication, friendship, fun, sharing resources, and joint experiences to achieve more and make a visible difference to this ancient town.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The entrance to the 37-acre Sconce and Devon Park has beautiful hanging baskets and lovely day lilies making an excellent impact at the start of the tour. The park contained some well-mulched beds containing yucca, corncockle and achillea – the mulch deterring foxes and muntjac which are a problem here. Sadly, the box hedging looked unhealthy and it is hoped it will be treated. There is a wildflower meadow with a good noticeboard identifying the plants.

Bloom volunteers have taken over responsibility from the Council for the management and distribution of some 200 planters and those we saw looked healthy and vibrant. Volunteers are enthusiastically taking cuttings to grow more plants so that seed and plant distribution can be increased around Newark.

Hawton Halt, transformed from an overgrown area, is now a very productive 1.5 acres of edible plants and fruit trees with a large polythene tunnel used to grow chillies and other tender plants and where winter bedding plants and plants for park flowerbeds are propagated. Lessons on horticultural skills including coppicing, pollarding, grafting, hedge laying and growing vegetables are offered in the classroom and research area.

At Reach Flower Pod learning-disabled adults can learn new skills and enjoy nature in this lovely spot. The site, which was once neglected allotments, has been transformed into a well-kept rose garden and orchard and excellently maintained beds of perennials and vegetables. Pollinators were evident everywhere.

The work that is still in progress at the Lock Garden and Canal has involved massive clearance work and replanting with summer bulbs, wildflower seeds and perennials which were evidently stunning earlier in the summer. The ongoing work undertaken by volunteers to clear the Lock Garden is valiant and the judges will look forward to hearing about its completion. Around this area of the Lock and Canal all the weeding is done by hand because of the proximity to water.

The Swan and Salmon gardens adjacent to the canal have benefited from the improvements at the canalside.

In the Castle Grounds the trees have been carefully crown-lifted where necessary and other trees and hedges have been sensitively pruned or re-shaped to return the area to as it was intended, giving clear views of the historic site from every entry to the park. Wildflower seeds have been sown where trees have been removed and the RPA (Root Protection Area) of trees carefully taken into account.

At the station previously derelict beds have been transformed by Vivienne and team into excellent low maintenance beds using bulbs, hardy perennials and a variety of foliage to give seasonal interest and structure, with some attractive ceramics. The My Sight Network Garden group propagate plants and send their surplus to other Bloom sites including the beautifully-labelled platform planters where herbs, vegetables and compact fruit bushes are grown (and enjoyed by the passing public!). In the carpark, in an area previously used by fly-tippers, a successful wildflower garden has been planted. A survey has revealed that, whereas in 2022 there were seven main species growing, in 2024 there were 32 species. In another 'retrieved bed', where the public pass by, shade-happy perennials and bulbs have been planted and a water bowser is well disguised by plants tucked into grey painted pallets used as a bug hotel.

In Newark Cemetery there were some attractive planters including one near the Remembrance Memorial using vinca and carex.

Section B – Environment

There are three parks with Green Flag awards in Newark.

Litter picking is outstanding. Volunteers are recruited on Facebook, the Council works well with Bloom, and Newark Community Gardens hold an annual spring clean.

At Hawton Halt there is active composting, soil from old planters is reused for potting, wood is chipped on site and used for mulching and footpaths. Comfrey is grown to make fertiliser, honey is sold from the local beehives, broken wheelie bins are recycled from the Council to make wormeries, planters are filled with edible plants and wild seed collection is undertaken by school children. Natural and manmade habitats for wildlife are abundant.

Rainwater is collected, and water from a natural well is harvested using a solar-powered pump.

At the Reach Flower Pod the judges saw dead hedges and excellent wildlife habitation with a pond and hibernaculum (a wet land refuge for amphibians and reptiles). Here there were excellent and well-managed compost heaps, a sensory area and bird hide. There are also 3 x 2000 litre storage tanks and solar panels funded by a National Lottery Community Fund donation, from the Airport and other donors. Bloom's closer involvement with the Town Council and District Council and the sharing of their resources (such as compost) and a Council bowser for the watering of planters has provided Bloom with more time to increase their overall impact. Twenty-eight bags of rubbish were collected over three days by eight volunteers working in the Lock Garden.

Section C – Community

There is extensive financial support and volunteer days from local businesses (B&Q, Curry's local, architects and solicitors). There is collaborative work with the Rotary Club and the Canal and River Trust, and Bloom volunteers have increased from six to 12 during the year. There are many future plans including buying a new composter for the church when it re-opens, holding a 'Garden Party' supported by the Council (a garden party with a difference where everyone will need gardening gloves) to complete the mammoth task of clearing of the Millgate Canal Lock Garden and to fundraise with a competition to 'make a garden in a reused container'. Other fundraising will continue with raffles and through the sale of plants. Donations have been received from Asda, Waitrose and Newark Castle Rotary. Two hundred businesses subscribe to hanging baskets.

The involvement of Newark Town Council and Newark and Sherwood District Council with Bloom is very evident (Hawton Halt, The Reach Flower Pod, the Castle, the Canal Lock etc) and adds greatly to the Bloom effort.

In Sconce and Devon Park and round Newark there are good information boards about the history and importance of Newark during the Civil War.

With the Council's Road Scene Crew together with local businesses and the community (for example, The Civic Society, Millgate Conservation Society and UMC Architects, Sconce Rangers, Trent Link and Friends of the Cemetery) a great deal of community help has been given to support litter control. The co-ordination and the sharing of resources has made a considerable impact on the litter-free environment in which Newark rejoices. The Newark Advertiser encourages this with stories about litter picking and Bloom events. The whole station area is cleaned by volunteers at weekends when the line is closed.

Bloom volunteers have increased from six to 12 during the year. Opportunities are widely advertised through social media and followers have increased from 180 to 280.

Work on a new visitors' centre is ongoing at the Castle where all the information signs are being renewed. The Reach Flower Pod, open five days a week is used by 46 adults with special needs who enjoy a sensory area and classes including yoga, cookery 'from seed to plate' and woodworking. Businesses such as Nottingham Trent University, solicitors and B&Q organise away days at the Pod to provide support. Hawton Halt is used by over 1000 school children in a year, from local schools but also from further afield, with many schools making repeat visits. There is a fully insulated Classroom with solar lighting used by the allotment association, Scouts, school groups, volunteers, neurodiverse and mental wellbeing groups to learn about the benefits and joys of growing. Green Social Prescribing can use the quiet zone close to the pond for horticultural therapy and wellbeing. Youth Groups can engage with the ethos of sustainability and community engagement, using their own initiatives in projects (for example building barbecue sites from old bricks.)

At Inizio and Not my Monkey, a business next to the River Trent, the judges saw community engagement at work with some attractive street planters for diners to enjoy.

Areas for Development

Section A

The judges were pleased to note a greater use of perennials, and this trend is strongly encouraged for next year.

The planting of annuals in the beds managed by the Rotary Club were looking dry. Consider planting up with greater use of perennials to give some depth to the planting.

The Clown Bed at the Castle was also looking very tired. We were told that the dropped needles from overhanging pine make the soil too acidic. A soil test would determine if this were the case and suitable ericaceous perennials could then be used, choosing those which might also be more tolerant of the increasingly hot climate.

Section B

Having the route of the tour laid out and the names of those the judges will meet en route would be a very helpful addition. It would support the judges' appreciation of all they saw to have special points in the tour drawn to their attention rather than just hoping the judges will not miss anything!

Even though there is extensive restoration of the Parish Church in progress, it would have been very good to see the Market Square, and hopefully this can be included next time. The judges felt they had not had the opportunity to appreciate Newark as a town, the tour relying too much on the good areas of interest away from the centre.

Section C

Although the judges appreciate the challenges, next time it would be good to meet some young people or visit a school if possible.

The planting in the cemetery would benefit from a more cohesive planting scheme, particularly around the Remembrance area. It would be good if In Bloom and the Friends of the Cemetery could work together on this.

Marks

Section A: 29 Section B: 26 Section C: 27 Total Marks: 82 Medal Awarded: Silver Gilt



LARGE TOWN CATEGORY

Gainsborough in Bloom

SILVER AWARD

Judged on 1st July 2025

Judges: Liz Alun-Jones and Griselda Kerr

Judges' Award: To Amanda Clarke for her work across the allotments in Gainsborough, encouraging community participation in growing.

Introduction

Gainsborough is an ancient settlement on the River Trent in North Lincolnshire. The small group of regular volunteers at Gainsborough in Bloom work hard to make their town a more pleasant place to live. Recent funding has been used to redevelop the town centre with some interesting new spaces such as the Baltic Mill with lovely perennial planting. Residents are optimistic about the town's future and have a reaffirmed pride in their interesting heritage.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

The emphasis on Heritage for the judges' tour this year produced an interesting and well planned day. The In Bloom group of six volunteers work very closely with the council to add colour and impact to their hometown. After the presentation by Vaughan there was a chance to meet the other members of both the local and district councils and In Bloom volunteers. It was clear that the Bloom team had noted the comments in last year's report and made some changes. Well done!

The judges' tour started in Richmond Park where the formal planting is well managed by Dave and funded by the Town Council. The town registry office is based here, and the gardens provide a lovely backdrop for photographs with mature trees and troughs of healthy red, white and blue petunias.

Ken showed us the formal beds, one of which contained dahlias bred locally by the late Les Stothard; they were yet to flower but hopefully looked lovely later in the summer. Another bed is set aside for maintenance by nursery school children.

At The Lodge, which is the former gardener's cottage and now home to the Hastings Group, 20 learning disabled adults can enjoy nature and growing flowers and vegetables. Over the past two years Linda and her team have created a delightful safe space with a variety of different areas of planting. Practical skills, veg growing and bird box manufacture can all be enjoyed. Plants and bird-boxes are sold to raise funds. Richmond Park has a polytunnel where bulbs are stored for replanting and salads, onions and other crops grown. Unfortunately, the polytunnel had recently been vandalised.

We were shown the boat rescued from the Covenham Sailing Club and heard about Ken's masterplan to use it as a 'showstopper' floral display next year. The judges look forward to seeing it!

The judges were driven into town by Anna to see some of the 17 newly-purchased brightly coloured planters which are a conversation piece and certainly smarten up the town centre. They contained good quality planting of petunias and impatiens. The barrier basket planting was also blooming.

Unfortunately, three of the new oversized planters in the town square contained very unhealthy specimen trees, while another was planted with ferns which did not seem appropriate. These had been planted up very recently and the subsequent heatwave and full sun was clearly not to their liking.

The display bed managed by the town Rotarians was parched and many of the begonias and geraniums were dying.

However, the new gardens alongside the Trent at the Baltic Mill are exceptional. The Corten pillars and artwork blend sympathetically with the brickwork of the former grain mills. The perennial planting is well considered and should improve with time.

At Hickman Hill Hotel we saw the lovely terrace and gardens ideal for a small hotel and wedding venue.

Section B – Environment

The residents of Gainsborough are clearly very proud of their heritage and there were plenty of useful information boards throughout the town. The Gainsborough Heritage Centre is a fascinating small museum run by volunteers. The visit to the museum was one of the highlights of the tour.

Levelling Up money has been used to develop the town centre with a cinema complex which is nearing completion. At Whitton's Garden a new riverside café, resplendent with a mural of King Canute, and built on the site of a former toilet block is due to open soon. Memorial benches along the River Trent were in good condition and detailed the wartime history of Gainsborough.

It was a pleasure to see the old photographs of Marshall's Tractors on display in the Marshall's Yard shopping centre which along with the thoughtful and healthy planting and water feature would enhance any shopping trip.

The 15th Century Gainsborough Old Hall is a jewel. Managed by English Heritage, there are plans to restore the garden to echo how it looked in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The grounds have well-managed grass and many mature trees including medlar and mulberry. The 'knot garden' had suffered from box blight but has been replanted with Euonymus green spire, which was looking encouraging.

The Hall is used for a Christmas Fair, weddings and functions. A recent archaeological dig by local community volunteers was well supported.

Bins and street furniture were generally clean. Unfortunately, a lot of litter was seen particularly around Caskgate Street, despite efforts by the litter picking group. Petty vandalism and graffiti remain an ongoing problem throughout the town.

The visit to Spital Hill allotment was inspiring. The judges were met by Amanda Clarke, the community engagement officer. Gainsborough has five allotment sites with approximately 415 plots. Amanda produces a regular newsletter and encourages sharing of gardening knowledge. She has also amended the leasehold agreement and initiated competitions for best scarecrow, best new allotment and best 'wonky veg.' There is a 'sharing shed' on site. Amanda plans to introduce a wellbeing policy and mentoring scheme recognising the benefits of gardening.

Only three plots are currently vacant. The plots looked well-tended and productive with a variety of flowers for cutting, vegetables and soft fruit. There were several wildflower areas encouraging pollinators. Bird boxes and owl boxes made by Men's Shed along with the service users from The Hastings Group have been placed in Mercer's Wood.

Interchangeable displays for seasonal colour are brought on in the greenhouse before being placed in their permanent planters throughout the town.

In Richmond Park, water harvesting is used effectively, as is composting. Pots and bedding plants are reused if possible or given away to local gardeners. The team have their own chipper, and bark is chipped following tree maintenance and used as mulch.

