



**RHS BRITAIN  
IN BLOOM**



# **RHS Britain in Bloom 2011 UK Finals Judges' Reports**

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the RHS Britain in Bloom 2011 Judges' Reports. This booklet contains the results and reports for the 76 2011 UK Finalists, including the Champion of Champions. The finalists are listed in alphabetical order and the comments are arranged according to the three sections on the marking sheet: horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation. Included here below there is a description of each medal award for your reference.

For your convenience we have also included a general results table so that you can quickly scan the results. This table is in alphabetical order by participant name with Category Winners highlighted in bold italic font. Following the general results are the results of the RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards.

## MEDAL AWARDS

**GOLD** (Overall 170-200 points; 85 % and above)

Outstanding

An exceptionally high standard demonstrated throughout. A consistent approach that demonstrates best practice, continuing development and sustainable effort. Meets all of the judging criteria and scores very highly in every section of the marking sheet.

**SILVER GILT** (Overall 150-169 points; 75-84 %)

Very Good

A high standard entry which meets virtually all of the judging criteria and includes sections of exceptionally high standards. Exemplifies best practice in multiple areas and demonstrates very high potential for continuing development and sustainable effort.

**SILVER** (Overall 120-149 points; 60-74 %)

Good

Considered to be an above-average entry that meets many of the judging criteria. The entry will include more than one sub-section that demonstrates exceptionally high standards. In particular, the entry will demonstrate a clear potential to improve in several areas and for sustainable effort.

**BRONZE** (Overall 100-119 points; 50-59 %)

Average

An average entry that meets some but not necessarily all of the judging criteria. The entry will include at least one sub-section that demonstrates a very high standard but the standards will not be consistent throughout. There will be some evidence of the potential to improve and of the ability to sustain effort.

**NO AWARD** (Overall 0-99 points; 0-49 %)

Fair

The entry may have a number of good merits and may have done very well in its category in the region; however the entry has not met the judging criteria to a national standard. The entry is not sufficiently developed to achieve any of the RHS Britain in Bloom medals.

## GENERAL RESULTS

Entry Name	Category	Award	Region / Nation
Ahoghill	Small Town	Silver Gilt	Ulster
Bangor	Coastal over 12k	Silver Gilt	Ulster
Bath	Small City	Silver Gilt	South West
Bedford	Small City	Silver	Anglia
Berrynarbor	Village	Gold	South West
<b>Bristol</b>	<b>Large City</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>South West</b>
<b>Broughshane</b>	<b>Large Village</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Ulster</b>
Bury	City	Silver Gilt	North West
Cemaes Bay	Large Village	Silver	Wales
Chirk (Wrexham)	Urban Community	Silver Gilt	Wales
<b>Cleethorpes</b>	<b>Coastal over 12k</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>East Midlands</b>
Coatbridge	Small City	Bronze	Scotland
Coldred	Small Village	Silver	South & South East
Coleraine	Large Town	Silver Gilt	Ulster
Colne	Large Town	Silver Gilt	North West
Comrie	Champion of Champions	Gold	Scotland
<b>Cricklade</b>	<b>Champion of Champions</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>South West</b>
Darlington	Small City	Silver	Northumbria
<b>Derry City</b>	<b>Small City</b>	<b>Silver Gilt &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Ulster</b>
Didsbury (Manchester)	Urban Community	Silver	North West
Donington	Large Village	Silver	East Midlands
Dunnington	Small Town	Silver Gilt	Yorkshire

Edinburgh	Large City	Silver Gilt	Scotland
Elswick	Village	Silver Gilt	North West
Filby	Village	Gold	Anglia
Forres	Town	Gold	Scotland
Freckleton	Town	Silver Gilt	North West
Garstang	Champion of Champions	Gold	North West
<b>Glenrothes</b>	<b>Large Town</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
Grange-over-Sands	Coastal up to 12k	Silver	Cumbria
Great Whittington	Small Village	Silver Gilt	Northumbria
Grouville	Coastal up to 12k	Silver Gilt	Jersey
Halstead	Town	Gold	Anglia
Holyhead	Town	Silver Gilt	Wales
Hunstanton	Coastal up to 12k	Silver	Anglia
Huntingdon	Large Town	Gold	Anglia
Ilkley	Town	Silver Gilt	Yorkshire
Kirkby Stephen	Large Village	Silver	Cumbria
<b>Loughgall</b>	<b>Small Village</b>	<b>Silver Gilt &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Ulster</b>
<b>Luddenden</b>	<b>Village</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Yorkshire</b>
Milton Keynes	Large City	Silver	Thames & Chilterns
Moor (Huntingdon)	Urban Community	Silver	Anglia
Moseley (Birmingham)	Urban Community	Silver	Heart of England
Newcastleton	Village	Silver Gilt	Scotland
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Small City	Silver	Heart of England
Oadby and Wigston	Small City	Silver Gilt	East Midlands

Oakham	Town	Silver Gilt	East Midlands
Perth	Champion of Champions	Gold	Scotland
Pitlochry	Champion of Champions	Gold	Scotland
Plymouth	Coastal over 12k	Silver Gilt	South West
Richmond Upon Thames	City	Silver Gilt	London
Rosliston	Village	Silver Gilt	East Midlands
Rothesay	Coastal up to 12k	Silver	Scotland
<b>Rustington</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>South &amp; South East</b>
Saltburn by the Sea	Coastal up to 12k	Silver	Northumbria
Scotlandwell	Small Village	Silver Gilt	Scotland
Shadwell	Large Village	Silver Gilt	Yorkshire
Southport	Coastal over 12k	Silver	North West
<b>St Martin</b>	<b>Small Town</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Guernsey</b>
St Saviour	Town	Silver Gilt	Jersey
<b>Stockton</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Northumbria</b>
Stony Stratford	Small Town	Silver	Thames & Chilterns
Tenby	Coastal up to 12k	Silver Gilt	Wales
Tetbury	Small Town	Silver Gilt	Heart of England
Thornbury	Town	Gold	South West
<b>Uddingston (Glasgow)</b>	<b>Urban Community</b>	<b>Silver Gilt &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
Upton upon Severn	Large Village	Silver	Heart of England
Walthamstow Village (London)	Urban Community	Silver	London
Wareham	Small Town	Silver Gilt	South & South East
Warkworth	Large Village	Silver Gilt	Northumbria

Whickham	Large Town	Silver Gilt	Northumbria
<b>Whitby</b>	<b>Coastal up to 12k</b>	<b>Gold &amp; Category Winner</b>	<b>Yorkshire</b>
Whitehaven	Large Town	Silver Gilt	Cumbria
Woodlesford (Leeds)	Urban Community	Silver Gilt	Yorkshire
Wrexham	City	Silver Gilt	Wales
York	City	Silver Gilt	Yorkshire

## RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM DISCRETIONARY AWARDS

The RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards are special awards presented by the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Judging Panel to finalists that demonstrate genuine excellence in a particular area of the judging criteria. As discretionary awards these awards are only presented when there is a deserving recipient, so not all of the awards are presented every year. The results for 2010 are as follows:

**RHS Britain in Bloom Floral Award**  
Bury, North West

**RHS Britain in Bloom Sustainable Landscaping Award**  
University of Edinburgh Pollock Campus, Edinburgh, Scotland

**RHS Britain in Bloom Commercial Award**  
Graythwaite Manor Hotel, Grange Over Sands, Cumbria

**RHS Britain in Bloom Young People's Award**  
Wee FIBbees, Forres, Scotland

**RHS Britain in Bloom School Award**  
Spring Common School, Moor (Huntingdon), Anglia

**RHS Britain in Bloom Conservation & Wildlife Award**  
Avon Gorge & Downs, Bristol, South West

**RHS Britain in Bloom Environmental Quality Award**  
Derry City, Ulster

**RHS Britain in Bloom Tourism Award**  
Tenby, Wales

**RHS Britain in Bloom Public Park Award** (Given in memory of David Welch)  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland

**RHS Britain in Bloom Anglian Home Improvements Community Award**  
Chirk (Wrexham), Wales

### **RHS Britain in Bloom Community Champion Award**

John Keenlyside, Forres  
Vera Varley, Ilkley  
Monica Whyte, Bristol  
Alan Fletcher, Cleethorpes  
Liz Wilson, Uddingston (Glasgow)  
Sandy Wilson, Broughshane  
David Orr, Whickham  
Dorothy Lord, Colne  
Jan Miller, Moseley (Birmingham)

### **RHS Britain in Bloom Outstanding Contribution Award**

Jim Knight,  
RHS Britain in Bloom UK Judging Panel  
Wales in Bloom Judge  
Wales in Bloom Foundation Committee Member

## **REPORTS**

### **Ahoghill, Ulster Small Town - Silver Gilt**

Ahoghill is a relatively new entry, however the progress made and enthusiasm from not just the committee but the whole village was apparent. We are sure that continuing on this path of progression will earn this entry higher accolades in the future. Wallace Elder is clearly the driving force of all the new creations and every credit must go to him, and the colleagues who support him, in the build and refurbishment of almost all of the furniture and art in the landscape seen on the tour. Fully integrated business support was clearly evident and ongoing.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Management of green spaces was of a high standard; the impact on arrival into the village is indicative of the consistency across the whole entry.
- Businesses have embraced the bloom initiative and we would encourage you to continue to expand and develop this.
- The diamond is a laudible feature at the heart of this town.

##### *Areas for development*

- For future tours care needs to be taken with the route, as some of the gardens passed were not of a consistent standard.
- A future consideration could be a floral trail to include all the churches in the town, and resurrecting the garden competition.
- Although it was of high importance to the entrant to show the judges all seven entrances to the town, two or three would have been sufficient, showing the others in the portfolio, for example visiting Glebe Rd/Church St could have effectively covered this.
- At the start of the tour, provide the judges with an itinerary showing the route and points of interest and people who will be met during the tour, with space for the judges to make comments.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The links between local heritage and pride of place, shows this is a proud farming community.

- The restoration and fabrication of the street furniture and planters were of a high standard and showed a great sense of pride of place.
- Of special note was the fact that almost every skill or material used was sought from the local community.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges were concerned that no proof was shown of conservation and biodiversity to the standard or extent expected in a town of this size.
- Provide more information about resource management, either by linking in with appropriate staff in the local authority or including statistics in the portfolio or presentation.
- There was clear evidence of dog fouling in the area of Glebe Rd.
- We noticed appropriate areas on the tour for encouraging biodiversity, for example by installing bird/bat boxes. Consider as a future project areas of grassland which could be converted to wildflower meadow to encourage even more biodiversity.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the progress made so far despite this being a recent entrant, particularly bearing in mind the baseline the town was working from.
- Clearly the community have been motivated in the past five years to work towards making the town a better place to live.
- It was evident that local businesses were supportive and were being encouraged to reinvest further in improvements, which is attracting new business and custom to the town.
- The judges were impressed by the level of support in kind and funding obtained to further develop and promote the campaign.

#### *Areas for development*

- Reconsider the delivery of the presentation as it was felt that a lot of duplication occurred, information was given that was already held in the portfolio, this time should be used to show additional aspects not covered elsewhere (e.g. tour or portfolio).
- It was not made clear the full extent of year round involvement; showing winter projects would have helped the judges understand this more fully.
- We would like to see evidence of links with other groups in the town; this could be achieved through a floral trail.

### **Bangor, Ulster Coastal over 12k - Silver Gilt**

This Northern Ireland coastal town with its interesting heritage has done much to improve its image. Florally it was a riot of colour in many locations and the walled garden was a delight. There were many redevelopments proposed particularly along the waterfront, which will uplift the recreational potential considerably and encourage tourism. We were particularly impressed with the horticultural training programme which will encourage the development of future horticultural skills. It was a full and varied itinerary which covered the core values of Britain in Bloom very well.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The yew pyramids and lime tree pleaching were excellent additions within the Walled Garden.
- The Newtownards roundabout was an excellent example of sustainable planting.
- The seed experiment by the Marquis Hall was a unique focus and with modification could be developed successfully.

- The Walled Garden was an excellent facility. We were impressed by the enthusiasm of Nicky, as well as the variety of vegetable areas, shrubs, herbaceous plantings, annuals, herbs and other plant features. We felt the arches in this area were an excellent addition and the new facilities planned will be a real asset.
- Generally the floral displays were of a high standard but there were some areas that were not of the same quality, e.g. the *Antirrhinum* bed by the town hall and the beds on Brunswick Road.
- There were many good examples of sustainable planting throughout the town and perhaps less emphasis should be placed on bedding. Consider reducing the amount of annual displays in some areas and concentrate efforts in key locations to increase the number permanent displays.

#### *Areas for development*

- It may be better to consider a more balanced colour scheme in certain areas e.g. outside the station.
- Grass maintenance standards varied throughout the town.
- The town centre manager was attempting to obtain more support for floral displays from businesses and he should be encouraged to continue.
- The Castle Gardens would benefit from an interpreted tree trail and good labelling. This may be funded through an Awards for All funding bid.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- It was good to see the efforts made to protect the Balloo Conservation area from development. There were good interpretation boards and other features on this site.
- The Civic Amenity Site educational facilities for children were excellent. The recycling signs, control and management of this area were first class.
- We liked the wildflower meadows in Castle Park, especially the use of species of local provenance.
- The artwork on the vacant plot fence in the Marina area was admirable.

#### *Areas for development*

- We felt more could have been done to promote local heritage.
- Street furniture was generally satisfactory but quality varied and there were bent slats on many seats in the marina area.
- There was litter visible in the town centre area and the beds adjacent to the fence at the Bangor Assembly contained quite an accumulation.
- We were not sure whether the weed reducing experiment was entirely successful. We were concerned about damage to paving and tarmac. Would a hot water treatment be more appropriate?

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The future training of horticultural apprentices is to be applauded. We were most impressed by this initiative. Keep up the good work in this area.
- The “Growing Connections” project and the help given to people with learning disabilities was excellent. A very good initiative linking it to permaculture. The element of providing skills to help with their future was very positive.
- The council should be congratulated on its support for horticultural and landscape initiatives.
- The Bangor Central Nursery School project was good and we applaud the involvement from the Walled Garden staff. A potato competition was suggested for the children.
- The work on the floral displays by the children at Carnalea Station.

### *Areas for development*

- The improvements to the Marina area were impressive however, we were concerned about the possible loss of much of the good sustainable planting in this area. We hope this is considered as things progress.
- We noted the hard work undertaken by the sole officer who showed us around the town. We would like to see other help given to spread the load. Maybe there should be some consideration given to forming a voluntary “in Bloom” group to help drive the campaign locally.
- The judges would have liked a route map/itinerary on the day to help them understand the tour a little further.

## **Bath, South West Small City - Silver Gilt**

The tour began at the superb St John’s sheltered residential complex, reflecting the move towards a community focused route rather than concentrating solely on the more obvious attractions of this World Heritage City. There were many high points to the visit, with St Stephen’s Church and the public conveniences at Weston being perhaps two of the peaks – though the unexpected attack of “guerrilla gardeners” may well remain with the judges for many year to come!

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- St John’s was a wonderful start to the tour, with a most beautifully designed and perfectly maintained garden, well-used and enjoyed by the residents of the complex.
- St Stephen’s Church, with a recent clean up and planting of the beds at the front adding to the already established natural areas, is another fine example of community-based horticulture.
- The Millennium Garden is also excellent and is adjoining the allotments effectively.
- The work of Richard Potem at Weston High Street loos is astonishing in such a short space of time.
- The Bath skyline is enhanced by the marvellous treescape! The notable trees of the Botanic Gardens, with the *Catalpa* particularly beautiful on our visit, are only part of the wealth of greenery in the city.
- The traditional Victorian bedding in the park and Parade Gardens is striking, and the permanent planting in the Botanic Garden is stunning.
- We were impressed by the containers at the Pump Room, and in Northumberland Place – with sweetcorn and other edibles – most unusual.
- A number of pubs had floral displays, with the Saracens Head being notable.
- The inspirational presentation of the children at St Mary’s Catholic School (where Mr Brennan said ‘go’ and they were away!) was superb.

#### *Areas for development*

- The containers at the Pump Room are substantial and suitably themed; this is not the case with the baskets on parts of your historic colonnades, where the baskets are too small for the site and its scale. You should ensure that the displays are more impactful in this dominating environment.
- The long border in the Parade Gardens is a trial border, but is not entirely successful; some plants have not thrived and the display style could be improved upon.
- Business involvement is good where it is happening but there were many ‘bare’ areas that were noticeable throughout the tour; encourage more areas to be like Northumberland Place and get this approach to spread.
- The Victorian beds of begonias in Royal Victoria Park would benefit from a complete renewal if the opportunity arises; the lawns are uneven, and the bed edges poorly aligned.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- For a city with high levels of footfall evident, it was a remarkably clean tour, with very little litter, no dog-fouling and no significant graffiti seen at all.
- The presentation about Primrose Hill Community Woodland was good – this site is clearly developing; we were also most impressed by the work at St Stephen’s Churchyard, where BTCV teams have helped the congregation with the splendid woodland areas.
- Adam Gretton is doing sterling work to increase the planting of native trees throughout the city.

### *Areas for development*

- Please try to ensure that the judges are able to visit at least one significant site of conservation and biodiversity as part of the tour; hearing of it is much like reading of it – neither matches the reality of a visit.
- We realise that you abound with heritage but feel that the ‘landscape / horticulture’ aspect of this is underplayed; could interpretation boards be present to allow the public to know more of Parade Gardens, Royal Victoria Park and other similar sites?
- Given the sheer number of baskets and containers that are in place, we feel that you should prioritise the recycling aspects of the compost (this may be happening but we were not made aware of it) and also increase the use of peat-reduced or peat-free composts.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- There are many strengths developing in this section, with the work of June Player at Oldfield Station, the Millennium Gardeners, St Stephen’s Church and the Guerrilla Gardeners (who achieved the unexpected feat of completely amazing the judges with their innovative presentation) being highlights.
- Excellent use of the banners and shop-window displays is raising the profile of Bloom in Bath; we were pleased to see that TV and radio were fully aware of your efforts.

### *Areas for development*

- There is clearly a new focus for Bloom in your lovely city; however we do feel that it may lack a clear strategy for how it is expected to move and develop in the changing economic and social circumstances.
- The balance of the tour was skewed towards community – which is not a major fault – but this means that areas such as the Botanic Gardens were under-valued and also that areas such as Primrose Hill and Oldfield Station were not able to be visited; we would recommend that you review your route to see if these can be accommodated in future.
- The presentation of year-round involvement was a little rushed and did not show clearly that it was really embedded in Bath in Bloom. Similarly, the portfolio is very light on showing how much support – in terms of fundraising – is being secured.

## **Bedford, Anglia Small City - Silver**

Bedford sits astride the River Great Ouse and this is a feature at the heart of the Bloom campaign, where the lovely embankment gardens are striking and clearly welcomed by residents and visitors alike. The Bloom is obviously developing in the city, with local community groups taking ownership of areas and great strides being made in outdoor education in schools, allotments and parks. The support of local industry and in particular the licensed trade is also notable, with the tour concluding with lunch at the splendidly floral White Horse Inn.

## Horticultural Achievement

### *Areas of achievement*

- The Embankment Gardens are startling and innovative, using a very wide range of plants in interesting ways; the use of *Saccharum* as a dot plant is attractive and the fountains of willow with runner beans and *Mina lobata* were dramatic.
- We very much approved of the way in which plants were used in the mixed colour carpet but with the blue ribbon running through the whole length of the display.
- The Tranquillity Garden at the Bedford Hospital was excellent, with modern, effective use of grasses and *Kniphofia* being particularly striking. This was a well-maintained feature and was enhanced by the swans sculptures.
- The range of other communal horticultural sites seen – e.g. St Cuthberts Church, the Bunyan Church Garden, The Hills Lower School and Golden Gardens were all well maintained and colourful.
- We were also impressed by the many excellent pub and hotel displays notably the White Horse, Mill Hotel and De Parys Hotel.
- We also commend the splendid treescape of the borough, most effectively viewed from the top of the Hospital.

### *Areas for development*

- The embankment bedding was lovely but the amount of chickweed visible in the displays was rather unfortunate.
- Weeds were also a problem in street tree planting pits and on some of the roundabouts and road junctions.
- Town centre pedestrianised areas were enhanced with towers of *Surfinia* and an attractive raised planting area; however, the area is extensive and we do feel that the amount of planting on view lacked sufficient impact.
- We are impressed with the use of tree chippings for recycling and would like to see much more evidence of it being used as a mulch in public borders, where the thin soils have dried out significantly.

## Environmental Responsibility

### *Areas of achievement*

- The Priory Park, with its substantial lakes and range of cycle tracks etc, is a remarkable resource; you are also very fortunate to have the Great Ouse running through the town providing an almost seaside ambience to the embankment.
- Surveys in the park demonstrate the effectiveness of the habitat for bats and other species, which are also actively encouraged in many other areas of the town through the auspices of the Bloom group.
- The local heritage including John Bunyan and the Laxton Brothers is extensive and you are also about to improve the Castle Mound area, the oldest part of the town. All of these features and persons are clearly promoted by the Bloom activities.
- We also were impressed with the general levels of cleanliness throughout the tour, and by the work of the Kayakers (and other) groups in cleaning the Great Ouse at intervals through the year.
- Significant public art is on display, with the Swans at the Hospital, the mosaic at Castle Mound and wooden carvings in Priory Park etc; the town fingerposts and other signage were well maintained.

### *Areas for development*

- Please develop the Laxton links further – either through heritage planting or displays styled around fruit, for example; it is too great a horticultural link to possess without more extensive celebration.
- Priory Park is a fine feature but needs more interpretation signage; the visitor is unlikely to be aware of the range of species or activities taking place.
- You should also consider having volunteers, specialist recorders etc on site to meet the judges on the tour, to increase the value of the experience.

- There are some problems with graffiti; this is very noticeable in prominent places such as Castle Mound, and we recommend a strenuous campaign to tackle this.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Well done for getting new IYN and Urban Community groups established in the borough; the efforts of Golden Grove and Bright Stars are especially notable from those we met on the day.
- Charles Wells Brewery is clearly a big supporter of the Bloom group and also strongly promotes colourful frontages in their own public houses.
- The seed exchange is a novel idea too.

### *Areas for development*

- Keep trying to develop greater levels of sponsorship for the Bloom campaign in the town; for a community of this size, there seems to be a scarcity.
- Some of the roundabouts are a missed opportunity for promotion and enhancement.
- On future tours, try to involve more of the community directly and in the forefront as part of the tour, with officers acting more in the role of facilitator rather than leader.
- We did not meet enough members of the community on the tour, and certainly not representative of the levels indicated in the portfolio.
- Press involvement was present on the day but does not come across as a strength of the entry; raising the profile of your excellent work is essential to a sustainable Bloom campaign

## **Berrynarbor, South West Village - Gold**

Berrynarbor is a beautiful and ancient village on the North Devon coast. The work of the Bloom group is sympathetic to the natural setting and the buildings within the village. The community spirit is outstanding with all sections of the community coming together to support the Bloom campaign. The pride of the local community in their village is clear for all to see and the new projects currently being planned will continue the good work into the future.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The number of very well planted and maintained floral containers seen throughout the village all with appropriate colours and complimentary to their surroundings. The excellent quality of plants supplied by the Jigsaw Horticultural Project. Of particular note were the baskets at Muffet's Tea Rooms.
- The half-barrel tubs adjacent to the shop / post office made from recycled plastic and containing a good selection of alpines. A good example of sustainable planting which others could follow.
- The impressive standard of the private gardens which were seen by the judges on their tour.
- The maintenance of the churchyard which is managed as a spring meadow and then cut in mid-summer.
- The recent improvement works to the area around the War Memorial were tastefully carried out.

### *Areas for development*

- The planting at the Manor Hall was sparse in comparison to the rest of the village and more impact was needed to match the floral containers elsewhere throughout the village.
- The small box planter at the base of the village entry sign was inappropriate to its location. We suggest removal and the creation of a new bed around the base of the sign containing some permanent, sustainable planting.

- The judges would suggest the re-planting of the shrub bed on the corner of the community shop / post office car park with co-ordinated perennials that are more in keeping with the existing shrub cover.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The management of the churchyard as a spring meadow to encourage wildflowers.
- The whole village was spotlessly clean.
- Re-cycling of the old tufa plant containers at the village centre planting area.
- Composting in the school garden and the organic gardening ethos.

### *Areas for development*

- Some of the litter bins seen on the judging route are in need of a coat of paint / wash so that they match the pristine conditions of the village.
- Persevere with the use of peat-free composts and seek advice if necessary from the RHS Advisory Service.
- The name sign on the entrance to the village would benefit from a cleaning or consider seeking funding to provide a bespoke sign using skills available in the village.
- Provide more water butts throughout the village for watering the floral containers, helping to conserve this natural resource.
- It was good to see the number of events taking place in the village. However the posters which were pinned to several of the lamp posts to advertise these looked unsightly; consider the use of appropriate notice boards instead.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Level of fundraising for the campaign and the wide range of community events held to support this.
- The support of all sections of the local community for the Bloom campaign. Of particular note the judges were impressed by the very enthusiastic children from the school gardening club and their mentor Jane Vanstone for their excellent garden, producing abundant crops.
- The Bloom group are to be congratulated on the purchase of their plant material from the Jigsaw Horticultural project – a scheme that provides training and real work experience for vulnerable and isolated people within a horticultural environment.
- Revival of the ancient village tradition of ‘pumpkin rolling’ by the villagers on Halloween.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue the excellent work to engage all sections of the community in the Bloom campaign.
- Continue to use the Bloom campaign to promote the area for tourism. The judges were particularly pleased to see first-hand the preparations for the excellent floral float for entry into two local carnivals and such fantastic effort and dedication in promoting the area.

## **Bristol, South West Large City - Gold & Category Winner**

This large South Western city, has made many improvements in recent years, and is a serious competitor in the Bloom campaign. The heritage of the city was well described, and the various improvements to the harbour-side and other areas reflected the heritage well. Tree cover throughout the city was good, and excellently maintained. Colour abounded in important areas, and it was well balanced with good sustainable planting. The attention paid to conservation work on the Avon Gorge and Downs was truly outstanding. The itinerary was wide ranging and covered all the core elements

of Britain in Bloom well. The visit was a delight, and we left wishing to return to see areas visited in more detail.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- We admired the work done by the management company at Temple Quay and there appeared to be good support for the campaign from many businesses. Many had colourful displays in this area.
- Overall standards of maintenance were good and the various agencies seemed to work together refreshingly well. The commitment of the contractor towards apprentices was inspiring.
- Russell Horsey was a very professional Arboricultural Officer, forward thinking and proactive in dealing with all tree issues in Bristol. The city has an excellent tree cover, well cared for with many unusual varieties.
- There was a significant impact with the colour and variety of the floral displays throughout the city.
- The plantings in the zoo gardens were inspiring, particularly the new introductions and special features, also the use of native species on the islands. All plantings were of a very high horticultural quality.
- The return to Victorian traditions with broad paths, trees and well kept grass was especially relevant in Queens Park.
- There had been much attention paid to good sustainable planting, e.g. the Cathedral Gardens, roundabouts, verges and parks.
- Residential gardens and enclosed open space were good, especially around Poole's Wharf.
- The quality of allotments seen was of a high quality and the city was well aware of the need to provide more plots.

### *Areas for development*

- Whilst we welcomed the introduction of the new troughs there were isolated areas where the quality was not up to the standard seen elsewhere.
- We felt that the planting at Temple Park churchyard could have been more appropriate to the surroundings and we will give further details on this, if required, at the surgery.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The professionalism of Mandy Leivers was outstanding. Her knowledge of the area was immense and her commitment to the project excellent. It was also good to receive information on the Downs Project from the friends group. There were many educational conservation initiatives. The sheep and goat grazing and Lichen Trail were also high points.
- The various projects, history and plant diversity at the Botanic Gardens was well documented and explained well by our guide.
- Resource management was well covered and there appeared to be few problems in this area. We applauded the proactive approach to all aspects especially home composting and communal systems.
- Interpretation for heritage aspects was of good quality. We noted the interesting trail throughout the city. Our guide, Phil Williamson, was extremely knowledgeable on this aspect.
- There were virtually no instances of problems related to local environmental quality with the exception of the tree grids referenced below.
- Hard landscaping was of a superior quality in many areas and interpretation was very good. Street furniture was maintained generally very well but there are some areas that needed attention and which would benefit from a maintenance regime.
- We found little to criticise with regards to environmental responsibility and hope you can continue to keep up these very high standards.

#### *Areas for development*

- The tree grids in the Poole's Quay area needed topping up with gravel or similar material to prevent litter falling between the gaps.
- We would like to have seen more interpretation at Temple Park churchyard.

#### **Community Participation**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- There was plenty of evidence of ongoing projects. The work carried out by the Community Payback team appeared to be well structured and useful.
- The itinerary was varied and professionally executed. There appeared to be good liaison with schools and young people and publicity material was informative and well presented. It was good to see considerable interest in the campaign.
- The Blue Skies project to help tree watering was an excellent community scheme.

##### *Areas for development*

- Year round involvement was covered well in the portfolio but we felt more could have been said about spring displays.
- Considering Bristol's diverse population we would like to have seen or been informed of projects or initiatives in the various ethnic areas of the city. This may be an area you wish to consider for the future.

### **Broughshane, Ulster Large Village - Gold & Category Winner**

Broughshane prides itself on being an inclusive community. The village is indeed fortunate to have many dedicated and able supporters of the initiatives established by the original Improvement Committee. It is inspirational to see how a community has taken on responsibility for its own development and how they have planned comprehensively for the future. The inclusion and encouragement of young people is particularly praiseworthy.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- No visitor can be in any doubt that this is a village where flowers count; bold, highly visual displays, expertly maintained and with inspirational choices of plants abound.
- The motto "doing the right thing right" is so appropriate, and the judges really appreciated the attention to detail that was seen everywhere.
- Excellent variation and upkeep of residential and community gardens.

##### *Areas for development*

- Continue to fill in the gaps left by the hard winter.
- The car park behind McNeills could be further enhanced around the perimeter.
- Continue the move towards introducing permanent plantings to give winter interest and to improve height and structure.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Innovative use of wildflowers in a front garden.
- Spotless streets and public places with well maintained street furniture.
- Rich diversity of art features and celebration of heritage.
- DIY street cleaning and encouragement of pride of place in young people

#### *Areas for development*

- Take care when introducing species to ensure they are compatible with the locality. Perhaps the BEWWA would be the body to initiate the necessary surveys.
- Aim to enhance the biodiversity in the wooded area around the pond, for example by sowing yellow rattle to control coarse grasses and by hand-pulling the goose grass.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The planning for future developments, as epitomised by the “Spring Offensive”.
- The encouragement given to young people.
- The entrepreneurial approach which enables the community to seize chances which might not otherwise be fulfilled.
- Using the Bloom campaign to reach across all sectors of the community to promote well-being and the use of the motto “Britain Blooming is Britain Booming”

#### *Areas for development*

- Although the judges were hugely impressed by the calibre of young people we met, it would be of great interest to have visited some in a school environment.