Stan's Park is an area in the town centre which is privately owned and has been left unoccupied for some years. Following the efforts of the Bloom Group and Conservation Volunteers it has now been partly cleared and is home to wild birds, including yellowhammers, and some wild flowers. Plans are being considered to develop it into a public space, possibly as the location for the completed floral display boat.

Section C – Community

There is very good collaboration with the Town Council and with West Lindsey District Council and the judges were introduced to several council members during the visit. There are many volunteer groups at work including The Conservation Volunteers, Gainsborough Litter Pickers and the Hastings Group team. All seem to work very well in partnership with Bloom.

The In Bloom group has used 'Gainsborough Life' a free local magazine and social media to update on activities and advertise for new volunteers as well as 'Connecting Gainsborough' Facebook page.

There is a rolling annual programme of planting and activity through the year as documented in the portfolio.

Bulbs and stock plants are overwintered in polytunnels and replanted.

We visited the C of E Primary School and saw the playground with its raised beds and colourful planters donated by the In Bloom group. Although currently in need of some care there are plans to restart a gardening club next term. The In Bloom group also work with a local Cub pack who enjoy planting up and tasting produce.

Areas for Development

Section A

Reconsider the large planters in Market Square. At the time of the judges' visit the specimen trees looked very unhealthy. It is hoped that this has been addressed.

A visit to John Coupland Hospital palliative care unit gardens would be appreciated.

The very dry bed managed by the Rotary Club might be reconsidered. It would benefit from improved edging to retain the soil, mulching to enrich and reconsideration of the planting to more drought-tolerant species for next year.

Section B

The revival of Stan's Park is underway, the judges look forward to seeing progress next time when hopefully the boat 'showstopper' will be in place.

Although there is mention of the work at Mercer Woods in the portfolio it would be good to see some areas of wildflower and woodland either at Mercer Woods or Scout's Hill.

Is it possible to raise the information sign on the Pilgrim woman statue? It is very difficult to read.

Section C

If Gainsborough C of E Primary School gardening club is reinstated do consider entering the RHS schools' competition.

Gainsborough in Bloom are doing some impressive work, but any committee needs a chair and more volunteers can reduce the workload.

Many local groups have worked with volunteers from businesses with links to their town or worked with Community Payback schemes. This could be explored to temporarily increase the workforce.

Marks

Section A: 24

Section B: 22

Section C: 24

Total Marks: 70

Medal Awarded: Silver



LARGE TOWN CATEGORY

Eastwood in Bloom – ‘Forget-me-Nots’

Certificate of Achievement

Judged on 8th July 2025

Judges: Liz Alun-Jones and Griselda Kerr

Judges’ Award: The enthusiastic group of four - Helen, Susan, Alan and Sue - for starting the journey towards making Eastwood bloom again.

Introduction

Eastwood lies just north of Nottingham. Famous as the birthplace and home of D.H. Lawrence, it has an established heritage trail and dedicated museum. A former mining community, in recent years Nottingham Road has become neglected and uninspiring. A small group decided to brighten up the shops and help invigorate the residents into improving their hometown. This is their first entry.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The judges were met at the historic Sun Inn and entertained by Dave Mooney on his guitar while a short, informative presentation was given by Susan McEntee.

This group of four main volunteers, Helen, Susan, Alan and Sue, was formed within the past year and this is their first year of entering the competition. The team agreed that 2025 was very early in their Bloom journey and entry into the competition was a learning experience.

The judges were unclear what the name of the organisation is as some posters said Floral Extravaganza and others advertised Forget-me-Not.

The impetus to form the group was a desire to revitalise Nottingham Road, the main shopping street of the town, and bring back some colour and pride. Helen Mutch approached all the shopkeepers, and those who took part were given silk flowers to decorate their windows and shop front. She encouraged them to organise raffles and offers to encourage footfall and trade. For a donation of £5, each was given a plant to either care for themselves or hand over to the In Bloom group to redistribute.

On the tour the judges were accompanied by Tracy in a stylish mauve gown and two small dogs creating a party atmosphere!

The judges saw some very imaginative and creative window displays. Those taking part each displayed a bespoke banner with their name and logo. Floral Innovations also had some interesting decorated wheelbarrows outside. These had been transported from a previous event and contained very colourful and well-presented displays including cut flowers and pots.

There were one or two little horticultural gems on the tour such as the beautiful planter by Helen Heffron outside The Old Post Office, now The Little London Herbal Store. Planted in shade it was a well-chosen mix including hostas and shade-loving clematis.

The tiered planters near the police station and council offices planted by the town council were attractive and healthy with mauve and white petunias. The barrier planters outside The Sun Inn, the bed of mixed begonias on the junction of Derby Road and the War Memorial at Top Hill were all good.

The small bed at Percy Street Baptist Church was well-tended and colourful with a mix of sedum, antirrhinums and fuchsias.

The rear garden at Hartwell Court residential home was peaceful with beautifully clipped hedges and trees and some lovely mature shrubs including hydrangeas and unusual buddleia. The residents are enjoying being involved with the town in Bloom.

The historic Sun Inn had a garden laid to grass with one or two planters and hanging baskets.

Section B – Environment

The visit to the D.H. Lawrence Museum, at the author's birthplace, was one of the highlights of the tour.

The judges met Fred Verity and saw how the house is set out as it would have been during the author's lifetime. The small, cobbled backyard had a decorated wheelbarrow and some additional planting.

Eastwood has an interesting history as a former mining town. Eastwood already has a walking heritage trail marked by phoenix and brass paving plaques with quotes from D.H. Lawrence's work.

Several other notable events occurred in the area and The Sun Inn has information plaques referencing D.H. Lawrence, the East Midlands Railway and the Pentrich Revolution bicentenary in 2017.

The town will be part of the local Heritage Days event in September.

Alan Wardle has done a sterling job with beginning to weed the pavements and waste ground.

We saw some interesting murals painted by local artist Anna Wheelhouse and understand there are more throughout the town.

Some of the pots we saw had been lined with fleece for reducing evaporation and so acting as a mulch which is compostable after use. Peat-free compost is used if plants are potted on.

Colliers Wood is a lovely nature reserve on the site of a former colliery with a wildlife pond and mature trees. There are some woodcarvings of wild animals here and some new benches.

Section C - Community

Sue Mutch has done most of the publicity including Facebook and printing posters about the judges' visit, and is involved in production of the supporters' banners visible in the shop windows.

Areas for Development

Section A

Helen and Susan have worked extremely hard to engage the local community shops in the 'Forget-me-Not' campaign. The main focus of the judges' visit was the decoration of the Nottingham Road shops. Whilst these were well decorated, In Bloom is primarily a horticultural competition and so the emphasis should be on plants ie flowers, trees, edibles.

Artificial or handmade items can play a small part, but the main focus is on living plants, plant selection and care.

Whilst the risk of theft or damage to any planters is an understandable and real concern you could try planting something inexpensive such as gifted herbs in recycled containers as a starting point. It is the experience of most Bloom groups that once planting is established local people take pride in it.

Similarly planting up bulbs or wildflowers could be a community-based activity which might give some ownership of the projects.

Be clear about the name you are working under. It is important that people know who you are and that your information is correct as the judges are from the East Midlands in Bloom competition not the RHS.

The judges passed several interesting front gardens; it would be worth entering one in the competition or running your own.

Section B

Next entry you could consider a visit to the allotments or one of the local schools if they have a garden. Plan the judges' tour to include the most interesting parts of the town. Whilst horticulture accounts for 40% of the marks there are marks for environmental awareness and pride in your hometown. It would have been good to see the other murals.

For any future judges' tour a list of places they will visit with the names of people they will meet is invaluable.

Consider planting spring bulbs on a grass verge or in Colliers Wood? This could be a community project involving schools or youth groups. You have already shown how social media can be used to advantage and it could be used to promote an event.

Litter was evident in several places and many of the bins were untidy although there were some newer bins with the phoenix logo. There was no mention of a litter picking group. Maybe a group could be formed? Starting with cleaning up the streets before big events or a judges' visit.

Section C

Write a constitution. Templates can easily be sourced from the internet. This and a bank account would mean you can apply for grants and funding in future.

If at all possible try to work with the council. In this competition everything in the town is judged irrespective of who manages it. The groups that consistently do well have good working relationships with their local councils.

Read the website emib.org.uk; it has advice on what the judges are looking for in the competition.

Consider producing a portfolio and take photos of any projects ahead of time to include in a portfolio to demonstrate work by the In Bloom group throughout the year.

Another way to celebrate the creative work of the shopkeepers might be to host a 'best decorated shop' competition. This could be run at Christmas as well and could be great fun!

Marks

Section A: 14

Section B: 15

Section C: 11

Total Marks:40

Award: Certificate of Achievement

SMALL CITY CATEGORY

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SMALL CITY CATEGORY

Loughborough in Bloom

Gold Award

Judged on 10th July 2025

Judges: Judith Warner and Liz Alun-Jones

Judges' Award: For all the volunteers including Alan Capeling and John Dimmick at Rectory Wildlife Garden for creating a place of tranquillity from a previously overgrown area, encouraging wildlife and introducing interesting sculptures.

Introduction

The Outwoods was the chosen location for the judges to begin their tour of Loughborough which took us to an inspiring allotment and interesting wildlife areas culminating at the stunning Queen's Park floral displays. The sound of the clavier played from the Carillon Tower as the judges were shown the newly unveiled Hope Bell which was created to mark the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

Loughborough can boast many floral displays that bring colour to this city. There were 400 hanging baskets and five 'trees' each containing twenty-one individual hanging baskets which made a statement on the junctions where they had been placed. All the hanging baskets were well maintained and were planted with bee friendly flowers. Love Loughborough (BID) funded some of these hanging baskets in the city centre.

Richard showed the judges the old Walled Garden area at Loughborough University where they are considering changing the planting to reflect the age of this area. The formal grassed area was cut leaving wavy stripes which gave added interest, and the Prairie Garden was looking good. The Hemerocallis, Agapanthus and Lavender were all teeming with bees.

Pat Cook should be congratulated on her front garden with its colourful planting which brightens up the roundabout on Forest Road.

Queen's Park was just a WOW factor! idverde and its grounds staff should be congratulated on the plant selection, which was bursting with colour and well maintained. The planting around the bandstand comprised annuals, with a view to being bee friendly, and containing purple Pennisetum, giving some depth and height to the relatively formal planting. The Museum flower beds, depicting the three stages of grief were a highlight and more a cottage style. The beds with the Olympic Rings were informal as was the planting alongside the brook. All plants were healthy and well maintained, looking stunning. In addition, there are many established trees around the park benefitting the wildlife and environment.

The Hope Bell bed was newly planted with perennials and will become established in time, creating a further flower bed to enjoy.

Section B – Environment

Walking with Kieran, Rhys and Sam through the Outwoods was a delight as they explained about the ancient woodland and its geology and designated SSSI site. A huge fossil from this ancient wood can be seen in the Charnwood Museum. There is a ten-year conservation project and currently the ferns are being removed to create a glade area. Because of the number of visitors there are desire lines being formalised to ensure the future of the bluebells. Old wood is left for the willow tits, owl boxes and a Swift project which uses a “swift caller” to encourage them to nest. The Outwoods has an old charcoal maker. Reptiles are being monitored using a mat trap.

The Forest Road Green Belt, a walkway into town beside the Wood Brook, is a wildlife and community area managed by Pat Cook and volunteers and supported by the other agencies. The Green Belt has many bat and bird boxes, not to mention the many fairy houses which the children love. It is the beginning of Loughborough fruit trail including the local Syston Plum. Along the walkway is the wildlife area and a wildflower area, Lady Smock has been seen in a damper area and a newly-planted disease-free Elm is thriving unlike a couple of more mature trees which are being left to encourage wildlife, and waste woodchip is available to other groups. Forest Road Green Belt has a Green Flag Award.

Restricted mowing is practised around Loughborough. However, Loughborough University have taken ‘No Mow May’ one step further by creating a Beetle Run by leaving long thin areas of grass uncut during the summer. The University makes compost which is also available for other groups.

Neil Clarke showed the judges the nine plots at Mountfield Allotments, maintained by the John Storer groups. One of the allotments has been transformed into a beach complete with beach huts and sand and called Marilyn’s Beach. There are wildlife areas including a natural pond, a good variety of fruit and vegetables are grown, with any extra produce donated to the John Storer kitchen. There is composting, water storage and part of the fruit trail. The contractor idverde had recently had their contract extended for the maintenance of open spaces in Loughborough, Idverde use peat-free compost in their planting schemes.

Resident badgers have claimed a wild area at Rectory Road Wildlife Garden which is left as cover. The water is harvested for use and there are two wildlife ponds. Willow sculptures and dead wood have been creatively made into an archway with the use of recycled materials. It is proposed that later this year it is entered for the Green Flag award.

Queen’s Park has an area of wildflowers with a few perennials, known as the ‘Songster bed’ near the Carillon, which provides some refuge to wildlife.

Loughborough was mainly litter free and there were many bins some of which are due to be replaced. The benches were maintained and in good condition. The Hope Bell was recently unveiled commemorating those lost to Covid. There are information boards adjacent. The Charnwood Museum is a free museum showcasing the history of Charnwood and its industries.