### **Bury, North West City - Silver Gilt**

On visiting Bury you cannot fail to be impressed by the fantastic quantity and the impressive quality of the floral displays. Baskets, planters and beds festooned with colourful petunias and begonias spill out from every street corner and open space throughout this bustling vibrant city. However, conscious of the ever increasing demands on the public finances, the Bury in Bloom team are introducing a range of sustainable planting in selected sites adding year-round interest whilst concentrating high impact seasonal displays in prominent positions. A very promising entry with lots of potential to continue to progress in the national campaign.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The high level of floral displays in many areas, including sponsored baskets and barrier planters, together with the innovative and imaginative hard landscape features, used to great effect on several sites. Of special note were the waterwheel feature in the library gardens, the carriages on Bolton Street and the flower barrows in the Market Place.
- The two public houses, The Sir Robert Peel and Wyldes in Peel Square and the impressive new landscaping at the New Rock add greatly to the visitor experience of the city centre.
- The garden of Mr and Mrs Reid with its high quality sustainable planting, a real credit to their gardening skills.
- Gallipoli Gardens, home of the Royal Lancashire Fusiliers Museum is a real gem and a credit to the maintenance team, with its high-quality themed displays.
- The involvement of Summerseat Garden Centre in the city centre with a good range of sustainable planting as well as the new sustainable planting on Bolton Street.

#### *Areas for development*

- Continue to develop sustainable planted areas to replace and enhance the seasonally bedded areas, creating an acceptable balance of colour, form and texture with all year round interest.
- It would have been appropriate to visit an allotment site on the tour and talk to plot holders about the various local initiatives in place to encourage home growing.

- Although it is recognised there are some new features in Bury town centre, all planted to a high standard, it was felt some of the older existing features were becoming tired. We felt that greater reliance on sustainable planting coupled with one or two more thought-provoking features would add to the area considerably.
- Continue to encourage the New Rock Shopping Complex to carry out planting to soften the hard landscaping; what they have achieved so far is great but it needs to be extended .

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The impressive work being carried out by the rangers at Burrs Country Park.
- The ongoing work to develop the “Street Care Pledge” engaging with businesses and residents, including the free litter-pick kits, is a superb initiative.
- The introduction of the changes in waste collection, which will help reduce landfill, and the associated educational work being carried out to ensure this transition goes as smoothly as possible.
- The judging route on the whole was spotlessly clean, something to be highly commended in a busy town centre, especially at the The Rock retail complex.
- The introduction of signage and fingerposts, with a standardised design and colour-based themes is a great achievement.
- The newly created display at Bolton Street depicting Bury’s considerable railway heritage, with its sustainable planting and appropriate heritage features, was superb.

### *Areas for development*

- There were several instances of graffiti visible on the route; a more proactive approach should be taken especially in regard to instances on private property.
- The initiative with Tottington and Bury West Rotary Club at Craig House Gardens is a great way of engaging with the community. Could this idea be expanded to include other community groups and areas?
- The Eco Centre at St Gabriels High School was felt to be tired and in need of a re-think and, although the school was closed for building work, it was an opportunity missed not to have met some of the children involved.
- There were considerable amounts of litter visible on Silver Street and although no marks were deducted for this it may be prudent on future tours, and indeed throughout the year, to have someone check the area more frequently.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The ongoing work to involve the community in Bury in Bloom is a positive way of developing the campaign and can only be of benefit in the future.
- The involvement of the children in various projects, including the superb Guardian Angel “Woodies” who care about their environment and were obviously benefiting from visiting allotment sites, learning about food production and carrying out litter picks.
- The involvement of the various friends groups in looking after their parks and open spaces.
- The Volunteer Rangers who help maintain the Burrs Country Park and assist the full time rangers with educational activities at the park.
- The very impressive sponsorship initiatives being carried out by the team involving local businesses and organisations can only benefit the town and help safeguard the high standard of horticultural displays.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue to develop community involvement in the Bloom effort. The introduction of a joint council/community led Bloom group is a must for the future viability and sustainability of the local

campaign. Perhaps visit other authorities in the area where this is happening and network with them to learn more about this approach.

- It's obvious the community take a great pride in Bury; why not capitalise on this and encourage further devolution to the community, similar to the involvement of the Rotary Club in looking after pockets of the town.
- A greater degree of detail regarding funding for the wider Bury in Bloom initiative would be valuable to the judges, especially when it is obvious there is a high level of sponsorship income being generated.

### **Cemaes Bay, Wales Large Village - Silver**

This delightful Anglesey bay has a community that has a real "can do", practical approach that impressed the judges. It was very clear that the campaign had support from all political levels and that the benefits were understood. With a climate that can, at times, challenge the northernmost point of Wales, their attitude wins through. A fantastic community shop displays a range of local specialist products and local skills contribute to fundraising. The committee even take the volunteers out for a well earned day off – a great idea.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- A determined vision which started initially with Pauline's Guerrilla Gardening and has now gone mainstream does wonders and vastly improves the village on the whole.
- There is a good mixture of permanent and annual planting, making appropriate use of the surroundings.
- The decorative annual beds at the school which combine wildflowers and annuals were a stunning innovation.
- The wonderful production centre and community allotments were bringing people together and we applaud their vision to acquire new land.

##### *Areas for development*

- Continue your efforts to replace plants and improve community beds after the harsh winter.
- Consider key focal points in the village where displays might be gathered to get a more striking effect.
- The longevity of high quality displays can be extended with appropriate feeding programmes.
- Wherever possible use the largest container appropriate to its location to maximise the impact and minimise maintenance.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- A very good understanding of the ecological value of "The Valley" and appropriate management regimes reflecting professional advice, including the input of Bangor University.
- A fantastic conveyor-belt shredding system using garden waste, which is then appropriately graded and used on the beds.
- A clean environment with appropriate regimes and campaigns to keep it that way.
- Great to get and keep "money back" from your "bring site" recycling banks.
- The intriguing slug and snail killing experiment using natural control methods.

##### *Areas for development*

- Judges were concerned to see significant misuse of weed killers which had resulted in dead strips caused by drift and lack of attention when applying.

- Consider re-locating the recycling banks – whilst being highly visible to encourage use, you could also use appropriate screening and signage to achieve both objectives on this side of the marking.
- Try to compost green waste, particularly at the allotments.
- Continue with your plans to upgrade the bridges and infrastructure at “The Valley”

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were very impressed with the Bloom group’s ability to access grant funding for several projects demonstrated.
- The inspirational decision to open a community shop has made great use of the vacant premises, raises funds, and demonstrates the community working together.
- Communication and networking was aptly shown to the judges, including hosting the Wales in Bloom awards reception and taking “Bloomers” on holiday.
- Good PR ensures the message of Bloom gets disseminated through the press. And we also applaud the Open Gardens scheme and the level of political support.

### *Areas for development*

- Realise your plans to update the website and consider links to social networking sites.
- Fully utilise the enthusiasm and commitment of the head teacher and school children – consider having them present all aspects of the tour at the school to acknowledge their work to the judges on the tour.
- Use the roundabout, either for sponsorship or by having the local children involved in the design a logo competition and then display the logo proudly to spread your message.

## **Chirk (Wrexham), Wales Urban Community - Silver Gilt**

Chirk is a first time entry into the Britain in Bloom finals. Although they have only been in existence for six years, the difference made to the community is quite remarkable; there was a feeling of pride at every turn on the tour. The churchyard is a very special place indeed, and we were impressed with the marina which, although busy, was maintained to a very high standard. Throughout the tour there was a sense of awareness amongst the residents. DIY is the key to getting things done at this entry, and we are sure this is only the start of their journey to even greater rewards and awards.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The centre of the town was very well dressed with appropriate tubs and containers.
- The standards achieved at the allotment were very high and there were very good community gardens, of which Craig Close Communal Gardens deserves special mention.
- Although the churchyard has already been mentioned in the introduction, we feel its contribution to the entry is so great that further mention is well deserved.
- The railway station is also a very special addition to the entry.

### *Areas for development*

- The cultivation/condition of plants in some areas was a little below par; however, we are sure this was in part to the adverse weather conditions in the few days before judging.
- In some cases, the summer planting in the permanent beds could have been better chosen.
- As the number of beds increase, a wider use of perennial plants appropriate to your area should be used.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Conservation is very relevant to this entry, the castle grounds and canal provide wildlife with a wide range of habitats.
- Recycling is a key element and a way of life in this town, almost every planter seen had either been recovered or was a donated item.
- There were some wonderful items of art relating to the heritage of the area.

### *Areas for development*

- It was felt that we must mention the condition of the bus stop furniture, although we understand this is not something that the group can deal with, maybe the local council can be encouraged to carry out some refurbishment works. This is also the case with some of the other benches and seats seen on the tour.
- The railway station, although good in other ways, is in great need of better access for people with mobility needs. Maybe by reconnecting with the railway company action may be taken.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- There is a good feel about this entry; the community are involved in many different ways pulling together to create a strong bond.
- Funding is received in many different ways, the outcome of which is moving this entry forward.
- The links with schools and older people are proving to be a strength in this community, we are sure that the group has a strong base on which to be able to build.

### *Areas for development*

- Although the press were in attendance, the judges were not interviewed and we were not made aware of what brief had been given for the photo session.
- The judges would have been interested to learn what plans were being formulated for the Millennium Park; this information could have been provided in either the presentation or on the tour.
- As there is great interest in the Bloom at the moment, this may be a good time to start a garden competition for residents.

## **Cleethorpes, East Midlands Coastal Over 12k - Gold & Category Winner**

This east coast resort is a delightful location for visitors. There were many examples of colourful, well balanced and high quality bedding schemes. These were softened successfully in many places by more permanent plantings and a good tree cover despite the salt-laden winds. The Bloom group is well organised and represents many interests. It successfully steers the campaign and reaches high standards throughout. Pride and a constant wish to improve drives the resort forward and tourism flourishes as a result. Our itinerary was wide ranging and varied and covered all three core pillars very well. We left with fond memories of the warm welcome we received.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The impact, colour and quality of the plants in the bedding schemes was outstanding, along with the tiered planters and barrier baskets.
- Good sustainable plantings particularly on Sea Road.
- The judges liked the allotment bed – what a good way to raise the profile of this aspect

- The businesses seemed generally supportive, for example the displays on and around the Tonka Train and there were some excellent private gardens and guest houses, especially the cottage garden with its water feature.
- Maintenance throughout the town was of a high standard.
- The car parks that were visible to us were well landscaped.
- The tree walk leaflet at Haverstoe Park was very informative and was supported by good signage.
- The sustainable landscaping scheme at the cinema complex was excellent.

#### *Areas for development*

- Consider reviewing the amount of bedding, rationalising some of the schemes and extending the specimens in gravel.
- A few beds had issues with height differential, additionally there was an overemphasis on yellow in some beds.
- The barrier baskets on the High Street could have a better colour theme to increase their visibility.
- The judges would have liked more information on the local garden competition.
- Time permitting, the judges would have liked to have visited an allotment on the tour.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The wildlife garden adopted by Bursar Street School was a novel feature and a good resource for all children.
- The conservation work on the sand dunes and beach and the work at the lake with the water circulation project were most impressive.
- Good use of discarded materials at the recycling centres.
- Very appropriate sculptures throughout the town including the new owls on the roundabout.
- The tributes to recent heroes seen were very appropriate, as was the Diana Garden.
- The short rails around the beds were a novel solution to reduce the damage to the flowers.
- The judges applaud the grant obtained from the lottery for the project officer to undertake the ecological survey of the verges.
- The screening of the gap site with the artwork by the local college students.
- The interpretation boards on the beach were highly informative and easy to understand.

#### *Areas for development*

- Considering the high standard of fencing and its treatment there were areas where galvanised rails would have benefitted from a coat of black paint.
- Consider creating a heritage trail around the town to increase the enjoyment for visitors.
- Link the existing planting schemes to information on biodiversity for the public e.g. RHS Plants for Pollinators.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The presentation and organisation of the route and portfolio were very professional and helped us to assess this coastal entry.
- The alleyway schemes were ingenious and have helped to solve antisocial behaviour problems locally.
- The lifestyle group who fundraised £350 to buy bulbs and plant them adjacent to the park.
- The features on the play trail were innovative, particularly the sand pit and musical instrument in the sensory garden.
- The contribution made by the business sector to the Bloom campaign, for example Sentiments sponsoring since 2004.
- The work undertaken in the Sure Start Centre by the Garden Gang was appreciated.

- The amount of publicity by the group was excellent, particularly the use of sponsored vehicles and signage.
- The spring photography competition and children's painting competition were a useful addition to the campaign.

#### *Areas for development*

- Consider the involvement of more groups such as scouts, guides, brownies and cubs.

### **Coatbridge, Scotland Small City - Bronze**

It was clear to the judges that, despite the awful weather, Bloom has a strong, positive future in Coatbridge. We had the company of Cllr Helen McKenna, Convenor of Environment Services, throughout the tour, supporting Keith Vernon from the Landscape Planning Section of North Lanarkshire Council. We were also pleased to note the support of Elaine Smith MSP for all your endeavours. The regeneration activities taking place throughout the town, but in particular at the Canal Basin, are commendable, as are your developing partnerships with the community.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Baskets, containers and floral towers are present in many areas and were well-established (and on a better day, likely to be very cheerful and bright!); we also liked the tree planting in the Canal Basin, where the *Betula 'Jacquemontii'* are appropriate, and the *Liquidambar* at the end of this area must make a dramatic autumn display.
- McDonalds Corner was colourful, and some attractive gardens were seen at Parkway Court. Your established allotments at Blair Road were well used; the new 'community payback' plots at Townhead are a commendable initiative.
- We also approve of the many friends groups that are establishing to take some responsibility for their environment. The group at Dunbeth Park, led by Susan Flannigan, have undertaken a range of community activities including tree and bulb planting.

##### *Areas for development*

- There are many dead trees throughout Coatbridge, from Drumpellier Park Avenue to the town centre; these should be removed and replaced with appropriate species and all available environmental support (e.g. suitable backfill, mycorrhizal enhancement, irrigation systems etc) as funds allow.
- Further planting should be sustainable (and obviously colourful and appropriate) where possible.
- You have little evident business support for your campaign; this must be encouraged if Bloom is to have solid foundations. We did note the posters about our tour in the shop windows, but you really do need to get sponsorship established; this can start at a very low level, e.g. where a shop sponsors a single basket; at roundabout level (we noted few examples of this); or even self-provided enhancements, where the business is encouraged to provide their own site improvement. This is a 'quick win' for public houses though we saw no examples at all.
- One or two of the churches were doing a little – try to encourage all to do something and then gradually do more.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- You have a substantive industrial heritage that is very effectively displayed through the medium of sculpture, public art and the Summerlea Museum; we were particularly impressed by the displays along the Canal Basin (Bank Street) walk.
- Tracey Peedle presented the regeneration work on the canal most effectively on behalf of the Scottish Waterways Trust.
- The biomass boiler at Drumpellier Nursery is good, dealing with all trees felled as part of clearance and weather damage.