Section C – Community

Sarah Cross, Cleansing and Open Spaces Contract Manager for Charnwood Borough Council, began the tour with a good presentation in the outside barn at Outwoods giving a brief introduction to Bloom Board members. Nicola Clarke, Horticultural Development Manager from idverde led the tour with Sarah. Loughborough have many partners who all work together to make the Bloom such a success. Pat Cook is the Bloom Chairman. The Bloom Board also work on various initiatives with the 33 IYN groups with Mike Jones, the Community Participation Group Chairman. Councillor Hilary Fryer was also on hand to lend support.

Opportunities for the community were well demonstrated. Local people can visit The Outwoods which is an ancient woodland where activities are provided from time to time. There is also Forest Road Green Belt, Rectory Road Wildlife Garden and Queen’s Park which all provide opportunities for families to enjoy

outside experiences, or volunteers, young and old, to help on the sites. Mountfield Lodge Primary School, local Brownies, and Eco groups enjoy visiting Forest Road Green Belt.

Watermead Nursery School gives opportunities to the under-fives to enjoy gardening by growing a few vegetables and bee-friendly perennials. They often visit the nearby Outwoods. A bed has been set aside in Queen's Park for the nursery to showcase their gardening skills.

Loughborough University is supporting young gardeners with their RHS qualifications. Students volunteer on a Wednesday for various causes. The Loughborough University Gardens Team launched an interactive woodland walk through Burleigh Woods.

Nine of the Mountfield Allotments are managed by THYME volunteers; work includes supporting those with dementia and special needs groups. It is open year-round with indoor and outdoor seating. The raised beds are at a height for accessibility by wheelchair users. Hanging baskets are sold in the spring.

'Love Loughborough' BID (Business Improvement District) is an organisation whose aim is to market and promote the town centre and help keep it a safe, clean and friendly environment so that customers will want to visit and businesses can prosper. The market takes place every Thursday and Saturday. A Gardeners' Fair is held each month between April and September. Twelve different events are promoted each year and currently the Dinosaur Trail was in progress.

For added security, the BID had received a grant to employ two security guards during the day, and a trial was about to take place for night security.

Areas for Development

Section A

When the planting is completed and more established around the Hope Bell it could be entered for the EMIb Best New Permanent Landscape Award. Remind the judges next year.

Section B

It would be interesting to know more about water harvesting in Loughborough.

Section C

More time to meet and talk to local volunteers as at times the tour seemed to be a bit rushed.

Loughborough has a young and diverse population but not represented. It would have been good to speak to some younger representatives.

Marks

Horticulture: 38

Environment: 29

Community: 28

Total Marks: 95

Medal Awarded: Gold



SMALL CITY CATEGORY

Grimsby in Bloom

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on 3rd July 2025

Judges: Liz Alun-Jones and Richard Stephen

Judges' Award: To Christine Bojen, for her dedicated care and attention to Weelsby Woods, particularly the Polish memorial garden and the iconic statue of Wojtek the bear.

Introduction

Grimsby, on the North Lincolnshire coast, is proud of its heritage as a fishing port. Residents are looking forward to the completion of the regeneration work in the town centre which will make Victoria Street a place where you can sit, relax and enjoy the pleasant surroundings. At the Pavilion Café, which is the home of Grimsby in Bloom, the judges received a very warm welcome and delicious world-famous fish and chips after the tour.

Areas of Achievement

Section A – Horticulture

During a walking tour the judges were able to see first-hand how the Levelling Up Fund is being used to revitalise Grimsby. Riverhead Square and St James' Square have previously been popular with homeless people and sites of anti-social behaviour, but now this area has recently been cleaned up, green walls installed and more planned, and the five wall planters on St James Hotel were beginning to establish. Outside on the Town Hall window ledges were three troughs planted with petunias which was their contribution to Grimsby in Bloom.

Planting of beds around the bus stops with drought-tolerant species including euphorbia, lychnis, oxeye daisies, various species of grass and sea holly worked well.

The main work is taking place in Victoria Street which has been transformed into a largely pedestrian area with plans for a new cinema complex. The large planters and new seating areas were in excellent condition and clearly being enjoyed by shoppers, even on a wet midweek morning.

The green wall on Victoria Street (one of two, and two more proposed elsewhere in Grimsby) looked very good and well maintained by the council-funded horticultural team, and the mural of migrating birds was eye-catching.

The nine large 'crow's nest' planters had been specially commissioned and placed out of reach to avoid damage and for safety reasons. There had apparently been teething problems with care of the planting at such a height and they were due to be planted up with summer bedding just after the visit. Abbeygate shops are an attractive lane of shops in a former brewery, with plenty of outdoor seating supported by a variety of floral displays which include 14 hanging baskets, a grapevine, a selection of free-standing pots, troughs and clipped hedging. It was good to see that a number of local businesses were contributing to the attractiveness of the town including St James Hotel and The Yarborough Hotel's eight hanging baskets. The judges saw a few of the 40 barrier baskets which looked good and also passed a delightful roundabout with established perennial gravel planting.

Grimsby Institute has large grounds with well-managed grass and mature trees. The formal beds had only recently been planted up, but the dahlias, marigolds and geraniums looked healthy and should make a vibrant display in later summer.

Section B – Environment

There is a resurgence of pride in Grimsby with the redevelopment of the rundown centre. New murals (a beautifully painted fish on a gable end wall on the way to Riverhead Square and one of migrating birds) have been commissioned by local artists around Victoria Street along the theme of 'Paint the Town Proud.' Several others are mentioned in the portfolio. The new paving at Victoria Square / High Street is particularly attractive and contrasts well with the modern theme presented at this location. Here, the street bins and benches are also clean and being well maintained, as you would expect at this stage of the project.

Art in the Landscape could be seen in St James' Square, where there is a large sculpture of a 'Trawler man pulling in his catch' in recognition of Grimsby's fishing industry. Three oversized ceramic bowl planters have also been commissioned and were strategically located along Victoria Street West.

At People's Park the judges met the Eco team who look after the coastal reserves in addition to the town's many parks. The judges were shown some new bat and bird boxes made by the Repair Café, they will be placed on the site and bat walks are planned in the near future.

In People's Park there is a splendid pond, beautiful trees / shrubs, large areas of well-maintained grass, a café and a lovely ornamental bed of established perennials including echinaceas, phlomis and bronze fennel.

The judges visited Weelsby Woods with its recently restored stone lions guarding the entrance and carved wooden animals around the play park. It was interesting to meet Christine Bojen who explained about the wartime history and the heartwarming tale of Wojtek the bear.

The park itself is well maintained and no litter was seen.

The new open spaces in the town centre looked smart and attractive. Most litter bins and street furniture we saw throughout Grimsby looked good.

At Littlecoates Allotments we met Dawn and Rob. This site has 140 plots with a small waiting-list. It has a café and shop which is open to plotholders and to the public. There is water and a compost toilet on site.

There are two community allotments with greenhouses and an area with beehives – honey being sold on site.

Rob the 'Green Mentor' works with VANEL and nearby Littlecoates School to encourage growing and eating homegrown produce. The community plot, which is managed by Rob, was impressive. There are opportunities for working alongside SEN adults and Community Payback workers who have cleared areas of the riverbank.

The council has a team which can be contacted to clear graffiti - and this has been seen to yield results!

Dog fouling has previously been a problem, but a council-led initiative 'Poo Bag Partners' is getting results, and the Pavilion is a partner in this project.

'River Freshney Comrades' care for the river and the riverbanks around the Pavilion site.

Both at The Pavilion and at Littlecoates Allotments excellent environmental principles are practised.

Composting and water harvesting are well-established at both sites. With the new polytunnels in place at The Pavilion there are plans to raise more bedding from seed and to overwinter plants from the displays on Victoria Street.

A wildflower area has been planted this year at The Pavilion and was looking delightful, even in the very dry, hot spell. The area around The Pavilion has benefited from the 'Greening the Marshes' project and extensive tree planting of native species. There are a number of informative interpretation boards located around the site, paid for by the Bradbury Foundation.

Section C – Community

The judges were welcomed by Elaine and Craig at the very impressive Pavilion, the newly completed headquarters of Grimsby in Bloom. The Pavilion boasts a lovely café and seating area, a brand-new bespoke wooden garden office and sheds. Raised beds contain a variety of healthy-looking fruit and vegetables, there is a wildflower area, a wildlife pond and a memorial garden. In addition, there are new polytunnels and a thriving repair café. After a well-planned and informative short film explaining Grimsby in Bloom's (GiB) activities and future plans, the judges' first stop was a brief visit to the Mayor Janet Goodwin, to learn how GiB and Grimsby Town Council are working in effective partnership. GiB's year-round activity and future plans are well-documented in the portfolio along with references to other notable landmarks that the judges were not able to see on the day. There are 20 regular reliable volunteers at GiB, and Grimsby has nine parks which are managed by the Town Council, and many have 'Friends' and volunteers who help with the upkeep. Other groups such as Rotary regularly help with projects. To celebrate Environment Day a fair was held on The Pavilion site with 32 stalls. The Repair Café at The Pavilion is open to the public every six weeks. Broken or unwanted items are brought in for repair, the service is free, but donations are welcomed. Local schools, Cub packs and home schooled children have all been in to learn new skills from the team. A weekly craft club meets at The Pavilion. Social media and local Press are used to good advantage. Grimsby in Bloom is well recognised within Grimsby and there is clear support from local businesses and the Town Council. A grant has also been received from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Areas for Development

Section A

Apart from the council and GiB managed areas there were very few additional floral displays seen in the town centre, perhaps Grimsby Railway Station could be persuaded to provide some floral displays which would complement the Yarborough Hotel's efforts.

Given the opportunity judges would like to see some residential gardens that contribute to Grimsby's floral aspirations. Consider introducing a competition to encourage pride of place eg Best Front Garden. To date the Crow's Nest planting in Victoria Street has had some teething problems and it will be interesting to see how that develops and what the judges will see next year.

Section B

Perhaps the judges next year might get an opportunity to visit a local church or other community group where volunteers carry out the maintenance.

Some good work is being done around developing the local wildlife. The judges would like to see some of the surveys of wildlife and monitoring by the Eco Team and see evidence on whether interventions have made an impact. Grimsby has a wealth of industrial heritage; the judges will look forward to seeing how the Heritage Trail has progressed. Consider installing some interpretation boards around the planting displays at Riverhead Square and The Barge.

The judges would like to see more examples of watering harvesting techniques used on buildings round Grimsby.

Section C

It is always a challenge, but perhaps the judges might get the opportunity to meet with some schoolchildren either at a school or at a display that they have planted / maintained.

It was noted that McDonald's have taken on the responsibility of maintaining the large planters outside their premises in Victoria Street, could this be extended, the judges will look forward to seeing how many more of the businesses take up this challenge in support of your efforts. It was also noted that there were hanging basket brackets on the wall above the M&S shop but no baskets – perhaps this could be rectified for next year.

The judges would like to set the Grimsby in Bloom campaign a challenge to engage Grimsby Live to interview next year's judges!

Marks

Section A: 32

Section B: 24

Section C: 24

Total Marks: 80

Medal Awarded: Silver Gilt

CITY CATEGORY

(SPONSORSHIP AVAILABLE)



CITY CATEGORY

Northampton Town Council

Silver Gilt Award

Judged on July 8th 2025

Judges: Liz Fairfield and John Constable

Judges' Award:

For the impressive increase in the number of 'It's Your Neighbourhood' entries, engaged through Northampton Town Council's community focus as part of preparations for this year's entry.

Introduction:

This was Northampton's first entry since 2019 when the council structure changed. In preparation for this, the council have been building community engagement via the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' community gardening scheme, growing entries from two in 2023, 11 in 2024 to 22 in 2025.

Eighty eight groups were supported with small grants in 2024, showing what can be done by encouraging community involvement on a large scale.

The diverse participation across the community was showcased well in the tour and should form a sustainable basis for entries in future years. Well done.

Areas of Achievement

Section A - Horticulture

The plant colour theme this year is inspired by the 1675 Great Fire of Northampton when 80% of the town was destroyed in just six hours. This scheme of reds, oranges and yellows in trailing begonias, petunias and creeping jenny in the hanging baskets worked well, and plants were generally very well grown and maintained by idverde. The story of the fire was further highlighted by matching enormous bold 'flame' themed wrappers on the Town Hall pillars.

Planting in baskets and tubs included perennials, making for a more sustainable solution.

The areas of Northampton that the judges saw on foot and from the vintage double decker bus appeared to be tidy and well maintained. Trees looked to be in good condition.

St Giles' Churchyard was very well maintained. The quality of plants seen in the plant centre at Workbridge was excellent, as was the area around the neighbouring St Andrew's Healthcare.

The portfolio provides a wealth of information about some of the parks and allotments in the town and how they are managed.

Section B - Environment

Town centres have their own inherent challenges, and the large newly refurbished Market Square now features a series of fountains which youngsters will find fascinating. A number of reasonable sized trees have been established to the north east and west edges.

Work underway at St Giles' Churchyard showed that environmental considerations can be incorporated even in an urban setting. Composting areas, grass areas left uncut to allow wildflowers to grow, and tree

trunks left standing to encourage biodiversity were all explained with suitably placed information boards. The area was being well used when we visited and a significant reduction in antisocial behaviour has been observed with these changes.

St Andrew's Healthcare sits in the grounds of an old golf course and so there are large grassed areas into which two large wildflower areas have been established by David Harrison, who has been head groundsman for 17 years working with a staff of six. An orchard has been established in the grounds with the help of public donations.