### *Areas for development*

- We recognise your recent litter picking activities but could not ignore the extensive littering in many areas; there are also substantial issues with fly-posting, and graffiti is obvious in many prominent locations – the Peace Garden memorial having been sadly defaced as an example.
- Please ensure that your wildlife sites are visited as part of the tour; you have important features, such as the raised mire, that are worth seeing. Also try to include volunteers or members of the Wildlife Trust within your organising group and the tour.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- We are impressed that you see the Bloom campaign as a key driver for change and regeneration of your community, and that you have the strong support of Elaine Smith (MSP) in what you are doing.
- “Big picture” plans are in place, and the links to community payback are a sensible and realistic approach, and you have double figures of IYN entries. We encourage you to continue this approach and can recommend other similar communities that have built very effectively on such foundations. When we meet at the surgery we will give you names of specific people who you may wish to talk to.

### *Areas for development*

- The tour was not well-planned to make best use of the assets of the community, and on a number of occasions did not follow the plans, with representatives not present to talk to the judges, gates locked etc. On occasions representatives talked to us in the street rather than on site. The ranger met us indoors rather than at the wildlife areas, and we spent a considerable amount of time inside buildings that were not really relevant to the tour.
- We would urge you to better plan the time and also to brief your community better on what it is that they are there to talk about. These are easy things to achieve and will have the benefit of making your community take greater responsibility for their efforts to support the regeneration of Coatbridge.
- Try to include children in the tour and a visit to a school, rather than just talking about them.
- It was good to note that Jacky was taking pictures of the tour; we encourage you to get the press directly involved in a more significant way as they can be a major driver of public support for the campaign.

## **Coldred, South East Small Village - Silver**

This small south eastern village is a quiet haven of horticultural interest. The first impression when entering from the main road is that of a country house estate drive. This is dispelled when proceeding through the white gates into the village green, complete with its own pond and quaint village pub. The area is quintessentially English and softly landscaped. Our visit was relaxed and informative, with a good balance of natural landscaping, colour highlights and insights into the village’s heritage. We enjoyed our visit immensely and thank our hosts for a well conducted tour.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- We noticed the produce from the beds was used for local supply, e.g. village lunch and other events.
- There had been great success with the hedge planting project.
- The permanent Christmas tree on the green was a good idea.
- The avenue of lime trees along the main entrance road to the village created a grand approach. We noted that the verges were maintained by local volunteers and that the trees were in memory of a past villager named Helen.
- The raised beds with their edible theme and colour highlights which were continued in other areas were a unique feature.
- There were some very colourful and sustainably planted gardens within the village. The hollyhocks were a real feature. Also Colret House and the bungalow garden were very good.
- The work on the main village pond was to be commended; it was a delightful area.
- The maintenance throughout the area was good and we noted the heavy volunteer involvement.

### *Areas for development*

- Carry on with your clearance work and proposals for the second pond.
- Whilst your unusual planting scheme is to be commended you should maybe consider a little more colour in key locations.
- The apple tree planted on the green and the holly bush would benefit from mulching around them to help suppress the weeds and make maintenance easier.
- The *Acer* adjacent to the bus shelter should have the reverted branch removed as soon as possible.
- Whilst we noted the essential netting to protect against rabbit damage the effect was to spoil your displays; perhaps you could consider a different approach which would be less intrusive.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The black kissing gates on the public footpaths were well constructed and entirely suitable for their location.
- We applauded the use of recycled materials in your raised beds.
- Signage and interpretation was good e.g. local footpath descriptions and welcome signs. The duck warning sign was unusual and appears highly effective.
- The white gates at the village entrance acted as traffic calming and enhanced the entry to the village.
- The pond areas and the wildflower area in the church were commendable.
- The promotion of local walks and our tour along part of these byways was interesting.
- The village compost bin and water saving initiatives at the bus shelter were to be commended.

### *Areas for development*

- The area could benefit from further agricultural artefacts placed at key locations in the village. We felt they would not be out of place and would provide local features of interest.
- The churchyard was a delight. We welcomed your biodiversity survey but suggest bluebells could be introduced on the bank area once bramble clearance had been undertaken. Additional bulb planting could be considered throughout the churchyard to further enhance the area.
- The seat with horseshoe could have some interpretation to explain its significance.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- We admired the efforts by all those involved in the campaign. There was an obvious pride in keeping the village attractive. The watering and care rota was a good way to ensure standards were maintained.
- We noted all your previous awards and these were displayed at key entrances to the village. Good for visitors' interest.
- Your press coverage and photographs at the end of the visit were highly appropriate. The information on the route was clear and well presented and the judges appreciated the original DVD.

### *Areas for development*

- Considering the previous comments regarding your previous awards it may be a suggestion to consider placing a brown sign on the A2 to help promote your village further. We accept the local authority may not accept this, it is only a suggestion.
- A leaflet covering your heritage and village interests would be beneficial. Should you be able to attend our surgery in St Andrews we would be happy to advise further on this aspect. For example it could be provided adjacent to your notice board in a weather protected box for visitors to access. Funding for this project could come through the "Awards for All" funding programme.
- A short presentation on your 'all the year round' programme would have been beneficial as would a little more information on the day about your funding proposals and how you involve young people in your campaign. It may be useful to organise for the judges to meet other members of the community around the village.

## **Coleraine, Ulster Large Town - Silver Gilt**

The benefits the Bloom campaign brings to Coleraine are clearly evident for all to see - from the approach roads to the impressive main shopping area and the wonderful green spaces. "Coleraine in Colour", working in strong partnership with a wide range of enthusiastic individuals and charity groups, are to be congratulated for all that they are doing to create a very colourful, attractive environment for all who live in, work in, or visit the town

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The very impressive and colourful flower beds, hanging baskets and containers throughout the town were matched by those at the town entrances and roundabouts, giving a very colourful impression of Coleraine.
- The regeneration scheme in the town centre has provided opportunities for innovative planting which the council's skilled workforce has used to advantage.
- The separate sections of Andersons Park gave linked walkways through attractive and well maintained parkland.
- The River Bann provides wonderful opportunity for peaceful recreation and the clean, well-maintained and unimpeded greensward and tree cover is ideal for this purpose.

### *Areas for development*

- The floribunda and hybrid tea roses were disappointing in parts; consider using a wider variety of roses, of which excellent examples were seen, or change to including some herbaceous plants to give more variation.
- Consider replanting gaps in borders where winter loss is evident. The judges suggest mixed sustainable planting may be more effective.

- The judges were disappointed to see the rather regimented pruning of shrubs, especially winter effect *Cornus* spp among others.
- The judges felt that the planters at the base of trees in Anderson Park were colourful but detracted from the general landscape of the park.
- Some of the shrub beds are reaching maturity and an ongoing programme of replacement should be considered.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the art in the landscape project and the large dragonfly on the riverside walk.
- The recycling of green waste compost to PAS quality and its inclusion in the growing compost used by the parks department at 50 % is an excellent step forward and should be more widely publicised.
- Town centre street furniture was well coordinated and attractive in blue instead of the usual black.
- Where evident, interpretive panels were informative, well designed and well maintained.
- The judges were impressed by the scheme of graffiti removal and landscape improvement, and the plans to extend this scheme throughout the town.
- The wildlife gardens competition was a most worthwhile initiative to encourage environmental awareness at a local level. This is an excellent example others could follow.
- The ready planted coir bank stabilisers at the realigned burn were very impressive, as was the scheme to encourage fish and wildlife at this important site.

### *Areas for development*

- At the excellent Source sculpture in Somerset Riverside Park the wonderful verbal explanation given to the judges by Jim should somehow be made available to casual visitors, by leaflets/interpretive panels or audio recordings.
- Consider further initiatives to reduce the chewing gum problem in the town centre as it detracted from an otherwise very attractive area. It would be beneficial if the standard of street cleaning was in line with those of the horticultural unit.
- Consider the sympathetic management of roadside verges to allow some areas to accommodate wildflower mixtures.
- It was felt that charging for green waste bags, travel costs to the recycling site and then paying for the resultant compost was a disincentive; can this policy be reconsidered?
- On future judging tours more emphasis should be given to route planning as the tour was rushed at the end and the visit to the arboretum was lost.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The enthusiasm and drive of the volunteers met on tour, and the wonderful contribution they are making to Coleraine's environment.
- The judges were impressed by the presentation given at the start of the tour and by the number of young people who gave an interesting overview of their projects.
- The level of funding and sponsorship raised toward the costs of roundabout planting and town centre displays was most impressive and showed the commitment of the local business sector to Coleraine and its wellbeing.

### *Areas for development*

- While the judges wish to meet volunteers and representatives of the community during the tour, it is important that the allotted time is kept to.
- The judges would have appreciated a comprehensive itinerary and tour route indicating Sections A, B & C and the names of those individuals we were meeting.

## Colne, North West Large Town - Silver Gilt

From being greeted by young Kyle at the railway station to being accompanied on the tour by Andrew Stephenson MP it was obvious that the whole community of Colne is fully behind the aims and achievements of the Colne in Bloom. The welcome was warm and generous with good opportunities for the judges to meet volunteers during the tour. The floral impact through the town was excellent, with very good quality hanging and lamp standard baskets evident. Innovative bedding displays reflecting current and past links to Colne's heritage were well planted and maintained. Examples of the Colne in Bloom's effectiveness was evident at Notts Lane Community Garden where an old garage site was transformed into a place of beauty, and at the transformed railway station. The visit to the community greenspace area at the rear of Bank House was very worthwhile, and the judges were saddened to hear that this valuable resource may be under threat. The increasing support of the business community along with the enthusiasm of the volunteers is impressive and the judges particularly liked the "Thank You For Supporting Colne in Bloom" cards sent to all those involved. As a first time entrant in the national finals the judges could see commitment and enthusiasm creating potential to gain further awards.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The high quality bedding and excellent lamp standard, hanging baskets and container displays in the town centre area.
- The increased participation of town centre retailers, encouraged by the very reasonable charge for baskets etc, added to the attractive precinct.
- The excellent work carried out at the railway and bus stations, giving a very favourable impression to visitors.
- The impressive sustainable planting at Alkincoates Park, Derek's Memorial Garden and Lloyds Garage.
- The determination, enthusiasm and skill to convert an old garage site into something special at the Notts Lane Community Garden.

#### *Areas for development*

- It was disappointing to see large sycamore seedlings in cultivated beds in Alkincoates Park.
- The SunPatiens in the bed on the main street would benefit from a greater planting density.
- The *Verbena* in the otherwise excellent guitar bed would benefit from regular deadheading. Choosing other plants that don't need this attention would be beneficial in a large bed.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Provision of a watering system in the planters at the precinct.
- Reduction to a 50% peat content compost.
- The new orchard and important conservation work at Alkincoates Local Nature Reserve.
- The inclusion of local heritage artworks such as the mill girl at the station, the large mural at Parliament Street and themed floral displays at the Titanic and guitar bed.

#### *Areas for development*

- Reduce the height of the tree stakes at the orchard to reduce rubbing and damage to branches and subsequent pest & disease problems.
- Try to increase rainwater collection to reduce water usage.

- Weeds at the rear of shops in the precinct and in paved areas at the police station were disappointing.
- The recycling bin at the precinct was very dirty and detracted from an otherwise attractive area.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The involvement of the young people of the Environment Action Group in all Bloom activities.
- The acquisition of land for allotments by the GAMRA Residents Association.
- It was a pleasure to meet so many volunteers, and the enthusiasm of young Kyle augers well for the future of Colne in Bloom.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue to encourage young people to join the “in Bloom” group so that it can be sustained in the future.
- The “Thank You” notes for participants are excellent and perhaps a “Thank You in Anticipation” note may encourage further participation.

## **Comrie, Scotland Champion of Champions - Gold**

For most of the afternoon the rain was light or absent, allowing us to view the tremendous work that Comrie in Colour carry out in their Perthshire village. This is clearly a progressive entry, with constant change and development; new Chairman Muriel Gregory is leading a wonderful team of volunteers who are making this ancient village more beautiful, appealing and friendly every day. Their work with children and with adults with learning difficulties is particularly exceptional for such a small community.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Despite a grey day and much poor weather in earlier weeks, colour was everywhere in your many containers and baskets, with begonias and *Lysimachia* being particularly effective.
- You have made excellent improvements at Mid Square, with all the beds very successfully and thoughtfully themed.
- Horticulture at the primary school is being delivered brilliantly, and it was a joy to see the children harvesting their produce so enthusiastically.
- There were lovely gardens in many streets but those of Mr Findlayson and Mr Walker were stunning.
- Cultybraggan is a remarkable and most effectively utilised resource!

### *Areas for development*

- We concur that Bumblebee Square is an excellent resource for the village and hope that you are able to retain it as an open space in the centre of the village.
- Queens Road baskets are remarkable but would benefit from a brighter backdrop; we realise that grass is impractical but perhaps appropriate scree plants would give a similar effect (*Phlox, Dianthus, Campanula* etc – low maintenance and green is the basic requirement)

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Well done on the use of peat-free compost – and so successfully too!
- You also manage excellent use of recycled materials from Perth and Kinross Council and by making your own composts, as well as own-produced comfrey liquid feeds at Cultybraggan.

- The village is spotlessly clean. Neil Aitken is clearly an enthusiast on Court Knoll, and if time had permitted we would have loved to walk this ancient feature of the village.
- The flambeau baskets and the sculpture at the Clach effectively portray your heritage. You also have a superb wildflower meadow, now cared for by St Serfs Church.

#### *Areas for development*

- The meadow is a sensitive area and management is critical to its success. We encourage you to take greater involvement with this feature in the future and perhaps also directly engage with a wildlife expert as part of the judging tour.
- Court Knoll requires some high-quality interpretation to give it the profile that this ancient and important feature warrants and we hope that Mr Aitken is fully involved in the interpretation when it is produced.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The achievements of such a small group of people - Comrie in Colour – are quite remarkable!
- The outstanding work with children of all ages, with local faith communities and with adults with learning difficulties: inspirational.
- We heard from the children of the proposals for a new straw-bale building at the school and hope that this progresses successfully.

#### *Areas for development*

- Continue to develop the Cultybraggan site as this is such an important community resource.
- You may also wish to consider visiting the allotments as part of the judging route in the future.
- We also look forward to the development of the orchard and encourage you to seek relevant expertise in its progress and management.

### **Cricklade, South West Champion of Champions - Gold & Category Winner**

This Wiltshire market town was at its most appealing for our visit, with a wide and diverse range of the community meeting us to explain their involvement in enhancing the ancient architecture and setting. Although the famous hay meadow had been harvested, we were still able to grasp the beauty and significance of the site, though this is only a part of the many beautiful aspects of the lovely town. It is clear that it welcomes visitors and residents alike – well done!

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- There are almost too many strengths to identify individually! We were most impressed by the public house displays – the Red Lion being just one example – and by the stream of containers and baskets throughout the town, all of which were of a high standard and in keeping with the nature of the town.
- The ‘corporate’ bloom styles were effectively supplemented by individual displays in a number of areas. Quality basket and container maintenance was also clearly in place, reflecting well on your understanding of the judges’ comments from 2010.
- Perennial planting is modern, appropriate and beautifully cared for, at Saxons Rest and Purton Road amongst many areas; here the end-of-the-line bed, with the ‘badge bed’ celebrating the 90th anniversary of the British Legion, is good and clearly appreciated by its members who were present on our visit.
- There was splendid evidence of community horticulture throughout the town, with the Abingdon Court Gardens and Bloomers Bank being especially noteworthy.

- School gardening is excellent, with the complex of the Smart Zone, St Sampson's Infants and Juniors, and Thames Pre-School being both functional and attractive.
- Verges and green spaces are well-cared for with excellent cooperative working between the various authorities evident, which not only produces good results but also reduces maintenance miles.
- Apart from the planting in St Sampson's churchyard – where the peripheral lavenders had swamped the central planting – there is nothing to criticise in the quite splendid horticulture on display throughout the town.

#### *Areas for development*

- We did wonder why you do not include your allotments on the tour route. The tour has ample time to show the many wonders of the town, but this aspect, which impacts upon all the three sections of the marking, is absent.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- A quite remarkable section! Your presentation of the environmental responsibility that is the case throughout the town was superb, from the fabulous NNR of North Meadow to the fritillary fencing, everything is wonderful.
- The town is scrupulously clean, with the enhancement of 'adopt a street sign' a very neat and individual touch.
- Your use of recycled green waste compost with such good results should be an indicator for others unsure if this is a step too far.
- The heritage trail is developing well with 17 excellent interpretation panels present in strategic locations on the 3-mile trail

#### *Areas for development*

- Please continue to pursue the eradication of the Himalayan balsam along the riversides to minimise its impact on your fabulous meadows and sites

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- We were particularly impressed by the 'snags list' – a great idea that will be suggested to other communities that are wondering how to achieve the difficult tasks that appear.
- Community engagement and participation were evident in all respects and throughout all the sections of the marking sheet, with the scouts at the NNR, the fire cadets at the fire station, school-children of all ages, and so much involvement of the more mature members of your lovely community.
- It is also heartening to observe such excellent partnership working between the Bloom group and the various local authorities involved, and that you all celebrate your achievements together.

#### *Areas for development*

- The new mosaic that is planned is a splendid idea; we hope that you will get the community fully involved at the design stage of this heritage project.

### **Darlington, Northumbria Small City - Silver**

The tour of Darlington, after an introduction at the Head of Steam Railway Museum, took in the cemetery, several parks and some residential areas of the town, and also a stroll through the main 'Pedestrian Heart' with its well-designed hard landscaping which has managed to retain a heritage feel throughout. The presentation on the unusual recycling approach of the borough was interesting, and in West Park we saw that biodiversity is important in all aspects of planning. The tour concluded

at South Park where we were able to meet some members of friends groups and also other Bloom partners.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The heritage of trees in the city is very good, with a wide range of species present in parks and at the cemetery, and street trees providing a pleasant green addition to many of the urban and through routes.
- Town centre container planting is good – bold, bright and cheerful – with flower towers of begonia notably successful (in the town and on the arterial roads).
- We passed good residential gardens on Cleveland Avenue, Carmel Road North and in other areas. The E D Walker residential complex is a lovely area, again with some notable trees present (a *Catalpa* in flower, and a grove of *Acer griseum*).
- In the town centre, some of the pubs and restaurants had colourful displays in containers and others were supplied by the Council team at a fixed cost. Salutation roundabout has a bright display of dahlias, and in South Park there were also some colourful floral and perennial features, and a newly planted community orchard featuring local varieties.
- The front gardens of Queen Elizabeth's 6th form college are colourful.

### *Areas for development*

- We were made aware of the cuts to the floral displays that have already taken place, and that more are expected; we suggest sponsorship for these displays should be explored.
- We noted good new herbaceous borders in South Park, and would encourage you to do more of this so as to retain the degree of colour without associated costs.
- Maintenance in rose gardens – in South Park and E D Walker Homes – was not good, with no recent dead-heading evident and in South Park suckers over a metre high. These aspects are basic horticultural practice and should be addressed.
- Dead and dying trees were prominent in some areas – on the road outside Yarm School particularly so – and we hope that you are able to deal with these appropriately.
- The borders around the town hall are rather weedy, with seedling chestnuts over a metre tall – these should be removed before they become a real problem.
- We also feel that you should be able to raise the levels of resident and business support for Bloom with a concerted, focused effort that addresses the benefits to them of being involved.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- West Park is an excellent new park, designed as an environmental and healthy living resource rather than a 'garden'. The presentation by Debbie Hall at the site was good, including details on the meadow management, species diversity and monitoring and involvement of friends group and wildlife partners.
- West Park is also one of several sites where we were able to view high quality and relevant examples of public art and sculpture.
- We were pleased to hear that you already use peat-reduced composts and that you have trialled peat-free successfully – this to be used across the whole of Woodburn Nursery from 2012 onwards.
- We heard a detailed explanation of your unusual MBT waste minimisation system and the successful levels of recycling that are being achieved through this approach

### *Areas for development*

- Litter is a significant problem in the pedestrian heart of the town; we heard from you of how the systems are supposed to be working, but given the extent of litter – in particular cigarette butts – it seems not to be as effective as it should be.
- At the very least we would have hoped that the litter team would have ‘done’ the Bloom route in the morning prior to our tour. Similarly, graffiti was noted in a number of prominent areas (including entrance gates to parks).
- There were good new seats in South Park provided by the ‘Friends’, but many of the existing items of street furniture in the park, town centre, cemetery etc were shabby, in need of rubbing down and re-painting. We noted that the team at Nubeck Nursery were carrying this out on some of the cemetery seats and hope that you are able to prioritise some of the others to be similarly treated.
- Your industrial and religious heritage is immense, and greater interpretation of this (and also of wildlife heritage) would be of assistance to visitors to the town.
- We also agree with your plans for labelling of the trees in South Park and this could also be applied to the new community orchard – where the ties should also be looked at urgently.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- We are pleased to see that the Nubeck Nursery special needs group is continuing and hope that it will continue as it clearly provides an excellent and valuable service.
- We also heard –from Debbie Hall in particular- of a range of wildlife and gardening related, curriculum linked activities taking place.
- You have contracted a specialist to increase your levels of roundabout sponsorship.
- You also informed us of friends groups that have formed in some of the parks areas, and of the Friends Forum umbrella body (though there were very divergent figures provided on how many groups and how many members in these groups).

#### *Areas for development*

- Perhaps the biggest single area to work on is the tour. We feel that it is insufficient to focus on such a narrow part of what the Bloom is about – and what is almost certainly taking place in Darlington. We did not visit a school or meet any young people. Residents on roads we passed, business owners whose shops we passed etc were unaware of the Bloom judging taking place and should be engaged with more effectively.
- We would like to have visited some of your allotments (or met with some allotment representatives at the final reception).
- It is much more effective if friends groups can meet us on site and talk to us there about what they do.
- You will benefit enormously by widening the scope of Bloom and how you do it – by becoming community enablers rather than sole providers – but this requires much more effective dissemination of information about how people can become involved.
- A final clear example of this is that Darlington has a railway station that has planted platform beds, well mulched and clearly cared for, but it is unlikely that they knew that Darlington was involved in Britain in Bloom until we walked through on our way home. Be bold and engage with community groups and all your other potential partners!

### **Derry City, Ulster Small City - Silver Gilt & Category Winner**

Early inclement weather was soon replaced by a bright, blustery morning for the tour of the walled city and its environs, led by Danny McCartney and supported by many partners and members of the community. We are impressed by the efforts being made to use the Bloom campaign as a vehicle for community cohesion, and by the engagement with a range of public and private sector partners to

achieve this. Floral colour abounds, but with a strong environmentally aware theme developing in this established bloom entrant. Well done!

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The range and extent of hanging baskets, barrier baskets and floral towers were of a high standard throughout the entry – a blaze of consistent colour throughout the city streets, and all appropriate to your ‘hot spots’ strategy. Bedding – particularly of begonias – was good, but also the roundabout of perennials (Harbour Square) made an excellent change as did the new Guild Hall Garden.
- Container planting at the Craft Village was tasteful and distinctive.
- We also noted some excellent community gardening at St Columb’s Peace Garden, St Augustine’s Garden, the Angel Garden, the Bastion Plots and John Gamble’s garden at Foyle Fold, as well as attractive residential gardening along Greenhaw Road.
- The view from the city walls showcases the extent of tree cover in the city and the tour also showed good verge maintenance and a range of mowing styles to increase value and decrease cost.

### *Areas for development*

- We applaud your efforts to increase sponsorship of roundabouts etc, but feel that more can be done; it is also notable that most of the town centre planting is not currently sponsored by businesses; again, you should pursue this aspect over the next few years –the successful 2013 City of Culture bid may make this an easier task.
- We agree with the proposed change from *Quercus* to *Betula* ‘*Jacquemontii*’ for the containers by the city walls, as described by Danny McCartney. Perhaps use perennials and grasses around the base of these containers rather than bedding in the future?

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Phenomenal levels and types of recycling are taking place; composting of green waste is good as is re-use of chippings etc.
- There is a real sense of both heritage and pride of place in Derry City, with the city walls, new sculpture (the Angel Garden), freshly painted lamp-posts and fingerposts all proving how the city is cared for by its community.

### *Areas for development*

- We had ample information about the management of conservation and biodiversity, including your red squirrel conservation project and also bat and butterfly monitoring however, although the Playtrail garden had some bat-boxes and bird boxes present, we would have liked to see for ourselves the main location at Bay Road Local Nature Reserve, rather than just hear of it and see the photographs.
- The tour was very clean and tidy with the exception of rather too much graffiti – the routine ‘tagging’ rather than that relating to history – and we feel that you should continue strenuous efforts to reduce this problem.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- We applaud the progress being made to bring communities together through the medium of Bloom – this is a great success at the Peace Garden, Angel Garden etc; we fully expect that this progress will be continued and increased as part of the progression to 2013.
- The programme of biodiversity education is impressive and already yielding good results. Your work with disadvantaged groups, in conjunction with Gareth Austin from NWRC, and also the Sow and Grow and New Horizons projects, are all very great strengths of Derry City in Bloom.

#### *Areas for development*

- We are convinced that Bloom is the perfect vehicle for bringing communities together and bridging divides and strongly support your continuing efforts to build on this; the Brooke Park HLF bid, on the west side of the city, will be potentially an exciting development where community cohesion can be the focal point and we encourage you to continue to progress in this area.
- We are aware that there is a lot taking place through the year, but your portfolio does not reflect this well; it would be better to focus on the 'year-round' aspects as part of the presentation, and leave it out of the portfolio altogether.
- You may also wish to consider more bullet-point text and fewer photographs in your portfolio – it is a wasted opportunity to impart helpful information about the many activities and projects that you are undertaking.

### **Didsbury (Manchester), North West Urban Community - Silver**

The strength of this entry sits with the volunteers, whose work is of a good standard. There is strong neighbourhood involvement and fundraising is managed well at the moment. The long-term efforts of Tom Webster have encouraged others to follow his lead. We were concerned about the obvious changes which are taking place, largely due to changes at the council, and we hope the community volunteers will be able to compensate for this to sustain Didsbury's achievements to date.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The tubs and containers were of a high standard, and although reduced in numbers, were placed in appropriate locations.
- The support from local businesses and the police have ensured the floral impact is still present.
- The work at the Parsonage Gardens Support Group was encouraging.

##### *Areas for development*

- Although we were informed of the cuts and the implications, we felt that overall the quality of planting could have been of a higher standard.
- There were many examples of dead and dying trees throughout the tour which need to be addressed.
- The reduction in grass cutting frequencies was clear to see and has caused a difference in standards not seen before.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The interesting species statistics given at Fogway Park were of value, these figures were proof of the benefit the change in park management is providing to wildlife.
- The wonderful owl sculpture in Dibbing Park, produced by a local arborist, was outstanding.
- The whole tour was clean and free of litter including in areas of hard landscaping.

##### *Areas for development*

- The judges found it hard to relate to the local heritage of the area, as no evidence was shown. This could have been illustrated in the portfolio had one been available.
- The volunteers have a strong sense of pride, and may be encouraged to carry out improvements to furniture, such as painting benches and bins etc.
- The judges understand the parking problems in respect of street sweeping and the results were evident in several places.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- This is a strong section for this entry, the interest of the many volunteer groups was very encouraging, there are many new projects in prospect, which will have a positive effect on the area.
- There was proof of strong links with the local school.
- The judges were impressed by the way in which Sylvia Hillier is able to extract sums of money from the pockets of almost everyone.

### *Areas for development*

- There was no clear evidence of year-round involvement, again this could have been explained in the portfolio or presentation.
- The presentation would also have been better delivered at the beginning of the tour, thus explaining what the many volunteer groups were about.
- We would encourage the Bloom volunteers to take on additional aspects from the council as and when they can.

## **Donington, East Midlands Large Village - Silver**

This delightful agricultural village has a fascinating history, from the explorations of Matthew Flinders in Australia to the bravery and romance captured by the Arnhem oak story. The relaxed approach worked so well in evidencing the generosity of many who care for their environment and their fellow residents. The entrepreneurial spirit of waste nothing has led to rapid progress from a new regional entry to the UK Finals in a very short time. Judges were left confident that this lovely village will continue to develop its strong campaign and were particularly impressed with the teenagers taking charge and making the skatepark happen.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Some bright and attractive containers at key focal points, such as the Flinders statue.
- Control of plant production thanks to the donation of the glasshouse by Mark Rollinson.
- The remarkable rapid development of the new allotments.
- Innovative community herb garden.
- The balance struck at the skatepark between recreation and ornamental features.

### *Areas for development*

- The council's maintenance of the roundabout leaves something to be desired.
- The visual impact could be enhanced by using more consolidated displays and ensuring quality is maintained with regular feeding and maintenance.
- New permanent plantings were in need of weeding.
- Wildflower areas may be something to consider where appropriate.
- Seek ways to encourage residential gardeners, perhaps by reorganising and promoting the gardens competition.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The emphasis on collecting rainwater at strategic sites was a very practical measure.
- Good recognition and signage for heritage interests such as Matthew Flinders and the Arnhem Oak Heritage Trail.

- Work by the graffiti artist at the skatepark had been effective in reducing graffiti of the unwanted variety.
- Good scheme to encourage green waste to be taken to the composting site to be exchanged for a bag of compost.

#### *Areas for development*

- Some prominent litter bins are damaged and will need to be renewed.
- A part of the Matthew Flinders Park could be managed as a wildlife area. This would go some way toward providing a biodiversity aspect, an important part of the Britain in Bloom criteria.
- The judges would be interested to know more about recycling and waste management, including recycling statistics.
- Look for tree planting sites and areas where wildflowers can be appropriately included.
- Consider additional ways, beyond participation in the Tulip Parade, to celebrate your local heritage.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Flinders Founders Teens have shown extraordinary foresight and diligence in establishing and funding their skatepark.
- The Dickensian Christmas Market seemed to have been good fun and proved a good fundraiser.
- The generosity and community spirit in Donington is typified by Mark Rollinson's donation of splendid glasshouse facilities, Margaret's bird sanctuary and Andy's Signs.
- Winning other awards and recognition as well as driving Bloom as a voluntary group.

#### *Areas for development*

- Could the park become an It's Your Neighbourhood entry in its own right?
- Take every opportunity to work with the media and spread your message through the website and social networking sites.
- Try to maintain your impressive progress by identifying new projects to follow on from the Hunter's Way and pumpkin bed replanting plans.
- The judges would like to know more about the role of schoolchildren in the community.