At Billing Road Cemetery (BRC) the judges met Chris, Pauline and Charmaine, some of the Friends of BRC group who have started to renovate the whole area in the past 18 months. The judges saw a picture of how the entrance roadway looked previously and admired the work that had been done to date - uncovering cobbled gutters to both sides and clearing the weeds growing in the Tarmac - they have quite a challenge ahead. Designated areas of grassland are being left uncut and some bird and butterfly counts have been done. Northampton council have done a tree survey. Grave mapping is underway and visitors virtually and in person have been from as far away as Texas.

Our visit to Bradlaugh Fields, a Green Flag park in a less well-off part of the town, was guided by Park Ranger Vicky. This gave the opportunity to view the garden created from a wild and overgrown area, with a long-established badger sett nearby. Composting was evident alongside the garden area and a wildlife pond is being established nearby, whilst rainwater is collected from the barn roof.

The very comprehensive portfolio was printed on recycled paper, which was good to see. It also highlights eco-friendly businesses and many other areas where the environment is being seriously considered. Litter picking is a never-ending task, and the Northampton Litter Wombles and other similar groups receive deserved praise.

Idverde planting is 99% peat free, commendable on this scale.

Section C - Community

The visit to the shoe museum was interesting, providing background to the central industry in the town, likewise 78 Derngate furnished visitors with fascinating information about the architect/designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Volunteers have created a Mackintosh inspired garden with spring, hot and Japanese themed areas all clearly visible from the cafe and museum. This garden features plants drawn by Rennie Mackintosh and his wife, or used in their designs, and these will be highlighted as the garden develops. Students from Northampton College had been involved in the renovation of the corner bench and planters in St Giles' Churchyard with financial support from Northampton BID.

At Workbridge judges were shown around the garden centre by Fiona, Marina, Chrissie and Louise. Chrissie, a patient, had found working there helped her build confidence and independence and was hoping for a chance to stay longer. Workbridge staff also work in the wider community.

In order to take advantage of a disused polytunnel, service users were asked what they wanted to see there. They were able to work together to create what they asked for - a hot garden with zones for jungle, a waterfall and a desert. Established in an impressively short space of time, this feature is due to open formally in September.

The friends of BRC all have their own reasons for interest be it family history, living locally or simply environmentally aware. There are 24,000 plots in the cemetery which was actually bombed in WWII by a plane returning from Coventry.

The gardening at Bradlaugh Fields is undertaken by general volunteers on Fridays and LIVES volunteers, supported by Northampton Adult Social Care, at other times - including during the tour visit. A community orchard was planted two years ago.

The portfolio detailed community events over the past 12 months and leaflets supplied showed what was planned in the future. Community activities - such as the Northampton Walking Group and Walk to School week are mentioned. Walking in many of the town's parks is highlighted. The C2C Group highlights a major issue in society and how many vulnerable women have found help and support through gardening and associated activities.

Many of the volunteer groups are connected and share activities, seeds, plants and knowhow via social media.

Council planting is visibly distributed around the Wards, not just in the town centre.

Council commitment to this initiative was reinforced by the strong turnout of council members during the visit, at the delicious curry lunch and in time spent with the Mayor. There is a clear understanding of the importance of planting of all kinds in improving the environment for local people and visitors and for the benefit of the local economy, with great focus on developing this throughout the town for the long term.

Areas for Development

Section A

In some areas the hanging baskets and planters could have been more widespread, occasionally getting lost against the backdrop of stone/brickwork. Along St Giles Street there were hanging baskets outside several retailers whilst the adjoining Fish Street was relatively unadorned with floral decoration and looked plain in comparison. Whilst judges consider only what they see from the route they cannot ignore clearly visible areas.

Were retailers and others made aware of the 2025 colour scheme and encouraged to participate?

Try to include more of the horticultural projects around some of the communities that are being so successfully involved and which may also be less challenging to maintain.

Section B

Information boards such as those held by a volunteer we met in the Market Square could have been used to establish Northampton's special identity but judges understood that QR codes at strategic points in the town centre were being used to allow visitors to explore and understand better their surroundings and origins.

Some conclusions from interventions would be interesting - for example where grasses have been allowed to grow and mowing restricted - what are the effects on species prevalence and insect numbers and what, if anything, needs to change? For a potentially very comprehensive project/entry, has consideration been given to the establishment of green/roofs or walls?

A future entry would make an even better impression if the plants in the more formal town centre planters and memorial gardens had been thoroughly deadheaded and tidied up.

Much winter and spring planting was described on the visit, this would resonate even more with some pictures in the portfolio.

Section C

Whilst the visits to both the Shoe Museum and 78 Derngate emphasised the heritage and were interesting diversions from the main tour, future judging visits would benefit from the subjects being covered more concisely.

Judges would love to see a residential garden, and commercial/retail and pub entries. The County Club garden, although very enjoyable, is not open to the general public. You could explore whether this could be entered in another category.

The diversity of the people we met was very pleasing. This could be further enhanced by visiting a school or young people's project, or young volunteers, in a future tour, especially as Northampton had two entries in the schools competition this year.

The judges enjoyed meeting those involved with and/or responsible for the diverse venues visited on the tour. However whilst an overview and keeping the visit to time is an important consideration, try to limit the numbers of guides speaking to the judges so both receive the same information. On occasions the novelty of the bus transport was challenged by the difficulty in taking notes whilst on the move.

Marks

Section A: 31 Section B: 26 Section C: 26 Total Marks: 83 SILVER GILT AWARD

**BEST OVERALL PRIMARY SCHOOL GARDEN
AND BEST WILDLIFE GARDEN**



School Garden Co-ordinator
Bleasby Church of England Primary School
Station Road
Bleasby
Notts
NG14 7GD

Dear Angela,

Thank you to you and Mrs Cast, and in particular to Zoe, not forgetting the many pupils that escorted us the whole time. I don't think I have ever met such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable group of children in the whole time I have been doing schools judging. What a delightful visit to Bleasby!

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
35	26	27	88	GOLD

Judge's
Overall
Comments:
It was a

pleasure to visit Bleasby School and to see the many and diverse areas, including the vegetable area, orchards, the Spanish Garden, wildflower and the newly-made pond and wildlife area, that have been developed with the grounds, making good use of land that may otherwise not have had a use.

All pupils participate in tending to the gardens and the gardening groups have pupils from across the school, from the youngest to the oldest, with the older pupils helping and teaching the younger ones.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

There is a wide range of different growing areas within the school grounds and although the soil across the school is the same, the treatment that each area receives is particular to the requirements of the plants grown there. The vegetable garden is mulched and the soil fed with homemade compost whilst the wildflower area receives no nutrients and is left to its own devices. One class have been learning about Spain and have built a Spanish garden with drought tolerant plants in the front of the school

Whilst I was there some of the pupils were making homemade tomato feed from coffee grounds, egg shells and banana skins, and it was lovely to see the enthusiasm of the children for everything they were doing.

As mentioned previously, each group comprises children from across all age ranges, so the young ones learn from the older ones and the older ones benefit by being able to pass on their knowledge.

The school is very fortunate that there are parents and volunteers living close by the school who will come in during the holidays and water when necessary. This for most schools is a major problem.

Section B – Environment

The various areas of the school grounds are all geared to benefiting wildlife. The vegetable garden has companion planting to bring in the pollinators and predators to keep the plants healthy. The wildlife area has a dead hedge, a fungi area and a newly completed pond that had wildlife in and around it. The school was very fortunate that one parent gathered seven farmers who came in and laid the pond liner for them, much to the delight of Mrs Dunning. Reduce, reuse and recycling is in evidence in and around the garden. There is a butterfly garden, in the shape of a butterfly, made from four bicycle wheels and a bike frame and planted with butterfly friendly plants. Someone living in the village grows bamboo and this is cut and used in the garden to support climbing plants. Another villager has recently removed an outdoor train from his garden and the tracks are now used as support for growing squashes and the like.

All the children I spoke to were very enthusiastic about gardening and all benefited from being outdoors and working in the garden. Speaking to Mrs Cast, the Headmistress, she emphasised the mental wellbeing, amongst many other benefits, the children got from the garden as well as the benefit to their education.

Section C - Community

The Headmistress was keen to emphasise that the gardens are closely linked into the curriculum and that all the staff use them across the whole range of subjects. Indeed, on a fence in an area where parents wait to collect their children were several of the artworks by the children.

Like most schools, Bleasby relies heavily on the goodwill of parents and villagers to support the gardening activities and that was evident whilst I was there, with several parents and indeed grandparents coming in to help with the work and teaching the children. The school raises money for the garden by selling some of the produce, but also by giving it away, and in return they receive income in cash or kind. Seed is harvested and this is sold to provide additional income.

They have developed a relationship with a local nursery who will provide plants and other material and also with a large retailer who will give them the “nearly dead” plants that most retailers seem to have. As a result, there is a nice display of these revived plants at the school entrance.

Areas for Development:

Section A – Horticulture

The one exception to the quality of plants is the wildflower area which, as the result of the area being sprayed with herbicide by the grounds maintenance team, which they are no longer doing, is only now beginning to recover. Hopefully by next year it will be in full bloom.

Section B – Environment

I am not sure that there are any particular areas that need developing except maybe the wildflower area. This area is recovering from being sprayed, and being supplemented with a mix of suitable seed in the autumn will benefit it greatly. Maybe there is a farmer or gardener who has a wildflower field/area who might be able to provide cut vegetation from their areas to provide local seed that could be spread on this garden. Water is harvested off the roofs of a couple of buildings adjacent to the garden. Around the garden there are several more buildings that I feel could be used to harvest more water for use in the garden. It was said that these buildings do not “belong” to the garden, however I feel that putting guttering on them will not adversely affect their function and the garden will have a lot more rainwater to use. The wildlife area is a relatively new area of the garden and this will develop on its own naturally. There are already good signs that the pond is attracting inhabitants, with tadpoles present and damselflies flying about. Tree logs with fungi on have been placed along a pathway and this will develop over time.

Section C - Community

Bleasby is already held in regard by its links with the local community and traders and doing what it can to generate funds. However links to local charities can help with this. Perhaps approach for example the Tesco/ Co-op Community Funds, the Rotary Club, the Lions etc or have fun with a ‘Green’ themed fundraiser within school or an Open Gardens where parents pop along, donate, have a cuppa and see the gardening work of the school.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Bleasby Church of England Primary School for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum, all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Malcolm Brown

BEST OVERALL SECONDARY SCHOOL GARDEN



School Garden Co-ordinator
Cambridge Park Academy 6th Form
419 Cromwell Road
Grimsby
DN37 9JR

Dear Kim,

It was a pleasure and delight to visit you all at Cambridge Park, to see the interesting growing and environmental activities that are important to your school and to meet the young people who attend. Please thank all the staff I met on the day of the visit for giving their time to meet and share their use of the growing and environmental spaces. The school is very fortunate to have such a supportive team who value the outdoors and the impact horticulture has on the lives of the young people both while at the school and beyond. All the students (Stefan, Stu, Ben, Marcus, Aliesha, Kerry and Libby) who shared in the visit were excellent ambassadors for the school and were a great help in explaining how the growing spaces were used. Their enthusiasm was a pleasure to see and hear. I also extend thanks to Dawn and Mike from Great Coates in Bloom who value the contribution the students have in their local community and shared in the visit too. The delightful complimentary refreshments organised at the end of the visit by the catering team and students was an additional welcomed gesture making the morning's visit such a joy!

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
33	25	27	85	Gold

Judge's
Discretionary
Award:

To all the

enthusiastic students I met on the day of the visit who provided such an insight into the importance horticulture plays in their learning, mental wellbeing and enjoyment while at Cambridge Park Academy 6th Form .

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

The students grow a wide range of good quality plants all year round and there was a good, shared understanding of the growing cycle across a wide range of plants. The horticultural skills are developed in line with the students' abilities and needs. Their knowledge of growing the right plant in the right place was evident, and singing to it!! Even with the upheaval of losing some of the garden to the new build the school team have worked hard to develop the grounds - replanting the orchard, bulb planting for all-year-round interest, the bike display planted up, re-laying the greenhouse foundation, protecting the plants in the beds from pests in an environmentally sensitive way (eggshells to make them uncomfortable), composting and soil enrichment to ensure great crop growth and all done with the students' involvement and care.

The allotment area is a great space and can easily accommodate groups of students to work on the variety of beds at ground level and raised, and in all weathers within the super polytunnel. The students understood companion

planting and basic crop rotation. Herbs and indoor plants were also a feature in the plant variety. Care during holidays is very good and enables year-round growing.

Key to everything was the students' knowledge - their practical skills, PPE, and safe use/ care of tools and knowledge of hygiene in the garden was SUPERB! Thank you to Stefan for his clear explanation of the oil and sand in the bucket for cleaning off the mud from the tools!