### **Dunnington, Yorkshire Small Town - Silver Gilt**

On arriving at Dunnington we were met with the news a storm of tornado proportions had taken place; however, this was not allowed to disrupt the tour. The judges were aware of the strong community spirit which flowed through this entry. A wonderful reception was received at the school and the nature reserve was well managed and proved to be an asset to the town. Grass cutting was of a high standard and street cleaning was also very good. The presentation was good and even showed before and after effects of the storm from the afternoon before. We were especially pleased to see the willow ploughman, which is of high quality.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Although damage had occurred to much of the floral aspect of the entry, it was clear that the cultivation was of a high standard and there were several good residential gardens.
- The church was well cared for and again the grass cutting was of a high standard being carried out by the Payback scheme.
- The judges were impressed by the speed in which the arbor squad were in attendance to clear the damage done to the trees.

- The bowling green was in good condition as was the cricket pitch, and general open space grassland.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges felt that even though there was support from many of the businesses, it was the Bloom group who carried out most of the provision and maintenance. Perhaps businesses could be encouraged to provide their own enhancements.
- The *Impatiens* used on this occasion were a real success, however, this may not always be the case so other species should be considered.
- The display and selection of plants at the cross require improvement as impact was lacking.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The volunteer rangers at Hassacarr Nature Reserve are to be commended, as this location is being heavily used by school groups and the general community to learn about local wildlife.
- Despite the storm from the previous day, the streets and open spaces were clean and of a high standard. The judges felt that the street furniture was in keeping with the location and of a high standard; in this respect the entry had been blessed with meaningful donations.
- The recycling figures given, even though shared within the York area, were still impressive for a small town population. The judges were impressed by the grass cutting recycling regime.
- The 'no dog fouling' stencil was a good way of reminding dog owners of their obligation in areas of concern.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although several points of heritage were mentioned, the judges felt that this could be expanded to focus on one identity as an entrant; consider agriculture as the willow man is already in place.
- Directional signage would be an advantage to visitors, pointing them to interesting areas of the town such as the wildlife area or impressive play area, in turn this would encourage a longer stay by passing cyclists.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were in no doubt that this was a strong group who showed evidence of several ongoing projects to further the entry.
- Press coverage could hardly have been better, when a negative situation was turned into an advantage in this campaign. Bloom promotional materials and posters were seen throughout the entry, emphasising the pride this group have in their town.
- It is evident that funding is in very capable hands, as they were even able to donate to other groups.
- The judges were impressed by the group's mentoring activities, encouraging fledgling groups to develop.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although all the components were present for the presentation, the judges had some difficulty linking the audio delivery with the visual presentation.
- The judges were impressed by the amount and quality of grass cutting being undertaken by the group; however we were concerned about the long-term sustainability of doing it yourselves.
- The mentoring idea could be expanded with interested parties, specialist knowledge could be passed on to new members giving them encouragement for the future, ensuring sustainability of this group and others (e.g. machinery training, funding application tips, and practical skills).

## Edinburgh, Scotland Large City - Silver Gilt

This historic Scottish city contains many fine buildings interspersed with green lungs throughout its area. It has many fine buildings, a Botanic Garden and a large conservation and natural area at its southern tip. There were many displays of both formal and sustainable planting including at the fine University complex. Our visit covered various aspects of the city's history, its development and movement into present times with a range of initiatives and long term improvements. There were many fine gardens, community schemes and good commercial support. It was pleasure to visit this city and enjoy the Scottish warmth and hospitality.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The RBS garden was very colourful and maybe some additional height could be added to the scheme in future.
- We enjoyed the visit to Dunbar Close and appreciated the work being undertaken by this team in other areas. We consider you should not change the emphasis in design in this garden.
- Anna Guest's garden was fantastic and inspirational. She is to be congratulated on her achievements. The use of recycled steel reinforcement bars was innovative.
- The displays in front of the town hall were much improved; a good standard to set.
- The utilisation of the redundant area by the cafe as a herb bed was very innovative and educational.
- The University plantings and our host at this location were excellent. There was a very wide range of unusual trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants.
- Dr Neil's garden was unique. We were impressed with the enthusiasm of Claudia.
- The Edinburgh Botanic Garden was of the expected high standard. The improvement to the main entrance was highly effective and the Curator was tremendously enthusiastic and informative.

#### *Areas for development*

- The roses in Dunbar Close needed support; you should consider wrought iron structures.
- Whilst we noticed the commitment of businesses to provide displays in the central area this still did not provide the high impact we would expect.
- The carpet bed was much improved and there was less lobelia; you could consider chamomile as a base alternative or extend your other peripheral plantings.
- Although we appreciated the need for local authorities to review many areas and use a design companies for new ideas, we did not consider the outcome particularly successful in effect.
- The mound beds were variable in quality; both needed to have the same impact at this important location.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Biodiversity competition and Orchard Project with the edible hedge were good projects.
- The conservation initiatives at Holyrood Park were very good, especially regarding rare plant subjects and there was good ranger support of volunteers.
- The Environmental Warden scheme regarding fly posting is to be applauded as are the other agencies involved in keeping Edinburgh tidy. However, we were not sure from the information gleaned how these initiatives were co-ordinated.
- Street furniture was generally of a high standard and local heritage was given a very high priority especially in the case of monuments.

- The various conservations schemes and trials at the Botanic Garden were very informative. The Curator was well informed and we found his rapid tour inspiring. Signage, the pond area and the rockery were key strengths.

#### *Areas for development*

- Whilst we appreciated the pressures caused by the festival and the efforts being made to contain the impact, there were instances of litter in some locations.
- We noted the poor state of the shelters in Princes Street Gardens but were pleased to see the renovations being undertaken.
- The cigarette end campaign in Rose Street is a good proposal and, if successful, it should be extended to other areas.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The support of the campaign by the Bio Group was evident in the city and had several good initiatives.
- The small community allotment was a revelation with its honesty sales and green approach. The coloured canes were a simple but effective idea. The efforts at recycling most things were very practical. We would also have liked to visit a larger allotment site if time allowed.
- No school was visited but the Cowgate Under 5's Centre had matured. We were impressed with the dedication and interest shown by both the staff and children. Concern was expressed about the condition of the rowan trees at this location, and this should be investigated.
- Dr Neil's garden is a unique facility with both plant and conservation interest. In particular a bonsai patch and the new Physic Garden, also the interest of a local herbalist.
- There was evidence of on-going projects and continued funding and support.
- It was good to have a press call to use this opportunity to promote your involvement in Bloom.
- The commitment by Essential Edinburgh in coordinating the business improvement areas and the various projects they are involved in.

#### *Areas for development*

- Whilst the itinerary was varied and interesting and well timed, we felt some areas visited lacked impact.
- There did not appear to be an overall Bloom group co-ordinating activities. Perhaps this is something you should consider; the campaign perhaps needs another driving force to partner with the local council.

### **Elswick, North West Village - Silver Gilt**

Elswick is situated in the heart of the rural Fylde plain, midway between the towns of Blackpool and Preston. Until quite recently it was a working agricultural village but is now mainly a rural residential area for commuters. As a first time entrant to the Britain in Bloom UK Finals, Elswick in Bloom are to be congratulated on their commitment and enthusiasm. It was most encouraging to see the significant benefits which the campaign has brought to the village. With sustained effort, Elswick will be no stranger to the UK Finals in the years ahead. Well done!

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The floral beds throughout the village were of an excellent standard, all containing good quality and well maintained plants.

- The sustainable permanent planting to the front of the village hall and on the corner of the 'Boot N Shoe' public house was most attractive and colourful.
- All the grass verges / areas throughout the village were maintained to a high standard.
- The residential gardens / areas seen by the judges throughout the tour were impressive. It was good to see a selection of winning entries from the local gardens competition.

#### *Areas for development*

- The square planting boxes containing seasonal bedding around the base of a number of trees are not needed in this rural location and we would recommend their removal.
- Consider the addition of some 'dot' plants in the floral beds on the High Street to give some height and variation.
- Look to develop more areas of sustainable permanent planting, as appropriate, throughout the village.
- The support of both Burton House Stores and the Ship Inn in providing floral containers at their premises needs to be recognised. Seek to work with both to ensure a continuity of standards with those containers elsewhere in the village.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The village was extremely clean with no evidence of litter, dog fouling, graffiti or fly-posting seen throughout.
- Fylde Borough Council is to be congratulated on its innovative recycling services, an overall recycling performance rate of 42% with over 80% of the residents of Elswick participating. It was good to meet the Recycling Officer who gave the judges an excellent overview of all the good initiatives taking place.
- The restoration / replanting programme of the 'Avenue of Trees,' which is an important part of the village's heritage, and the new tree planting taking place around the edge of the football field.
- The level of composting and rainwater collection being carried out at the Gorse Farm allotments. Also the pond on the site was providing a good natural habitat for wildlife.

#### *Areas for development*

- The large expanse of grass to the rear of the church hall could have some areas of wildflowers incorporated into it to add to local biodiversity. Seek to engage local children in this to build on the enthusiasm created by their involvement with the Girl Guides bed / planting of seasonal bedding around the perimeter of the existing grass area.
- Look to recognise and celebrate the agricultural heritage of the village in the floral / permanent planting displays incorporating farming implements / artefacts as appropriate.
- Investigate, in conjunction with the supplier of your plant material, the use of peat-free / reduced-peat composts taking advice from the RHS Advisory Service as necessary.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Community Wildlife Garden and Orchard currently under development will be a fantastic recreational, educational and conservation asset for the village. All connected with this project are to be congratulated for their vision. The judges look forward to seeing how the project develops in the future. Good luck.
- Very well put together, clear and concise portfolio which gave the judges an excellent overview of the entry and all the activities taking place as part of the Bloom campaign.
- The use of the window displays in the vacant shop on the High Street to publicise the campaign was an excellent idea.

#### *Areas for development*

- Continue with all the good initiatives to involve as broad a cross-section of the community as possible in the campaign.
- Look to diversify income sources for the Bloom campaign to ensure its further development and continuity.

### **Filby, Anglia Village - Gold**

The village of Filby is located in Norfolk not far from the resort of Great Yarmouth on the wonderful Norfolk Broads. The overall floral impact on first entering the village leaves the visitor in no doubt that this is a well loved village. The pride of the community in their local environment was clearly evident to the judges on their visit. The work of the Bloom group is greatly appreciated by all who live in and visit the village. It was most pleasing to see that the recommendations made by the judges in previous years are being acted on and incorporated into the local campaign.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The number of floral features and containers seen throughout the village all containing very good quality plant material and maintained to a high standard.
- The permanent planting displays on the entrance to Poplar Tree Drive and Filby Close were very attractive and were enhanced by the addition of some seasonal colour. Also of note was the sustainable planting recently planted around the village pond.
- The high quality, well maintained residential gardens seen throughout the tour.
- The very attractive garden / wildlife garden at the village school and nursery. Of particular note was the enthusiasm of the children and their obvious enjoyment in taking part in gardening. The school takes part in the RHS Campaign for School Gardening.
- The development of the new allotment site and the high standard of the individual plots.
- The displays at the main village shop area were most impressive with an excellent display of floral containers; and both the local pubs and the restaurant had made a particular effort to enhance their individual premises.

##### *Areas for development*

- Continue to develop areas of permanent sustainable planting, as appropriate, throughout the village.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The ongoing targets for the reduction in peat usage which the Bloom group has set itself are to be acknowledged and are an example which others could follow.
- 'The Orchard' containing varieties of apple with a Norfolk connection is an excellent conservation and community project.
- The village is very fortunate in having such a wonderful asset as the Trinity Broads which provides an abundance of wildlife areas and natural habitats. The environmental education and community engagement work being carried out by the officer from the Broads Authority is to be applauded.
- The very attractive village entrance sign made by Tom Green, the 'Filby in Bloom' sculpture at the Club Room and the stone water feature all added to the overall attractiveness of the area.
- The village was extremely clean and tidy with no evidence of litter, dog fouling or graffiti seen throughout the tour.

#### *Areas for development*

- The grassed area in the orchard, which is currently regularly cut, could be managed in a more informal way as a meadow with the incorporation of some appropriate wildflower species to add to local biodiversity and compliment the adjacent wildlife garden site.
- Continue and expand the efforts to reduce peat content in composts as well the use of water-retaining gel in the floral containers, the collection of rainwater especially on the allotment site, and the excellent recycling initiatives taking place in the village.

#### **Community Participation**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The level of community involvement in the campaign is outstanding with everyone from the youngsters at the school through to some of the oldest residents actively getting involved in the village's efforts.
- The level of fundraising / sponsorship and the range of events held / organised throughout the year to support this.
- The portfolio was very well presented; it contained a very good overview of the entry and all the good work that is undertaken by the Bloom campaign including a breakdown of the group's income and expenditure.

##### *Areas for development*

- Seek to build on the obvious enthusiasm of the children at the local school and engage with other children and young people outside the school environment to ensure the development and continuity of the Bloom campaign in the future.

#### **Forres, Scotland Town - Gold**

From the minute you enter this lovely Scottish town the welcome is overwhelming from everyone you meet. As a past winner of the Scottish, UK and European competitions, Forres has lived up to its reputation for excellence once again. This is the 21st year of participation for their Bloom group and it was a privilege and an honour to include the judges in the celebrations complete with a birthday cake depicting their new Bloom logo. The enthusiasm right across the community from the volunteers to the tremendous support from their local council and in particular the Wee FIBbees (the Wee Forres In Bloom Bees) were a pleasure to see. The confidence of children aged from five years old who had a full understanding of the purpose of the competition with their ability to recognise plants and their uses was a credit to the whole team. Here's to the next 21 years!

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Grant Park with its mix of sustainable planting and three-dimensional figures provided an impact and a novelty for the many visitors to the park.
- The community garden, developed on the old council's depot site was inspirational. There were 70 people involved and 60 scouts using this new facility for the growing of fruit and vegetables. Examples of composting and wormeries were demonstrated and have proved very successful.
- The four schools in Forres participate in Bloom and the Scotland Eco Schools campaign. The whole involvement of the children and their full and detailed explanations was just perfect. Their understanding is part of the life-long learning process and their commitment at such an early age meets exactly the objectives of the RHS.

- The Wee FIBbees (The Wee Forres In Bloom Bees) was set up in 2008 as a young youth group to cater for children from five years onwards. This is one of the most inspirational young groups the judges have ever seen. They were able to answer any questions that were put to them, dressed in their purpose designed polo shirts with their own logo were seen as a great team.

#### *Areas for development*

- Look at the introduction of more sustainable planting in Grant Park to further improve the quality of the park. During these difficult economic times, substantial savings can be made from making the change to perennial, at the same time ticking the boxes on conservation and adding a different dimension to the visual impact of the park.
- The use of potatoes as a crop to replace floral bedding was seen as a great idea which could be extended by using ornamental vegetables that would add more interest and colour to the planting scheme, if council funding for floral bedding continues to drop.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Excellent presentation given by Fiona on the council's recycling initiatives it's obvious Moray Council are going that extra mile in raising awareness of recycling opportunities.
- The very impressive new dog-walking scheme and it's friendly way to tackle dog fouling was excellent, with dog owners signing up to a pledge to clean up after their dog, but also carry extra doggie bags to give to other dog owners to use when they don't have their own. Those signed up to the pledge wear a green arm band, or attach it to their dog's collar to show their support of the campaign.
- The excellent work that had been done setting up the Forres Community Woodland Trust, making woodlands relevant to the people of Forres.
- The Forres Footpath Trust, which provides a network of walks around Forres, is an excellent idea; it provides a number of walks that enable you to look at the many historic artefacts, marvel at the floral displays or just the wildlife while taking valuable exercise.
- The town was weed and litter free and a pleasure to walk around.
- The sowing of wildflowers on the banks of the Mosset Burn. This has given an added interest to an otherwise very functional uninteresting grass bank. The wildflowers with their seasonal changes are meeting the needs of environmental improvement and conservation while at the same time creating an aesthetically pleasing display.

#### *Areas for development*

- Cluny Woods would benefit from an approved programme of maintenance including the careful selective thinning of some the woodlands. A proposed plan of operations, with the support of the Forestry Commission, could be prepared to gain support from local residents for any suggested felling. This would be an opportunity to explain best practice in forestry, at the same time allowing the trees to develop into full maturity. There will be a financial gain if the timber to be removed is sold standing, alternatively if there are qualified foresters on the team it could be done in house.
- Consideration should be given to develop a 'Heritage Trail' linked into the Guide to Walking in Forres. This would add some local interest to the scheme.
- The Adopt a Street scheme, also mentioned under Community Participation, is a fantastic initiative and no doubt will be extended in size and scope. If this continues to be so successful, why not promote the idea to other authorities as an example of best practice?

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The very informative and constructive introduction which was excellently put together.

- The introduction of the Adopt a Street scheme as a litter reduction initiative, developed in partnership with Forres in Bloom, is an excellent idea where groups give their time to clear litter. The scheme is looking to expand to include repairing street furniture, clearing weeds, painting out graffiti and planting bulbs and we support this further development.
- The Wee FIBbees (The Wee Forres In Bloom Bees), a youth group for children aged five years old and above have are an excellent group and a great example of working with the community and engaging with young children.
- Forres in Bloom is a registered charity and provided a Financial Statement for the judges, this is a great way of demonstrating the funding streams and expenditure, another example for others to follow.
- The shop window displays were a pleasure to see and an excellent way of publicising the in bloom campaign.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although the relationship with Moray Council is excellent, it is essential, now more than ever, to work even more closely to help cover the shortfalls in public spending, bring in new ideas and alternative ways of providing their service.
- The opportunity to visit a selection of good residential gardens as part of the judging tour would be an advantage.
- The Wee FIBbees is such a excellent initiative this could be used as a model for other groups in the area; perhaps Beautiful Scotland could promote Forres as an example of best practice and as a mentor to others.

### **Freckleton, North West Town - Silver Gilt**

From the very warm welcome we received from the Freckleton in Bloom Committee members at the start of the tour, to the meeting of individual members on the route who greeted us and explained their involvement with the Bloom campaign, community spirit shone through on this tour. The reception and introduction was good. It was clear from the very start that this was a very dedicated team who were committed to meeting the objectives of the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign, with little help from its local council. It was a well organised and well presented entry and as a first time entry into the UK Finals a very credible entry which will continue to go from strength to strength.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The majority of the planting in tubs and containers had a beautiful colour scheme; the soft subtle shades of pale white, greys and yellows were ideal in a semi-rural location and integrated nicely with this historical village.
- Evidence of bolder planting when planted with more sustainable planting was excellent.
- The replacement of the old wooden boat with an attractive and eye catching permanent stone and brick feature was superb. British Aero Space provided the lettering for the name of the town while a local member of the committee provided the hard landscape materials. This now has a high impact in a prominent position which is an ideal way of creating a focal point to the village.
- The visit to Strike Lane School to view the work of the children was inspirational, as was the visit to the Memorial Park and the work done to commemorate the tragic wartime disaster through which many local children lost their lives when an American bomber crashed on the school.

##### *Areas for development*

- The first stop at the school opposite the Memorial Hall, was a little disappointing. To walk round the site may have proved a better option and although it is accepted that this is a work in progress this may not have been the best way to start the tour.

- The caravan park, although showing some good examples of small individual gardens that were interesting to see, required some support or intervention for those that were not quite up to standard (e.g. some on-site gardening workshops).
- Continue to incorporate features into the planting schemes, this can only enhance and enrich the visual impact, the same can be said for sustainable planting; look at further areas of seasonal planting that can be supplemented by the inclusion of perennials and grasses.
- Although the weather conditions of late have caused problems with plant material, if sites in poor condition, for example the Bowling Green, are to be shown in the judging tour, it would be advisable to provide evidence on how the site is to be improved.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The work of the Lytham & District Wildflowers from its early beginnings in 1954 is a wonderful record of achievements.
- The allotments were of a high quality with plenty of variation in the plants grown, but more notably the introduction of bees to the site was extremely positive and beneficial to the whole area; a great innovation, well done!
- The local heritage was demonstrated in various ways during the tour. From the superb display in the Memorial Hall to interpretation in the town showing where Balderstone Mill and the original mill stone were located.
- The woodland area of the caravan park was interesting and developing well and the David Bellamy gold awards that have been won are a credit to the scheme.
- The irrigation system and reservoirs used in the planters around the war memorial and on the roundabout were a great mechanism for saving water while providing the plants with exactly the right amount of water to give the best displays.
- The agricultural allotments were a great asset to the town and obviously highly valued and probably, in this day and age, quite unique.

### *Areas for development*

- Even though the woodland scheme at the Lamaleach Caravan Park was developing well it could have had a more diverse planting programme to raise the value for biodiversity and wildlife. It was felt that an interpretation board would be of benefit to visitors and a programme of further enhancements developed. Local Wildlife Trusts are very helpful and would provide expert advice to improve the site even more.
- There were areas along the route that were poorly maintained. This may be as a result of them being the responsibility of the highway authority. If that is the case better communication between the council and the Bloom committee should be made in an attempt to improve these areas.
- An interpretation board with information about Balderstone Mill and what it used to produce would be of local interest to visitors and residents alike.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The commitment of the community was seen throughout the judging tour and is a credit to Freckleton in Bloom. The amusing way that the 'Support Frank' display had been put together was very funny and aroused interest in the community and gave an opportunity to develop the theme further, for different occasions throughout the year.
- The memorial park and the children's memorial garden was a reminder of the tragic loss of young lives that were clearly being remembered today. The sensitive way the memorial had been put together and the way it is looked after is a credit to the community.

- The support from the Parish Council and Fylde Borough Council is encouraging, but recognizing that funds in future are likely to be reduced is a realistic outlook for any group to take. The generosity of sponsors who have donated funds is to be applauded.
- The school visited was a pleasure to see and the enthusiasm of the pupils was fantastic. We saw a number of areas where the children had been involved; the vegetable plots where they had grown produce used in a meal they provided for their teachers was brilliant.
- The judges enjoyed the flower salad of nasturtiums and pansies and would recommend it to others.

#### *Areas for development*

- Working in partnership with the Local Authority and the Parish Council will bring many advantages in improving and maintaining the environment and would help support local services in the current austere financial climate.
- Try to network with other local groups; after 14 years Freckleton in Bloom have so much expertise to offer and this should be shared with others.

### **Garstang, North West Champion of Champions - Gold**

This pretty, ancient market town in the lovely Wyre Valley of Lancashire is rightly famous for being the first Fair Trade town in the world, but increasingly also fully recognised for its startling displays of colour through the efforts of Garstang in Bloom – a great example of community effort achieving remarkable results. Despite the weather we enjoyed the tour of the many streets and open spaces of the historic town, meeting so many enthusiastic people of all ages. Congratulations on all that you continue to achieve

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The sheer volume of colour is remarkable, with beds, baskets and containers everywhere throughout the town. Particular highlights include the Royal Oak, Th'owd Tithe Barn, Nickson's Corner, Walmeseley Close IYN entrant, the Bible Garden at the URC, and numerous front gardens with Lynden, Bridgeway and those on Windsor Road standing out.
- We would also highlight the contribution of various 'pocket gardens' such as that on Church Street and at Sainsbury's Corner.
- St Thomas' School's new vegetable garden and developing wildlife areas and the partnerships with all the schools in the town to encourage gardening and environmental awareness.

##### *Areas for development*

- The dead trees at Booths supermarket should be removed and replaced in the forthcoming planting season and the replacements cared for more effectively. Replacement is also required at Jubilee Garden where you may wish to consider the use of herbaceous perennials rather than shrubs in the future.
- We recognise the quality of the bedding by Wyre Council – mainly *Begonia semperflorens* and Non-Stop begonias – but would encourage you to develop a more innovative style in some areas in the future.
- At St Thomas' School the wildlife area is a great idea, but the maintenance is not as good as it should be and we also feel that there is scope to develop a partnership with the Wildlife Trust, BTCV or similar to increase the interest – perhaps with a native hedge and more appropriate planting.
- We applaud the changes planned for Kepple Lane Park; however it would have been good to meet some of the intended users of the facility and ask them about it as part of the judging tour.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- You have an excellent and developing appreciation of the heritage of your community, with blue plaques in many areas, the 'Garstang – a Town for all Seasons' booklet and related brochures, the 'Fair Trade Town' aspect etc.
- The tour was very clean, with only the odd instance of litter and an area where you have made efforts to remove some graffiti. Street signage and furniture is in good condition and there are examples of public art on display.
- Your use of mainly recycled compost is excellent as is the use of a sustainably sourced compost for your own planting.

### *Areas for development*

- Millennium Green is an enormous project! It includes new accessible paths which have both gravel surfaces and reinforced grass, and an excellent tap rail. However, given that the feature is now in its eleventh year we do feel that there should be greater progress made on managing the fertility and increasing the species diversity of the site, and also adding meaningful signage to supplement your website. You must also do much more to control the balsam.
- Please encourage your nursery suppliers to use sustainably sourced composts in their containers

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- This is a splendid section! We arrived on the evening before judging to see a blizzard of community activity doing the final titivation, and it became clear on the tour that this is fully the norm in your very pretty town.
- You are fully engaging with schools and more mature members of the community – e.g. Strandsdale Close Inter-generational project – and great support and guidance is given to all parties.
- You have engaged very effectively with all aspects of the business community and the links to all local authorities is very strong.

### *Areas for development*

- We feel that your ongoing development would benefit from some formalised characteristics such as clear fundraising details and budgets and perhaps a structured committee – but without reducing the huge community spirit and sense of enjoyment of Bloom that is clearly present in Garstang.

## **Glenrothes, Scotland Large Town - Gold & Category Winner**

Despite the “worse than Dreich” weather, neither the enthusiasm of the entry or the enjoyment of the judges was affected. Built as a New Town in 1948, Glenrothes planners ensured the survival of large tracts of open space and tree belts at the planning stage. This provides an attractive setting for the town, screening housing and other developments and providing an air of maturity and well-being. The standard of landscaping and maintenance is of the highest order with excellent examples of sustainable planting throughout. Very high quality seasonal bedding and floral containers supplement this framework in appropriate areas. Numerous artworks are prominently positioned in the landscape adding further to its attractiveness. All sections of the community are very supportive of the “In Bloom” campaign, as was evident at the Auchmuty Community Building and grounds, and by the involvement of schoolchildren in biodiversity projects in Riverside Park. Glenrothes embraces all that is good about the Bloom ethos, from nurturing its environment and heritage to ensuring that policies for future care and development are planned and implemented. In a very high quality Large Town category, commitment to quality throughout this town, coupled with the enthusiastic

involvement and support of the whole community, ensured Glenrothes' success in winning the category for 2011. Congratulations to all concerned!

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The extensive and very well maintained treescape and open spaces throughout the town.
- The excellent quality and maintenance of the well-designed and planted bedding schemes and containers at entrances to the town, Riverside Park and other appropriate areas.
- The quality of sustainable planting at all sites seen on the tour route.
- The community garden at Stenton precinct was excellent and the judges were impressed by Peter Scobie's enthusiasm and willingness to help others achieve similar success.
- The new allotments at Auchmuty were impressive.

### *Areas for development*

- Encourage businesses on the perimeter of the town centre shopping mall to participate in your floral initiative.
- Some tree stakes seen on the tour route needed attention or removal to prevent damage in future.
- Some form of labelling, leaflet information or interpretive panels at the arboretum and other sites would enhance the visitor experience.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were pleased to note the commitment to "increase biodiversity and nature conservation" as part of the Sustainable Development Policy.
- The recycling of 64% of waste is very impressive, with a 100% target in sight
- The artworks in parks and open spaces are a wonderful addition to the attractiveness and personality of Glenrothes.
- The quality of all notice boards, fingerposts, street furniture and sponsorship boards was impressive, as was the cleanliness of all areas with no evidence of graffiti or dog mess.

### *Areas for development*

- The judges would have liked more information on whether the council's plant supplier used peat-free/reduced-peat compost in line with its own sustainability objectives.
- Interpretive panels at wildlife/wildflower sites e.g. Lochty Park would increase users' enjoyment and knowledge.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The enthusiasm and will to succeed shown by Janet Mitchell and the community at Magnus Drive to improve their area.
- The community garden at Auchmuty showed that young people can contribute to the improvement of their local area when encouraged.
- The involvement of the education officer from St Andrews Botanic Garden with children from local schools in Riverside Park to encourage environmental awareness is to be commended.
- The judges were interested to hear of the help that the Gardening Club is giving to school children through school garden clubs.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue to encourage local leaders in community initiatives seen on the tour to liaise and help neighbouring communities.

- Continue to encourage young people to respect their surroundings and contribute to the future wellbeing of their environment.

### **Grange Over Sands, Cumbria Coastal Up to 12k - Silver**

With such a beautiful environment and high quality hotels, the village and its surroundings have so much to offer the nature lover. This is enhanced by the efforts of the Bloom group who are making a real difference. Graythwaite Manor Hotel's impressive grounds are expertly maintained by a self taught and passionate Head Gardener and were a delight to visit. Judges were treated to a warm and relaxed welcome and met countless dedicated volunteers. The group have taken on many challenges and are progressing well with a clear vision for the future. Grange over Sands shows ambition and well-developed plans leaving the judges confident of future progress and success.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Graythwaite Manor Hotel demonstrates the high level of horticultural achievement that can be attained by high density planting with good permanent landscaping, coupled with good maintenance practices.
- This Bloom group has courageously taken on the challenges of previous neglect and minimal maintenance and are determined to work together to make a difference and brighten up the village.
- The group have some impressive statistical achievements, particularly the number of spring bulbs, herbaceous and bedding plants that they plant every year.
- The recently established allotment area is satisfying this local need and has given gardeners a great new facility.

##### *Areas for development*

- You should try to achieve consistency and a high level of horticulture obtainable in the local climate, as demonstrated at Graythwaite Manor Hotel.
- With the Bloom group's renewed interest and responsibility for planting schemes, there is an opportunity to ensure that in future the right plant is in the right place, appropriate to its surroundings.
- Realise the ambition of replacing fencing around the floral beds in the ornamental gardens.
- Consider appropriate feeding regimes to ensure the longevity of your displays.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- It was great to see the community involved in furniture condition audits that allow them to persuade the authorities to repair and replace where possible.
- Working alongside local partners, the group have achieved a clean and tidy environment.
- Great to see local heritage varieties accessible to the community and well interpreted.
- The labyrinth and wildflower planting at the playing fields will help children to appreciate the value of nature whilst having fun.