Section B - Environment

The benefits of being outdoors and growing edibles, ornamentals and pollinator-friendly plants are well understood by staff and students. Kim delivers, engages and educates through the interactive horticultural curriculum she delivers at the school. The school interweaves the sense of a sustainability agenda along with the building of social skills through gardening alongside active learning. The positive benefits of gardening on the emotional and wellbeing of all involved and connection with nature was evident both inside and outside the school building - the various photographic posters in the corridors of the students at work in the garden and the videos of them dancing in the garden whilst they watered were a joy! The judge really enjoyed the tour of the animal care section, too, with tour guide Aliesha. Produce is used regularly in the school kitchen with students who really understood the journey of plant to plate when asked during the visit. The students have also learnt to use the dehydrator to dry herbs and fruit to preserve them and created some very tasty chutneys, infused oils, jam and pickle. The layout and accessibility of the workroom was well considered for access for all, as were the gardening areas. You have bird feeders and a very well-developed pond area that hosts a good variety of flora and fauna - it's coming on a treat. Your pond and developing bog garden are an asset for wildlife (frogs and baby fish) and supports the curriculum. It creates great learning opportunities. There was evidence of some birdfeeders and bug hotels showing the students' care of the wildlife in their grounds. Composting including the fruit and coffee grounds is established, as well as making nettle feed for the plants and water collection, and the garden is doing well.

Section C - Community

At the school the commitment to growing and being outside engaged in environmental activities is a real strength. But learning with the students goes beyond this and you are active in your community through a number of projects and events in your own school, your lower school and in the wider community. Your stall at the Great Coates Macmillan Coffee morning where produce and products made by the students are sold to raise money was a great example. There was an informative noticeboard up in school with information about the students' activities and photographs; their letter and reply from Alan Titchmarsh was in pride of place! You engage the students in national and local environmental activities including the Wildlife Trust '30 days Wild' and RHS School Gardening Awards (currently level 1 award), Environment Day on June 20th (parents encouraged to come in and see the students' hard work). The students (Kerry/ Aliesha) have been busy creating labels and signs to inform visitors when they visit the garden. The students have also taken part in native hedge and tree planting both at the school and in the wider community.

The judge was pleased to see how you use your students' Tapestry portal, Facebook account, school newsletter and village website to share outdoor learning and gardening news with parents/ carers. You are part of Great Coates' portfolio and volunteer with their garden at the Community Hall. You also have close connections with Grimsby Council grounds team where you source mulch and soil for the beds. It was also great to hear how some of the students are keen to continue their gardening journey into work experience or even a future job!

Areas for Development:

Section A

The allotment site was clearly developing after the upheaval of the new build and Kim explained that they had further plans including the new greenhouse that was on its way and the development of a wildflower patch. There were some beds that were still developing their growing of crops.

The raised beds, especially the refurbishment of some with new plants, will provide more successful growing opportunities for the pupils if crop rotation is a feature. It will make understanding the growing cycle easier. Composting is developing well, and it was good to see leaf mould collection.

Seed saving and propagation through cuttings and division may be a further developmental plan on the curriculum in a cost-effective way, as well as developing a wider range of horticultural skills.

As you are such an inclusive school, perhaps try to grow some less traditionally grown in the UK that would further complement the life skills / cookery team for tastes from around the world. Growing guides for unusual vegetables are available from Garden Organic.

Section B

You are very fortunate to have such valuable green spaces around the school. Water capture is something you are developing; perhaps think about using the new greenhouse as a way of capturing more water in a water butt to meet the growing need. Using mulches can help minimise water demand. You may want to consider using your willow tunnel prunings to creatively weave fences/ boundaries/ hurdles to enhance the decorative and functional effect on your raised beds. Although some bird boxes and feeder were seen perhaps the students, as winter practical projects, could focus on more e.g. develop more permanent bug and hedgehog boxes near the pond? Once installed there are invaluable learning opportunities to be had, perhaps even having a live feed to a camera in one of the bird boxes for the students to witness the process of the lifecycle. You may also want to consider growing plants to harvest for bird food.

Section C

Funding and resourcing is clearly a challenge for all schools and so continue to consider ways to tap into funding e.g. through contact with local charities such as Rotary and Round Table in order to further your gardening ambitions. Also seek out funding elsewhere - perhaps local Tesco or Co-op who have community grants available and the DIY / garden centres for any surplus plants. It was lovely to see your Eco board with examples of your year-round gardening activities but perhaps consider developing a portfolio/ scrapbook to showcase to the judge your ongoing work - for example, the season's work the students are doing linked to their curriculum learning. You may have plans to put some seating in the orchard area which will benefit all and provide a quieter space for those students who need time out or indeed to have a rest whilst gardening!

We at EMIB wish you all well at Cambridge Park Sixth Form for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk.

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Emma Schofield



BEST SCHOOL GARDEN FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

School Garden Co-ordinator
Littlecoates Primary Academy
Harlow Street
Grimsby
DN31 2QX

Dear Neville and Rob,

Thank you so much for your warm welcome and the chance to meet the children and the volunteers including Fumiko who are involved in the gardening activities at Littlecoates. On the day of the visit we were also lucky enough to be joined by the Trent Valley College young people (Joshua, Jake, Damien, James and Keane) with their tutor, Kerry. It really was a joy to see everyone working together and benefiting from being in the outdoor space! Please pass on my thanks to everyone I met, it was a pleasure to meet the pupils who showed me around on the day, who clearly loved gardening and were very knowledgeable too - Elena, Ruth and Cooper. They were a real credit to your school. On the day of the visit Elaine from Grimsby in Bloom joined us as the group support the school and she offered further help after listening to some of the future plans – a great reciprocal community relationship that continues to bloom!

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	TOTAL MARKS	AWARD
28	18	17	63	Silver

Judge's Discretionary Award:

To Rob and Fumiko who inspire the gardening at Littlecoates with the children on a weekly basis with their enthusiastic approach, skills and knowledge, complementing the Headteacher's vision and passion for the wider learning at Littlecoates.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

Your accessible garden area is well set-up with raised vegetable beds, a polytunnel and shed at the rear of the school site, however it was great to have a tour of the other garden areas, too, including the Peace Garden and to see the thriving trees located all around the playground, providing shade. Most plants are growing well and were healthy, and there was a clear plan in place for 'which plant where' for the allotment area. A good selection of crops were growing successfully in both raised beds and in planters and no pests were seen in the allotment area. Brassicas, pak choi and winter lettuce were showcased in the portfolio donated by Trent View College students. Also seen were elephant garlic, chard, rhubarb, strawberries, tomatoes, beetroot, radish, peas, dwarf French beans, broad beansand the potatoes promised a good crop, too. The members of the gardening club were able to share their knowledge well and they demonstrated a good understanding of crop rotation and its purpose. They also had a good understanding of the watering and needs of the plants, including the use of companion planting. The children shared their knowledge of horticultural skills including sowing, thinning, staking plants, protection and good garden/personal after gardening hygiene. Your portfolio was excellent and detailed for the judge the all-round gardening activities completed with the children over the academic year. The school is already an RHS Schools Level 4 award winner for its gardening efforts and it showed! The horticultural skills shared by the older students with the primary pupils was a reciprocal relationship which all enjoyed. It was great to hear about how some of the students were

thinking of linked horticultural careers and the visits to the school were a type of work experience. The apple orchard featured a range of heritage Lincolnshire species and was very healthy! The mint sink in the allotment was a great idea emphasising reuse of old materials, as was the small pond sink in the garden. A hot composter was in situ in the allotment area and earlier in the year organic matter (chicken poo) was incorporated into the soil. All classes are encouraged to include gardening activities in their learning across the curriculum and to use the various outdoor spaces. The gardening club made a variety of lovely signs that were seen around the allotment and holiday maintenance is well organised with the site manager – great team work all year round! The Peace Garden housed several raised beds with a variety of annual and perennial plants. All were bright, healthy and colourful and gave the corner of the playground a real sense of place and purpose with a book cupboard available for all pupils to select from when seated there at playtime or when used as a learning space. The information board was also useful to help pupils identify pollinators and read interesting plant and outdoor facts.

Section B – Environment

The children enjoy taking part in the annual RSPB Big Birdwatch, making recycled bird feeders, and there are several birdhouses located around the school. The edges of the field are left as a wildlife corridor with the grass not mown, and there are wildflowers planted in it too. The mini pond was ready to receive its new guests, water snails, after the judge's visit at gardening club time – Cooper informed the judge. The children were very able to talk to the judge about how the garden was of benefit to them, both mental wellbeing (enjoyment) and for their physical wellbeing. The gardening club is well subscribed to and the photographs shared in the portfolio showcased the joy that the activities bring to the pupils. The judge was also told about use of the garden for wellbeing and to help pupils who needed support, and the use of the seating area by staff for their wellbeing in the Peace Garden.

Section C - Community

I really liked the way that the produce from the garden is shared with parents collecting pupils at the end of the school day in Littlecoates Larder. Parents enjoy the produce from the garden free of charge and this is a huge benefit for those on low incomes and encourages healthy eating in the community. The seating is well-considered in the outdoor environment around school. Children take plants home to grow with their families and you have worked closely with Grimsby in Bloom, Elaine and John, and the regeneration project to brighten up Freshney Place with numerous flower planters. There was also mention of work done with the Art Group on a collaborative piece (as seen in the portfolio). The gardening group, with compost and trays provided by the visitors, got to work to plant the seeds which was enjoyed by all involved. The children will be excited to see the outcomes in their local community. Work about the garden is shared in assemblies and with parents in school newsletters etc - the Mother's Day Sunflowers were lovely to hear about from the children. The collaborative work with the older students from Trent Valley College was a delight to see as they used their visits to the school as onsite work experience. The barrier pots outside school created by the Grimsby in Bloom team were 'blooming' and gave a sense of anticipation of what was to come, providing a cheery greeting to parents, pupils and visitors to the school and showcasing a further strong link between school and their community.

Areas for Development:

Section A

Crop rotation in the existing beds is clearly benefiting the soil and adds in a learning opportunity at the garden planning stage. Similarly developing leaf mulching would benefit both the growing spaces by adding nutrition and could be used as a beneficial mulch to improve the soil. They are also an invaluable source of minibeasts linking the garden to the curriculum. As a multicultural school you may want to consider growing plants not usually grown in the UK to relate to your community. Growing guides for unusual vegetables are available online at Garden Organic. For the dry garden perhaps consider linking with climate change and developing the gravel area with alpiners or Mediterranean plants suited to the dry environment which could link with elements of the science or geography curriculum. Perhaps consider developing some indoor plants to bring the outdoors into the school building more to reflect the Eco ethos of the school further - perhaps have fun with cacti/ succulents?

Section B

Integrating growing and eco activities into the curriculum gives great added value to a school and it would be good for a judge to be shown more evidence of this next time as you mentioned it during the visit. You also mentioned the bottom of the field as a Forest School environment and it would be super to see and hear more on this too. You have made bird boxes and have bird feeders and the monitoring of their use via a webcam may be an interesting next step given the children's enthusiasm about the local bird population. Water collection is being considered with a good run-off from the shed a possibility but this needs supplementing, and so maybe some more water butts? You showed some great examples of the 3R's – REUSE RECYCLE AND REDUCE. Is this also used in school as part of an eco-commitment more widely? You have a large collection of pallets that may be used for construction of leaf mulch bays.

Section C

It was exciting to hear how the children are to be involved in the plans to repaint and stencil the seating area in the Peace Garden. It was great to meet the gentleman who was going to create a piece for a newsfeed about the gardening and the judge's visit within the Trust - do keep promoting your valuable contribution to the school - it is such a valued part of the school's ethos as shared by your Head on the day of judging. Funding a school garden is a challenge. You may want to see if you can obtain support from a local supermarket's community funds, contact local businesses to gain sponsorship and local charities such as Rotary or Round Table. Further engagement with other growing groups will be really useful to you and Elaine from Grimsby in Bloom may be able to help make those contacts for you. They may be able to offer 'in kind' support.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Littlecoates Academy for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Emma Schofield



School Garden Co-ordinator
Eastfield Academy
St Albans Close
Northampton
NN3 2RJ

Dear Lindsey,

Thank you for inviting me to see your lovely school garden yesterday. Please pass on my thanks to everyone I met especially Mrs Grey, Audrey and Arthur. It was a pleasure to meet young people who love gardening and they were very knowledgeable too. They were a real credit to your school.

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
28	19	16	63	SILVER

Judge's Discretionary Award:

To Audrey and Arthur, two pupils who really shared their love of gardening.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

Your garden is well set up with raised beds, easy access pathways and a great storage and resource area. Most plants are growing well and were healthy. A good selection of crops were growing successfully in both raised beds and planters and the early ripening of your red peppers is a credit to you. The strawberries were cropping well and your potatoes promise a good crop. I liked the way your gardening group had researched the sunflower seed choices, opting for the biggest, the Russian Giant, for an inter-class competition. It was a shame the judge did not see how they were progressing. Your pupils had a good understanding of the needs of the hanging basket plants compared with plants grown in the beds and had a good grasp of plant nutrition and watering. Theoretical crop rotation understanding from studying the Egyptians and composting could now be transferred into the future plans for the garden to help nurture the soil. I was told that the nursery also had outdoor space for growing but this was not seen in the visit.

Section B - Environment

With bird boxes in the garden & feeders and a bug hotel you are creating great learning opportunities for different classes. You have a large water tank and taking rainwater off the roof of the shelter is ideal. You told me about planting a wildflower patch and it would have been good to show the judge how it is progressing.

It was sad to hear that the Forest School had been affected by budget cuts, however with plans in place I hope it will return as you explained that the pupils had a great experience at the University of Northampton Forest School Day. A visit from the local park ranger is planned.

I was told about the use of the garden for wellbeing and to help pupils who needed support and also the use of the seating area by staff for their wellbeing.

Section C - Community

Pupils are looking after the planters on Broadmead Avenue for the benefit of the local community. This is to be commended and will also develop horticultural and social skills. The initial help of the Rotary Club to clear the overgrown space and help it become a garden was invaluable and makes the approach to the school entrance very attractive.

Funding a school garden is a challenge and the support from the school fete and the catering contractor is invaluable.

I really liked the way that the produce from the garden is shared with parents collecting pupils at the end of the school day. Parents enjoy the produce from the garden free of charge and this is a huge benefit for those on low incomes and encourages healthy eating.

Areas for Development:

Section A

You are learning alongside your pupils and it is working well. You might benefit from making a connection to one of the local community groups/ allotment/ Bloom groups to have a gardening mentor who is able to share their knowledge and expertise. This could be a parent as some pupils clearly have parents who are gardeners.

Crop rotation of existing beds will benefit the soil and add in a learning opportunity at the garden planning stage. Similarly composting would benefit both the growing spaces adding nutrition and could be used as a beneficial mulch to improve the soil. They are also an invaluable source of minibeasts linking the garden to the curriculum. You may wish to consider growing more companion plants to assist with pest control and to add in visual interest. As a multicultural school you may want to consider growing plants not usually grown in the UK to relate to your community. Growing guides for unusual vegetables are available online at Garden Organic.

Section B

Integrating growing and eco activities into the curriculum gives great added value to a school and it would be good for a judge to be shown more evidence of this. You have made bird boxes and have bird feeders and the monitoring of their use would be good to see. You may want to consider getting involved in the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch or monitor via a webcam if the school has access to one. You may want to consider a mini pond and the RHS has guidance about them. It would create another growing and learning resource and can be done safely and in a small area.

Section C

Engagement with other growing groups will be really useful to you, and Nicole Haviland from Northampton Town Council may be able to help make those contacts for you. They may be able to offer in kind support. Similarly as Moulton College run horticultural courses, they may be a useful partner.

Given the challenges of funding a school garden you may want to see if you can obtain support from a local supermarket's community funds.

As you plan the development of your garden jointly with pupils you may want to consider how more pupils can be engaged with the garden as part of the curriculum.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Eastfield Academy for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Joyce Slater



School Garden Co-ordinator
King Edwin Primary and Nursery School
Fourth Avenue
Edwinstowe
Mansfield
NG21 9NS

Dear Alison and Jodie,

It was a delight to see the developing growing area, new shed, orchard, Reception's garden area and your lovely well-used and loved outdoor woodland area. Please thank the staff whom I met on the day. It was especially nice to meet Esme, Olivia and Daisy who showed me round and enthusiastically shared their growing and Eco experiences with me. They were a credit to your school and a pleasure to meet.

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
22	20	19	61	SILVER

Judge's Discretionary Award:

The team approach between Alison and Jodie is recognised again as they work hard together to pass on their enthusiasm and skills to the children through their commitment at gardening club and in line with the school Eco ethos.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

Around the school a range of plants are growing including well-established shrubs, herbaceous perennials, flowers, edibles and fruit and it was good to see some in the vegipod ready to grow from seed. Some were struggling in such a hot and dry environment (in the Reception outdoor space) and were awaiting planting on into beds. Thank you to Becky the Reception teacher who shared her time to describe how the children in Reception grow beans, sunflowers and carrots and other veg from seed and enthusiastically water the rhubarb which was doing well. Holiday arrangements are made for watering and given the vegipod was still showing no seeds sprouting this will be invaluable for the crops. The after school gardening club offers a great opportunity especially for those pupils who have a real passion for growing things and may not have the space at home to do so - your growing numbers wanting to join showed this! The children who showed the judge had some understanding of the right place for the right plant and some idea of crop rotation and why, but this could be developed further. The vegetable plants seen were healthy and no pests were seen. Some excess produce/ plants is shared with the community through the stall which generates funds for the children to buy more seeds, so this is self-perpetuating for funds. It was good to hear how Jodie whilst wearing her spiked shoes helped in the wildflower planting!!

Section B - Environment

Walking through school enabled the judge to see the wonderful wider Eco work the school carries out including the box dioramas of gardens – super! Each class has an Eco rep who participates at meetings and in assemblies including Eco awards for the class who recycle well. The Eco board is being considered for relocation which is a good idea to share the news more widely! Also it was an invaluable way of seeing how growing was integrated into the curriculum plans where possible. You have planted some wildflower plugs and seeds on the field edge to create more of a wildlife corridor so perhaps add some yellow rattle seed to help reduce the grass influence and to help the growth. The children were able to discuss the importance of good hygiene after gardening and the importance of weeding. They were aware of how important gardening and being in the outdoors is to their wellbeing and they, as do many of the pupils, enjoy the opportunities offered by the school.

Section C - Community

It was good to hear about the parental interest and the autumn tidy-up that occurred. You share your growing activities well in school and on the school website, so continue to promote your endeavours making more local links to the community. It was good to hear how the children right from Reception enthusiastically take home their plants and share their enthusiasm with family. Good links are made with the curriculum and the school takes part in bird counts for RSPB yearly and have enjoyed working with the local Wildlife Trust. Trees have been planted in the grounds from local sponsored events. Raising funds through the plant sales went well and provided funds especially due to the excellent beetroot sales, and a local Mum made lasagne which was enjoyed. The Forest School's curriculum work continues to be a key factor in all year groups. The gardening group take part in 30 days Wild, the Wildlife Trust themed activities, and Eco led trips are part of the curriculum coverage.

Areas for Development:

Section A

It would be good to consider developing the raised large gardens outside each classroom through a theme and link them with climate change as they are in full sun. Perhaps move to creating some dry rock gardens with plants (Mediterranean herbs and sun-loving perennials) suited to coping in dry conditions and then mulch over with gravel. This would help with ongoing maintenance and link with curriculum areas. Given the financial constraints you work with, the children could write letters to local builders merchants etc and maybe they could sponsor a garden for you? As a multicultural school you may want to consider growing edibles not usually grown in the UK. A guide to unusual vegetables is available online at Garden Organic. Give each garden a purpose and if each class can be involved it would cut down the garden club's responsibility.

Soil improvement is always a key part of any successful garden plan and you have plans to develop composting more now you have the shed and garden area more established. You have so many trees on the grounds so why not have an area to collect leaf mulch to then use in the gardening projects. Your soil is a challenge. Perhaps follow up with the local council who may have a scheme to supply local schools with leaf mulch to improve nutrition and drainage. You have started an all-round yearbook with gardening club and this would be beneficial to develop further as a way of celebrating your gardening calendar with the judge next year so they can see the aspects not seen on day of judging. Perhaps also consider the development of some indoor plants to add to the aesthetic of the Eco feel within school.

Section B

Given your extensive grounds and the role Forest School etc plays in the curriculum it may be helpful to develop further the feeders for birds and homes for wildlife to enhance the grounds and encourage wildlife. You may want to explore growing bird food as well as making pine cone feeders for example, rather than having old plastic bits left hanging in trees once food is gone. It may be a partnership activity with the Eco Club run across the classes. Monitoring their use through surveys and webcams will be invaluable. As a garden you have the rather sad underpopulated pond in the Forest School area but perhaps consider a relocation and redevelopment of a mini pond, which is an invaluable asset to any growing space. The RHS has good information online on how to create mini/ micro ponds and I have seen them very safely and successfully used in other schools. Watch the wildlife come in!!

Section C

Funding is always a challenge in schools but it was good to hear you are benefitting from some funding the Head has secured. Promote your great gardening more through village newsletters, social media etc and you may have luck from local businesses or neighbours. Sometimes they cannot give money but they may have other skills to help e.g. your local nursing home may have some top knitters/ crocheters who could make some super colourful garden inspired bunting etc or maybe a local college may have some artists/ students who could create a beautiful colourful mural on that big wall near school to improve the playground aesthetic linked with eco and gardening, the ethos of the school. Perhaps your local council could put you in touch with allotment, community, Bloom and gardening groups locally from whom you could benefit from surplus plants, seedlings etc. Or as I suggested on the day of the visit reach out to local charity organisations to help with some funding - the children can write to them about a great winter gardening club activity. Supermarkets, community funds, Round Tables, Rotary Clubs etc may help with specific projects you may have in mind. You have plans to put some seating in the orchard area which will benefit all and provide a quieter space for playtimes for those children who need time out!

We at EMIB wish you all well at King Edwin Primary and Nursery School for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Emma Schofield



School Garden Co-ordinator
 Newton Solney Preschool
 Trent Lane
 Newton Solney
 South Derbyshire
 DE15 0SF

Dear Gill,

Once again many thanks for showing me the children's delightful garden, a place designed for safe educational play for preschool children, and for explaining all about your growing activities this year.

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
17	21	16	54/90=60	SILVER

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

A variety of perennials and annuals are planted in raised beds and surrounding borders.

Four large, raised beds are planted up each in a different way. One has been designed to show the difference in each season from a small child's viewpoint, demonstrating the plants that might be seen in each season. Another raised bed is planted with herbs and a few vegetables, one contains a small pond and one has planting to attract pollinators. Most of the plants were healthy, there were some perennials and a number of colourful annuals. There is a small composter in use. Gill and her husband care for the garden during school holidays and can call on the local community for extra help if needed. There is plenty of opportunity for hands-on play and learning including a soil pit, sandpit, outdoor play kitchen and a treehouse. An experiment on growing seedlings under cloches is in progress aimed to protect the seeds from marauding pigeons. A rock garden was also seen.

Section B – Environment

The main emphasis is on a safe learning environment whilst allowing opportunities for wildlife to thrive. There is a woodpile, bird boxes and feeders and a covered pond. A new wildflower area has been allowed to develop. Composting is in use and small water butt has just been installed.

The garden is surrounded by hedges which are a haven for wildlife. The honeysuckle was splendid on the day of my visit. The children have the opportunity to spend time outdoors both for imaginative play, watering and occasional planting up or tasting produce.

Section C - Community

The preschool has a special place in the community and there is ample opportunity for all the children to learn in the outdoor space. There is good liaison with the infant school next door. The preschool children have some access to the forest space and to observe the school chickens.

Vegetables and fruit are enjoyed by the children when available. Bedding plants are donated by parents/ grandparents or acquired at local plant sales. Gill is very much part of the community having been in post for many years and even taught some of the parents.

Areas for Development:

Section A

Consider moving the fruit trees from the raised beds into large pots or barrels. They looked dry and would benefit from mulching and room to spread their roots

Section B

The wildflower area could be developed to include more colourful flowers eg Ox-eye daisies or 'fox and cubs' which are easy to grow. These could be planted as seeds in the autumn or plug plants introduced in the Spring.

Section C

Is it worth experimenting with a few more edibles for the children to taste? Peas/ mangetout are a possibility, or pumpkins, which would be ready to harvest in the autumn. There are plenty of mini varieties available.

Funding for school gardens is always a problem. Newton Solney is already held in regard by its links with the local community. However links to local charities can help with this; perhaps approach for example the Tesco/ Co-op community funds, the Rotary Club, the Lions etc or have a fun 'Green' themed fundraiser within preschool or an Open Gardens where parents pop along and donate to have a cuppa and see the gardening work of the school.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Newton Solney Preschool for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Liz Alun-Jones



School Garden Co-ordinator
Ridgeway Primary Academy
The Ridgeway
Market Harborough
LE16 7HQ

Dear Georgie,

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school and showing me around your projects. It was very nice to meet you and your parent helpers with the children from the gardening club. The Sensory Garden has developed out of all recognition since I last saw it two years ago. Gone are the large areas of bare soil, and the plants that now take up that space are of excellent quality. The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
22	22	19	63	Silver

Judge's Discretionary Award:

Over the past two years the Sensory Garden has developed from a space where if you stood in the middle, you could see all of the space, with large areas of bare soil. It has now developed into a beautiful area with good quality plants and trees that fill it. It is used by the whole school as an outdoor classroom and a place where individual pupils can be brought, for whatever reason, if they need to be in a quiet place.

Judge's Overall Comments:

The school has relatively large grounds and I feel that maybe better use could be made of some of it in respect of areas for development of growing spaces.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

As mentioned above, the Sensory Garden is now really well developed, with trees that are maturing nicely and ground cover plants that have grown so that there is now no visible soil. The banked garden next to the hard play area has continued to develop and is now well established. Beside this is a small area of ground where pupils can sow seeds of unknown origin, to see what grows.

Almost all of the plant growing is carried out in a relatively small, Tarmac area, just inside the fence where there is a small greenhouse and two deep beds. Here a good range of vegetables and flowers are grown from seed and then planted out into the two raised beds that are situated here.

Horticultural skills - seed sowing - was evident from the range of plants being grown. One pupil was being shown how to thin out carrots that had been grown on a modular tray.

Section B – Environment

The school is fortunate to have a good, thick hedge down the whole length of the playing field and this is ideal habitat for the smaller birds. The Sensory Garden is now also good habitat for birds and insects, so much so that one pupil has started a birdwatching club at the school; it will be interesting to see how this develops.

There is some evidence of water collection and compost making, with a water butt outside the greenhouse.

The school now has a wooden, covered outdoor classroom that has built into it a solar panel and a wind turbine. Inside the classroom there is a panel explaining what power is generated – currently sufficient power to illuminate the classroom. It will be interesting to see if sufficient power is generated in the winter months. The area around the outside of the structure is being developed as a flower area.

Section C - Community

The Sensory Garden is a useful facility for the school to have as it is now a sheltered and relatively quiet area that is used as an outdoor classroom for Art, English and storytime, with a circular area with logs for seats. It is also a place where pupils can be brought at any time should they need time out of the classroom.

Areas for Development:

Section A

The Garden Club consists of about ten members, and meets only on a Monday lunchtime for about an hour. Not all the members come to the garden on a regular basis, so it is quite difficult planning a work schedule. As a result, the plants in the greenhouse and in the deep beds are not of the same quality as those in the Sensory Garden and perennial flowerbed, simply because they do not get the attention, partly I guess watering that is necessary for good seed germination and seedling development.

Section B

There are several sheds around the garden area and maybe, with a little help from staff and parents, these could be used to collect rainwater and reduce the use of mains water for this area in the deep beds and greenhouse. I would suggest that the water tub outside the greenhouse, when empty, is put on to higher blocks, so that watering cans can be placed underneath for filling.

Maybe more use could be made of the Sensory Garden to attract wildlife. The school was given bird feeders two years ago. They can still be seen in the garden but look somewhat abandoned. In conjunction with the Birdwatching Club maybe they could be brought back into use and then the school may wish to participate in some national Big Bird Watch RSPB surveys to see any impact on visiting bird numbers.

Section C - Community

The places that the children can grow in are really very limited and small so it is not really surprising that relatively few of the pupils get to do any gardening. The area around the new outdoor classroom is being developed for flowers. Are there areas of the school grounds that could be developed into growing areas, away from the main playing area?

With so few pupils involved with the garden it is difficult to develop links into the curriculum directly. I do see, however, when visiting some other schools, that the garden is an integral part and very much embedded into the curriculum, whether that is through links with science, maths, English or art. (I did note some paintings on the fence surrounding the garden area). I understand that there are many pressures on teachers these days but maybe, if the garden could be made better use of, then there may be some interesting ways of integrating it into the curriculum.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Ridgeway Primary Academy for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. Do you take part in the RHS Campaign for School Gardening to gain recognition for your work? If not, details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children.

Malcolm Brown



School Garden Co-ordinator
Sneinton St. Stephens C of E Primary School
Windmill Lane
Sneinton
Nottingham
NG2 4QB

Dear Kathryn,

It was a pleasure to visit you all and see the interesting growing and environmental activities that are important to your school. Please thank Mark Lowe, Headteacher, Rachel Pruszek, Learning Mentor and all the staff I met for giving me their time to share their use of the growing and environmental spaces. The school is very fortunate to have both an allotment and a large space for a Forest School. Adam, Carys, Nduchukwe, Dolly, Elliott and Henry were excellent ambassadors for the school and were a great help in explaining how the growing spaces and allotment were used. Their enthusiasm was a pleasure to see.

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
21	21	24	66	Silver

Judge's Discretionary Award:

To Kathryn for her commitment to the allotment and the school and ensuring pupil-led growing activities alongside engagement with the local community.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

You grow a wide range of plants and it was good to see plans for year-round growing. The Eco Club's bulb planting ensures year-round interest, and class projects like the sunflower competition engage the whole school. Foundation's broad beans were an especially successful crop. Bee-friendly plants planted with help from "Wild about Sneinton" community group have added to the diversity of planting. Some crops like the blueberries have been affected by badger predation and some preventative measures have been effective, e.g. double height tyres. The quality of crops was somewhat variable and the recent drought would not have helped new plants to establish strongly. The allotment is a great space and can accommodate groups of pupils easily to work on the raised beds and use the shelter. The fruit trees on the allotment are a great asset and plans to develop the upper part of the site will add different growing opportunities for climbing plants. The judge also liked hearing about the school plant swap last year.

Section B – Environment

The benefits of being outdoors and growing edibles, ornamentals and pollinator-friendly plants are well understood by staff, volunteers and pupils alike. I especially like the way that Rachel, the learning mentor, used the outdoor spaces to support pupils. For an inner city school you are very fortunate to have both the allotment and the Forest School space and they are clearly well used across the school. The use of the spaces in school time, by the Eco Club

and the after school Monday nature club is great. Foundation's birdwatching window was clearly a success. Integration of growing activities into the curriculum is good and is clearly planned to align with key topics. You have bird feeders at the allotment and a hedgehog house which is some distance from the hedgehog highway at the allotment. Making the scarecrow was clearly enjoyed by the pupils. Your pond is a great asset for wildlife and to support the curriculum and creates great learning opportunities. It was good to hear how the frog's lifecycle engaged pupils using a webcam in the pond.

Section C - Community

The commitment to growing and being outside, engaged in environmental activities, is a real strength. The allotment is gifted to the school on the proviso it is for the school and the local community and you have had some great community events – the wassail and the herbalist walk are great examples of year-round activity. I hope the family picnic works well. Kathryn is the school's allotment officer one day per week and clearly enables the allotment to be as successful as it is. Her funding is finite and the school growing is done on a shoestring. The active relationships with other academy schools, the nearby city farm (a source of manure) and volunteers enable the growing spaces to develop. I was pleased to see how you use your newsletter to share outdoor learning with parents/ carers.

Areas for Development:

Section A

The allotment site was clearly very overgrown and the school has worked hard to get much of it cleared and into use. When more is cleared it will give greater growing opportunities.

The raised beds, especially the refurbishment ones, will provide more successful growing opportunities for the pupils if crop rotation is a feature. It will make understanding the growing cycle easier. The broad bean bed has been successful especially as the plants are not competing with others. Pupil-led interplanting has meant that plant quality is variable and some plants are healthier than others. Whilst this is a learning opportunity it makes for harder work. Composting is developing well and it was good to see leaf mould collection. Given the costs of bought-in compost it would help the allotment to increase the scale of composting given that the city farm manure is available. You have ambitious plans and they will benefit from more compost for use as a growing medium and as a mulch.

Seed saving and propagation through cuttings and division would enable growing spaces to be filled in a cost-effective way as well as developing a wider range of horticultural skills.

Around the roses you have planted some bee-friendly plants which is a great idea. You may want to consider taking this further by sowing wildflower meadow seeds. They will suit the soil quality of those beds, make them easy to look after and create a great environment for wildlife close to the school buildings.

Your mini greenhouse is a great asset and you may want to look at follow-on crops for the autumn / winter seasons. As you are such a multicultural school, I would urge you to try to growing plants not traditionally grown in the UK. Growing guides for unusual vegetables are available from Garden Organic.

Section B

You are very fortunate to have such valuable green spaces around the school. Water capture is a challenge and the plans to install some guttering off the shelter is great but may not be sufficient to meet the allotment's needs especially as the allotment tap is available only in summer. Using mulches can help minimise water demands. Badger predation is a problem and you are finding that barrier methods are the most effective. You may want to consider using your willow tunnel prunings to creatively weave fences/ boundaries for your raised beds.

I would encourage you to have bird boxes in both the allotment and the Forest School. I know there is a Men / Women's Shed at Farm Eco, Screveton, and there are Men in Sheds around Nottingham that may be able to help. Once installed they are invaluable learning opportunities. You may also want to consider growing plants for bird food.

The sloping pathways to and within the allotment may be tricky for children who have mobility challenges and also older people should you be actively engaging in multigenerational gardening activities. You may want to consider using bark chipping paths around the beds, and your school's ground maintenance team may be helpful in this respect.

Section C

Funding and resourcing is clearly a challenge and limits your scope to deliver your ambitions. Seeking out funding to enable Kathryn to continue and to develop the spaces is key. You may want to apply to supermarkets community funds and the DIY / garden centres for any surplus plants.

The allotment still has many overgrown areas which, if unchecked, will encroach on hard earned growing spaces. You have had community volunteer Sundays planned and you may want to consider parental blitz days, Good Gym again or community payback to get on top of the whole space.

Your plans showing links to the curriculum across all classes are good but certain plants e.g. the potatoes are having to work hard to deliver across several curriculum areas. It might help if you to extend the range of plants grown aligned to the curriculum to ensure you have the quantity and quality of plants needed. This will also help mitigate the frustration of predation.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Sneinton St. Stephen's C of E Primary School for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Joyce Slater



School Garden Co-ordinator
Standens Barn Primary School
Flaxwell Court
Standens Barn
Northampton
NN3 9EH

Dear Helen and Louise,

Thank you for inviting me to your school. It was a pleasure to see your lovely courtyard garden, Reception class's garden centre and your lovely green spaces. Please thank the staff who showed me what they were doing indoors as well. A very special thank you to Riley and all the other pupils who enthusiastically shared their growing experiences with me. They are a credit to your school and a pleasure to meet.

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
25	21	21	67	SILVER

Judge's Discretionary Award:

To Riley for showing me his herb planters and his enjoyment of gardening and especially how he was able to use his tools to prepare soil despite being blind. I was also particularly impressed with his braille treasure hunt around the school grounds that he created and other pupils clearly enjoyed. Well done, Riley.

Judge's Overall Comments:

The phrase "small is beautiful" sprang to mind when I visited your courtyard garden. Run on a shoestring it delivers so much to so many pupils and staff. With recycled and repurposed pallets you have created valuable reading spaces and quiet areas as well as lovely growing areas and a crafting space. You have a range of edibles and ornamentals growing in recycled tyres, planters and permanent planting. Well done to everyone involved especially the gardening club. Taking me through the school allowed me to see so many enriching classroom-based growing activities and it was really good to see how growing was integrated into the curriculum. I am sure the vines will be an interesting project!

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

A range of plants were growing, including well-established shrubs, herbaceous perennials, herbs, flowers, edibles and fruit and it was good to see some grown from seed. Some were struggling in such a hot and dry environment, and you may find it helpful to focus on plants suited to those conditions such as Mediterranean plants, many of which can be grown from seed. Holiday arrangements could be constraining for an internal courtyard and it was good to hear that you and the caretaking staff provided cover. The after school gardening club was a great

opportunity especially for those pupils who did not have access to green space at home and the diary on show by the door was an excellent way of showcasing your activities to other pupils.

I loved the garden centre in the other courtyard, which was a perfect play / learning environment for Reception class. Sowing seeds and tending the plants on display as well as serving in the shop and café will develop so many skills.

Walking through the classrooms was an invaluable way of seeing how growing was integrated into the curriculum and the staff are to be commended for it.

Section B – Environment

It was interesting to hear about the birds fledging from the bird box and I note you had some bird feeders in place. In an inner courtyard these will benefit a limited range of birds.

You do an excellent job of recycling pallets and other objects to make planters and create spaces. It was good to see appropriate and safe storage of tools. Your soil is a challenge and would benefit from a compost mulch to improve nutrition and drainage. Using the garden for wellbeing is very well understood and I saw it in use for your blind pupil who had his own adapted space. What a fabulous asset for him! Courtyard use by staff for their wellbeing was good to see. I particularly liked that the garden was zoned into active spaces and quiet sheltered spaces which some children need. I particularly liked the kindness flowers on display.

Section C – Community

Adaptations for your blind pupil were excellent and I was glad he showed me his planters with braille labels. His dedicated space worked well for him. I loved hearing about the braille treasure hunt around the grounds that he prepared for his fellow pupils. The arts and craft activities in the courtyard garden and in the classroom showed the link to growing very well. You run the garden club and maintain the courtyard garden on very limited funds and achieve a lot with very little. I appreciate that Helen and Louise have a limited time in which to keep that garden on track and they do a marvellous job in creating such a precious and delightful environment.

You share your growing activities well on social media and in newsletters. Reaching out to parents and the local community in this way is great, especially when children take plants home to grow.

Areas for Development:

Section A

Given the financial constraints, you worked well with what you had available; however a garden plan for year-round growing might be helpful. Salad crops grown from seed are especially valuable at extending the growing season and as part of healthy eating. As a multicultural school you may want to consider growing edibles not usually grown in the UK. A guide to unusual vegetables is available online at Garden Organic.

Soil improvement is always a key part of any successful garden plan and you may want to explore how you can produce your own compost in the courtyard or in your extensive grounds. I note that you have some bark down as a mulch and it may be something your grounds maintenance contractors may be able to help with if they are doing any tree maintenance on site later this year.

Section B

Given your extensive grounds and the trees on the bank and near the cow parsley, you have scope to extend the provision for birds and other wildlife in terms of nesting sites, bird feeders and encouraging minibeasts. You may want to explore growing bird food as well as making the pine cone feeders that you use successfully. It may be a partnership activity with the Eco Club. Monitoring their use through surveys and webcams will be invaluable. The extensive grounds, especially the wild area in the bottom corner, lend themselves to a Forest school. This needs careful planning as it requires trained staff, as you know. Making better use of this space might benefit from advice from organisations such as the local Wildlife Trust. A parental blitz morning might also help to get pathways cleared though this area once you have an agreed plan. You may also find growing wildflowers on the bank will work well and I note that some wildflower seeds have already germinated in one class. With the refurbishment of the cabin as an eco centre it would be good if the plans for this integrated with the gardening club growing plans as they can be

mutually beneficial. As a garden you are missing a mini pond, which is an invaluable asset to any growing space. The RHS has good information online on how to create mini/ micro ponds and I have seen them very safely and successfully used in other schools.

Section C

Funding is clearly a challenge, and despite the fee charged for the after school gardening club (£1 per pupil per visit) and some funding from elsewhere you are limited. Nicole Haviland from Northampton Town Council has said she will put you in touch with allotment, community and Bloom groups locally from whom you could benefit from surplus plants, seedlings etc. and I hope that helps.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Standens Barn Primary School for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk. If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

Joyce Slater



School Garden Co-ordinator
Heathfield Primary and Nursery School
Kersall Drive
Bulwell
Nottingham
NG5 1JU

Dear Lucie,

Thank you to both you and Kieran for your time on the day of the visit. It was a pleasure to meet the children, Darasimi, Doyinsola, Teddy, Sonny and Rosie. There are multiple areas available on the school site for planting and Lucie is adapting her plans for those that are most avoided by children's feet! Their enthusiasm was evident during the visit. However, I was disappointed not to visit Scotland Road because I believe that it would have contrasted strongly with Kersall Road, but I understand that it wasn't possible on the day.

The following shows where I consider you are doing really well and where you are looking to achieve more.

MARKS AWARDED

Horticulture	Environment	Community	<u>TOTAL MARKS</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
19	17	15	51	BRONZE

Judge's Overall Comments:

Lucie's enthusiasm was admirable, however I did get the impression that her talents were being spread very thinly over both sites. She had saved money for the school by splitting and replanting some of the perennials and herbs. The changes in our guidelines and marking criteria for 2025, which may help in readiness for next year's entry, have made it difficult to award any higher marks this year. Clear references to last year's report by Kieran and Lucie would have helped them to have improved the outcome, as would a gardening diary or simple record of children's activities. It would have helped to meet more children who had been involved in garden activities but I understand curriculum pressures etc don't always allow for that.

Areas of Achievement:

Section A - Horticulture

The two borders adjoining the main school entrance contained mainly perennials - a variety of shapes - the grasses growing attractively against the white render amongst clumps of lavender. The deep red dianthus was very striking. Alliums had been present as had spring flowering bulbs, I was told. The nearby corner plot was most attractive with grasses again providing height with a deep red campion, white carnations alongside mauve spiked speedwell. Lucie has done a terrific job splitting larger plants and replanting them around the site. There was clearly a lot of work underway in and around the main raised bed area, a wide range of vegetables - bulb and salad onions, tomatoes, types of lettuce and beans (some just emerging), with more seeds having been sown. Strawberries and raspberries were very healthy with the former fully fruiting. Most fruit trees in the wildflower garden looked very healthy and will allow pupils to understand the origins of apples, plums and cherries for example. A holiday watering plan was in place.

Section B – Environment

Situated in a primarily residential area, Heathcote Primary School's Kersall Road site provides an excellent outdoor environment for pupils. There were numerous examples of bug hotels from small food tins packed with twigs and other vegetation to a larger wooden version in the wildlife garden alongside many other tins. Leaves and cones had been collected in the garden near the Y1 playground entrance. A more permanent bug hotel was seen in the wildflower garden. Lucie has a compost bin in the vegetable garden which has been used to add to the very light soil in the raised beds. The children recognised rosemary and understood that other herbs such as mint emitted an aroma and added flavour to other ingredients in food preparation.

Section C - Community

I was shown round the school site by Kieran Lalli and the school gardener Lucie. There are multiple sites available for planting and Lucie is adapting her plans for those that are most avoided by children's feet! I met five pupils, Darasimi, Doyinsola, Teddy, Sonny and Rosie. Lucie is a parent of two school pupils and so can interact well with the pupils. The school layout means that several of the ground floor classrooms have doors leading directly to planted and grassed areas. The main vegetable and fruit garden is situated close to the school and is easily accessible for all. Brown beans had been planted by pupils including those I met and they recognised emerging seedlings. They were also aware that the carrot root was the edible part of it and that different plants had other edible parts - for example the strawberry fruits and lettuce leaves.

(Noted this year: the Scotland Road site was not included in the judge's tour)

Areas for Development:

Section A

It was explained that children had helped to sow seeds of rocket, salad onions and tomatoes but some pictures or record of the activities the children had undertaken would have been beneficial. Evidence of all-year-round gardening related activities with a wider range of species and plant types would be very beneficial.

Section B

The collection of sticks and twigs in the wildlife gardens could be saved and would provide a natural bug hotel. Several of the classes had access to the outdoor space and gardens and I was told that outdoor lessons were held - again evidence of outdoor activities and/or learning would have been beneficial. The soil in the containers/raised beds was very free draining, whilst some compost had been added - increasing the water-holding capacity would help the plant growth and lower the pressure to water, and also reduce plant losses due to drought. There was a water butt alongside the garden shed - additional capacity would be perhaps beneficial? A water feature could be considered to extend the wildlife interest in that section.

Section C

It was good to meet the five pupils but it would have helped to understand from them (and others?) how they were involved with gardening activities and what else they had sown and planted. More evidence of what had been done and perhaps some pictures? Could some pupils have displayed an understanding of the growing cycle? There was limited seating. A gardening club was mentioned but there was limited evidence of its activities. More promotion of gardening and the environment in the school newsletter might raise its profile. I was told a tent was erected in the wildflower area for lessons - a scrapbook or pictures of such events would help the judge greatly, as we only get to see a snapshot on the day and it helps to give the judge an idea of the complete year's work.

We at EMIB wish you all well at Heathfield Primary School and Nursery for the coming year and do hope you will invite us back as part of the School Competition in 2026. We look forward to seeing how you progress on your green-fingered journey with the whole school community.

There is a new scheme with the RHS in partnership with the Natural History Museum all about biodiversity. Please do have a look at www.educationnaturepark.org.uk . If you are not already part of the RHS Schools Campaign details can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/schoolgardening

Happy gardening to you and all the children!

John Constable



EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM FLORAL AWARDS

Frank Constable MBE Award for Best Front Garden 2025

WINNER

Address of Property:	Fourth Avenue, Edwinstowe	Post Code: NG21 9PB
Owner's name:	Tina Shirt	
Name of "In Bloom" entry (mandatory)*:	Edwinstowe	Date judged: 02.07.2025
Judges:	Irene Bates and Jeff Bates	

Criteria	Comments	Marks	Marks awarded
1. Attractiveness of planting e.g. Colour schemes; design to function; use of scent; duration of attractiveness across seasons; innovation	A raised border near the house has lavender, sage and other herbs as well as herbaceous perennials and shrubs. Pots are everywhere, with courgettes, beetroot, beans, rhubarb and more, enabling the owner to harvest fresh produce and flowers on a daily basis through the spring to autumn season as well as provide pleasure for passers-by.	30	26
2. Design e.g. suitability to location; balance; proportion; focal points / focal picture; light and shade; use of texture; unity	A former 'colliery house' on the Fourth Avenue estate has retained the space as somewhere to get the car off the road, and now also a colourful array of annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs and fruit and a resource for bees and butterflies. A remarkable effort.	30	25
3. Quality of Care and Maintenance e.g. edged up lawns; minimal weeds; mulching; health of plants; lack of pests and diseases	Everything in excellent condition, borders chock full and no obvious signs of P&D. Mulch seen where appropriate	30	26
4. Sustainability e.g. minimising peat use; composting; mulching; minimising use of pesticides	Peat-based compost is not used, organic waste is composted in the rear garden. Lots of plants to attract pollinators.	10	8
TOTAL MARKS		100	85
AWARD (Gold, Silver Gilt, Silver, Bronze or Certificate of Achievement)		Gold	



EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM FLORAL AWARDS



Best Pub/Hotel Award - Supported by The Art Department, Nottingham

WINNER

Address of Property:	Hickman Hill Hotel Cox's Hill Gainsborough	Post Code: DN21 1HH
Owner's name:	Rob Ewen	
Name of "In Bloom" entry	Gainsborough in Bloom	Date: 1 st July 2025

Criteria	Description	Marks	Marks Awarded
1. Attractiveness of planting <i>e.g. Colour schemes; design to function; use of scent; duration of attractiveness across seasons; innovation</i>	This is a delightful hotel and wedding venue. The approach to the garden proper from the front parking area is past a slightly shabby pond surrounded by balustrades and pretty terracing. The relaxed, unmanicured planting at the front gives no indication of what lies beyond. The rear garden is accessed through an arch built by the owner which leads guests down an immaculate, box-edged path, with hanging baskets and climbers, the mood immediately changing from casual to immaculate. A large garden comes into view at the end of the path. Containing principally evergreen topiary, shrubs and mature trees, it is a garden for all seasons, very suitable for an hotel and wedding venue. The variation of shapes, the rise and fall of the land and good spacing in the planting provides changes in texture and light whilst the occasional rose or planter provides pops of colour to this principally green garden. The restrained use of colour creates an air of serenity. A new pergola, being built as an extension of the hotel's dining area, does not interfere with the agreeableness of its surroundings and will rather add greatly to the use of the garden.	30	28
2. Design		30	

e.g. suitability to location; balance; proportion; focal points / focal picture; light and shade; use of texture; unity	The design of the garden is beautifully balanced with excellent focal points - for example, a planter made out of an intriguing old bath, topiary shapes and well maintained steps leading the eye on. Pleasing variations of light and shade are created by the careful use of mature trees and the evergreen structure. Variation in the topiary and good spacing in the planting of evergreen shrubs provide changes in texture and the restrained use of colour in this principally green garden adds to its serenity – and unity.		29
3. Quality of Care and Maintenance	The rear garden is absent of weeds, with well edged lawns, healthy plants showing no signs of pests or disease and beds mulched where needed. The pruning of all the evergreens and, where desirable, the raised canopy of trees is well and sensitively done. The front garden and parking area would benefit from more attention and the gravel needs significant weeding.	30	24
e.g. edged up lawns; minimal weeds; mulching; health of plants; lack of pests and diseases			
4. Sustainability	No peat is used. Watering is sustainable with the use of a large, camouflaged water bowser and the box is actively treated to keep it healthy and free of both blight and the box caterpillar moth. We were shown no composting area but it could well have been hidden in an unfrequented area.		9
e.g. minimising peat use; composting; mulching; minimising use of pesticides			
TOTAL MARKS			90
AWARD			Gold
(Gold, Silver Gilt, Silver, Bronze or Certificate of Achievement)			



EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM FLORAL AWARDS



Best Retail/Commercial Award -

Supported by The Art Department, Nottingham

WINNER

Address of Property:	Marshall's Yard, Beaumont Street, Gainsborough	Post Code: DN21 2NA
Owners' name:	Dransfield Properties Ltd. Melissa Cutforth General Manager.	
Name of "In Bloom" entry (	Gainsborough in Bloom	Date: 1 st July 2025

Criteria	Description	Marks	Marks Awarded
1. Attractiveness of planting e.g. Colour schemes; design to function; use of scent; duration of attractiveness across seasons; innovation	An attractive selection of planting enhancing a busy shopping area and office space helping to make a welcoming and calm atmosphere. Opened in 2007 on the site of a former tractor factory, most of the beds contain established perennials with annuals for seasonal colour. Pansies are planted up in the autumn and the beds all contain spring flowering bulbs giving year-round interest. Two healthy wisterias are establishing either side of the entrance gateway. Some of the beds adjacent to walkways contain aromatic herbs, and wildflowers such as foxgloves thrive.	30	27
2. Design e.g. suitability to location; balance; proportion; focal points / focal picture; light and shade; use of texture; unity	Peripheral borders with wide coping stones provide additional seating. The vanishing fountain is a lovely feature. There is recognition of the history of the yard, with the silhouette tractor in the flower beds, the information heritage plaques and the enlarged black and white archive photos in B&M.	30	27
3. Quality of Care and Maintenance e.g. edged up lawns; minimal weeds; mulching; health of plants; lack of pests and diseases	Care of the beds and borders is by staff who work at the shopping centre, including maintenance and security guards. A few businesses manage their own floral displays. Everything looked healthy including the hanging baskets and trees. Unfortunately, the oversized wall planter 'hayracks' are very tricky to plant attractively and a challenge to maintain, which is a shame in this otherwise very good entry.	30	25

4. Sustainability	Mulch and composted bark had recently been added. All the plants are fed regularly and planted in peat-free compost. All the plants are sourced from local suppliers and trees are managed by local tree surgeons. Within the borders old tree stumps are placed. Bug hotels and bird boxes are noted. Toxic chemicals. are avoided in this public space.	10	8
e.g. minimising peat use; composting; mulching; minimising use of pesticides			
TOTAL MARKS			87
AWARD (Gold, Silver Gilt, Silver, Bronze or Certificate of Achievement)			Gold



EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM DISCRETIONARY AWARDS

HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE WITHIN PARKS

WINNER: Queen's Park, Loughborough

LEAST LITTERED

WINNER: Newark

BEST NEW PERMANENT LANDSCAPE

Supported by The Art Department, Nottingham

WINNER: Beaufields, Collingham



EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM BEST WILDFLOWER/CONSERVATION AREA

WINNER: Swale and meadow at Audley St Elphin's Park, Darley Dale

EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM COMMITTEE AWARD

WINNER: Simon Hill and team for management of Hawton Halt, Newark

EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM BEST ENTRANCE

WINNER: Shardlow

DOUG STACEY YOUNG PERSONS' AWARD

WINNER: Ranby School

MOST IMPROVED ENTRANT

Sponsored by Taylors Bulbs

WINNER: Ranby



MOST INSPIRING IYN

Supported by The Art Department, Nottingham

WINNER: Bulwell Forest Garden, Nottingham