##### *Areas for development*

- To fully meet the criteria, it would be helpful for the judges to visit conservation areas such as Brown Robin and be told more about the conservation of the bay.
- Try to include more on Environmental Responsibility on your tour to give the judges a better understanding of your achievements in this area.

- In order to ensure conservation of the heritage of the Park Road Gardens, try to find funding for a replacement programme for the bins, benches and paths. Also try to screen the small building at the entrance.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The level of partnership working with a wide range of village organisations, including the innovative sponsorship of baskets by the Chamber of Trade.
- The way all the groups work together to maintain the Esplanade was exemplary.
- Press releases and activity is spaced right through the year to promote this campaign.
- The judges applaud the group for the production of information material such as leaflets and the portfolio.

### *Areas for development*

- Try to focus future community activities on improving the quality of the wide range of responsibilities you have taken on.
- Review the added value of the new Britain in Bloom Committee and how it complements the Grange in Bloom committee; we would suggest these should be one in the same.
- Look to update your website and promote your activities such as your competition and including a link to a PDF of your excellent portfolio.

## **Great Whittington, Northumbria Small Village - Silver Gilt**

This small village in rural north eastern England is an excellent example of a small community working together. For the judges this was an enjoyable and valuable visit with interest shown in the varied aspects of the criteria and horticultural expertise being evident. Colourful and sustainable planting was prominent in most places. Thank you to our hosts, we left with fond memories.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Your obvious care in ensuring the maintenance of empty properties.
- The allotment project is a useful addition and will mature given time.
- The Queens Head hayricks on the wall had a good selection of colourful plants and many containers in other areas were of a similar standard.
- Private gardens visited were well designed with a wide variety of plantings.
- The front to Scott's of Great Whittington was a good example of mixed planting by a business and this was replicated at other locations throughout the village.
- We were impressed with the wide range of trees throughout the village.
- Standards of maintenance were good throughout and we noted the professional edging of grassed areas.
- It was good to hear of the massive daffodil planting and to see the evidence during the presentation.

### *Areas for development*

- It is suggested that an indigenous hedge be planted along the allotment boundary (provided permission can be obtained from the landowner). Once established, mature shrubs providing some protection could be removed to give more space for cultivation.
- Continue with your scheme for the tree leaflet and other plant identification.

- Whilst accepting that there were good areas of sustainable planting you may wish to consider further additions in future with an emphasis on plants for pollinators; the RHS has a list available on their website.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Your “Welcome Home” theme is to be applauded alongside your prominent “Back to the Good Old Days” ethos.
- The educational value of the children’s nature area was obvious and the children’s activity sheet was very innovative.
- Signage boards and way marker posts were appropriate for the village.
- We did not see any litter or any problems at all associated with local environmental quality.

### *Areas for development*

- It would be good to see agricultural artefacts used to enhance the local heritage, e.g. milk churns, ploughs or seed drills.
- Consider willow weaving in the children’s area.
- You should apply for grants for your environmental proposals, e.g. interpretation boards and wildflower meadow. Awards for All would be a good place to start.
- The wildflower meadow is an excellent proposal but you must remove the top soil and reuse and sow with an appropriate mixture. Consider the information judges provided on the day and/or visit the RHS website or contact the RHS Advisory service for additional advice.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The presentation and portfolio appeared professionally produced and were well received.
- Ample evidence was given of future Bloom initiatives.
- Considering the small population of the village, having the majority of local people actively involved is laudible.
- The high profile positioning of the Britain in Bloom finalist banner and good use of the What’s On board to publicise events. The judges also appreciated the DVD of the village.

### *Areas for development*

- We encourage your efforts to obtain full funding for your village hall renovation and we hope you are successful.
- You may wish to consider a project to record residents’ past and present reflections on the above items and other village interests. It would strengthen your link to your local heritage.

## **Grouville, Jersey Coastal Up to 12k - Silver Gilt**

For visitor interest and enjoyment, Grouville has a lot to offer. The floral impact while travelling through the village and past the church and parish hall is very satisfying. The enlightened and commendable management of the golf course which is allowing the reestablishment of the native flora and fauna. The judges very much appreciated the warm welcome offered by the Bloom group members and parish officials.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The parish hall makes a spectacular announcement of the floral delights to come.

- Superb quality and colour choices of mangers and baskets at the church in the village.
- The increase in numbers of displays, both residential and business, prompted by the Bloom influence.
- The Normandy Court display is very good although we would encourage better management of surrounding turf to further enhance this site.
- Good sustainable planting in the village.

#### *Areas for development*

- Is there the opportunity to encourage more entrants into the gardens competition?
- The school beds could be improved and made more productive with a little extra attention to detail.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The St Peter La Rocque project, with its conservation of heritage Jersey apple varieties.
- The establishment and management of the Ramsar site with its impressive range of bold species.
- The management of the golf course is achieving the desired results through the adoption of brave but commendable strategies.
- The Marsh and the Durrell environmental assessment.
- The awareness of the need to encourage endangered species.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although the Holmgrove recycling site is well-used, there is more scope to look at encouraging the reduction of residual waste, perhaps via an award scheme.
- Some products of hard-surface weeds detracted from an otherwise excellent street scene.
- There would be scope for more art projects, e.g. art in the landscape or children's competitions celebrating their heritage.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The awareness and involvement of some 200 parishioners, including 65 who have "adopted a street".
- Grouville's role in supporting "Holidays for Heroes"
- The enthusiasm of the Bloom group and their pride in the parish.
- The contribution by the parishioners to the floral displays on the railings and parish hall
- The partnership with other organisations for everyone's mutual benefit
- Good relationship with the media, both press and TV.

#### *Areas for development*

- A more complete list of sponsors, together with some more information on the role they play, could be included in the portfolio.
- The judges could learn more from the portfolio if the judging criteria were more clearly identified.
- It was not always clearly explained how the Bloom group liaised with other parties in getting things done on the ground.

### **Halstead, Anglia Town - Gold**

It was clear from the start of the tour that Halstead in Bloom ran their whole campaign in a very professional, organised, efficient and effective way and were meeting all the criteria of RHS Britain in Bloom. There were over 30 regular volunteers helping with the campaign with other helping out as and when required. On arrival we received a very warm welcome from the many friends of Halstead in

Bloom including the members of the committee, the young members of the Air Training Corps, the Brownies, the Rainbows and the newly created youth group. Halstead was a pleasure to judge and the partnership between the District Council, Town Council and the community was very evident and they all should be very proud of where they live and work. A worthy recipient earlier in the year of the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, which is a superb achievement. Well done to everyone!

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The horticultural impact was good with evidence of colour and high quality planting throughout the whole tour. There were plenty of examples of seasonal and sustainable planting and we were pleased to meet the various support groups on the route to explain their involvement.
- The maintenance of plants was very good, although there was clear evidence that the areas maintained by the Bloom volunteers were of a higher standard and looked better than those maintained by the council.
- The policy of the Bloom committee is to provide year-round colour in the displays around the town and that was evident on the day.
- The introduction of new trees where existing ones have been removed from the highway. The majority were in beautiful containers which could be moved if required, a good idea.
- Joan's Big Bed, the carpet / badge bed clearly visible along the causeway, is of a nice design and is well executed.
- The work done by the WI in creating a drought garden from a neglected strip of land is to be applauded. The overall affect of the design and planting is excellent. This has been done with a generous donation of plants from a local nursery. This is a clear example of team and partnership working to put something back into the community.
- The allotments sites, of which there are four, are fully occupied with waiting lists. These are administered by a town council warden. The standard and quality were very good.
- The excellent "It's Your Neighbourhood" entry put together at Adams Court, simply superb.

### *Areas for development*

- More support from the local authority would be an advantage, to raise the standard of some maintenance on the floral displays, especially in the public gardens.
- The new garden developed on the site of the disused tennis courts in Halstead Public Gardens could be improved by the use of alternative plant species. Although it is recognised this is a work in progress the area still looked disused due to the lack of decent surfacing. Finishing this should be made a priority.
- Could the allotments be run by the tenants through the formation of an association? This is happening in many areas across the country and it could mean a more flexible way of working and greater commitment by the allotment holders to take responsibility for their own site.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Some of the ingenious ways of watering, especially on the bridge with the extraction from the canal using alternative energy for pumping, including a solar power pump.
- The planting by the cadets around their HQ perimeter fence of 100 trees and shrubs donated by the Wildlife Trust. This will really make a difference and engages with the cadets in a meaningful way.
- The construction of a new garden for wildlife, sensory and dye producing plants. Writtle College students have been gaining practical experience in constructing the garden.
- The removal of litter from the River Colne using extended litter poles and nets donated by the Tidy Britain Group. This operation is much more efficient and safer.
- The bird, butterfly and bee garden constructed in 2010 is now establishing well and the objective has been achieved. Bird boxes and insect hotels were included on this site.

- Additional dog bins have been installed in problem areas and the dog wardens have regular information campaigns.
- The artefacts depicting Halstead's industrial past of silk weaving, brewing and agriculture placed in prominent positions across the town.
- Although not visited, the development of Coggeshall Pieces by the Halstead Conservation Group, including the restoration of three ponds, new interpretation boards, viewing platforms and a boardwalk is to be applauded and is admirably described in the judging portfolio.
- The work of the Halstead and District History Society and the Halstead Heritage Museum is producing a valuable case study on the North Street Baptist Church.

#### *Areas for development*

- The Bloom group, with the help of the authority's dog warden, could introduce a friendly way to tackle dog fouling. This may include where the dog owner signs up to a pledge to clean up after their dog, they also carry extra doggie bags to give to other dog owners to use when they don't have their own. Identification that you have signed up to the pledge is to wear an arm band, or alternatively attach the band to the dog's collar. Such a scheme is run effectively in the town of Forres in Scotland.
- Produce a heritage trail for Halstead with the help of the Museum and the History Society.
- Some of the street furniture was in a poor state of repair; is this something volunteers could take on perhaps in partnership with the Town Council who could supply the materials?

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The whole of the Halstead in Bloom objectives, strategy and policy are totally dependant on community involvement. Their track record is second to none; they have the right people in place to recruit, motivate and bring together all the groups and councils effectively to coordinate their efforts in meeting their objectives. The volunteers' enthusiasm is infectious.
- The portfolio sets out the goals for 2011 and 2012 which all seem feasible and consistent with the work to date.
- The clear evidence of all-year involvement and the way proposed future works support this.
- The way the Bloom committee are continuing to work with youth groups, including the newly formed Youth Council that we met on the judging tour.
- The fact funding is raised in a number of ways including through the production of a calendar the sales of which generate a major part of the funds. Also the plant and car boot sales and sales of Bloom merchandise. The latest item, a reusable shopping bag at £2.00, and the cash donations from eight separate donors.
- The use of a six seat limousine, supplied by the local undertaker, for the judging tour was a superb method of getting the judges around the town.
- This part of the criteria was met so well the judges could not suggest anything else in the way of improvement, just to say a superb entry and a worthy recipient of the highest accolade of a RHS Britain in Bloom Gold Medal. Well done!

#### *Areas for development*

- Look at the possibility of maintaining areas currently maintained by the council where the standard is below your expectations, perhaps they could contribute to the upkeep.
- This group's community effort is so great it should be used as a model for other groups; why not network with other regional groups? The judges were sure many other communities would benefit from seeing what can be achieved.

## Holyhead, Wales Town - Silver Gilt

For a very new group and a first-time entry in the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals, Holyhead in Bloom have achieved a remarkable result. Working in partnership with Plas Cybi, the Town Council and Anglesey County Council this partnership has engaged with the community in a way many towns and cities would envy. This strategically important port - with 2.5million passengers travelling through each year - was a once-vibrant aluminium industrial base, but has seen a steady decline over many years and now suffers quite severe deprivation. However it is now being revitalised by the local community, encouraged by the Plas Cybi Partnership. Holyhead's involvement in Bloom is a lifeline to this community, where a once dying town is coming back to life through regenerating run-down areas through environmental improvements. All involved are to be congratulated with special reference to the driving forces of Rita and Colin. Holyhead is clearly an area of regeneration and the youth, senior groups, school children, businesses and politicians are being encouraged to make Holyhead a brighter, cleaner, greener place to live, work and visit. The results seen on the judging tour confirm that their efforts are beginning to work. Well done to everyone a fantastic result!

### Horticultural Achievement

#### *Areas of achievement*

- To supply, plant, put up, water, feed and maintain 321 hanging baskets since March is a tremendous achievement. The funding has been sought from various quarters and this is to be applauded. The plant material was brought in as plugs, grown on and the baskets planted voluntarily by members of the community.
- The setting up of a nursery on a piece of donated land at Twr Farm, given for free use for this purpose, is a tremendous step forward and is working well.
- The floral bedding in the town has been developed in the same way as the baskets, all from plugs.
- The main roundabout on the entrance to the town was only developed two years ago when the highway authority asked Plas Cybi Partnership to design and plant this gateway to Holyhead. The results are stunning and a high impact has been achieved along with a "feel good factor" for the many visitors and residents.
- The "Ready Steady Grow" initiative through which children are now being encouraged to take part by being shown how to sow, plant, grow and maintain flowers, fruit and vegetables.
- The introduction of a best kept garden competition is a great way of engaging with the wider gardening community.

#### *Areas for development*

- The future purpose of the Sunken Garden needs to be established before the garden can be developed and re planted. It is essential that it meets today's needs and is not just a remake of the past. To use it as a demonstration garden could be more beneficial to the community and safeguard it from possible abuse.
- Large areas of grass banks would benefit from the introduction of wildflower meadows. The results on the banks would be stunning and, if the correct species are chosen for the seaside location, could be a showcase for the area.
- A comprehensive tree-planting scheme in many of the open space areas would be of huge benefit, perhaps develop an "Adopt a Tree" scheme which would ensure trees are maintained and watered during the early stages of establishment. Perhaps a scheme could be launched by the Mayor planting the first tree as an example to others. Professional advice is always available to select species and sizes suited to their location.
- Continue to adopt areas that are not being maintained to an acceptable standard by the public realm and improve their condition.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Breakwater Country Park is an excellent example of conservation in action, set in a stunning location and led by the absolute dedication of the warden Will Stewart; the site was a joy to visit. The information available to visitors, particularly school children, is to be commended.
- The empty shop initiative is proving to be successful. The ability to paint shop fronts and dress the shop window is a good idea and should continue. Also the other schemes whereby the planning department is funding the repair of shop roofs, replacing rotten windows and generally improving the shop fronts, all to regenerate the area.
- The railway art project involving local primary schools and sixth form students was very well presented and the difference this competition has made to the station is tremendous and benefits the many thousands of visitors who either visit or travel through this bustling port.
- The town heritage trail and the information leaflets including the map are an interesting introduction to the sights of this historic town.
- The start of refurbishing street furniture and the historic seafront shelters is to be applauded.

### *Areas for development*

- Although work is ongoing to raise awareness of littering, there were several instances of litter and dog fouling which must be addressed. A campaign specifically related to these two important issues must be supported by the local council and the Bloom group and would be a good joint initiative.
- The development of a Street Care Pledge, to tackle the problem of dog fouling and dropping litter could be a way forward. There was no evidence during our tour of where the Local Authority was taking a positive step in promoting and resolving these serious issues by educating the public and enforcing the law. There are plenty of examples of good practice across the country where information can be found.
- Continue to establish who owns what and who is responsible for maintaining the various items of infrastructure.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The school project "Ready Steady Grow" run in 10 primary schools is excellent. With the development of purpose built allotments at each school this was one of the best school initiative seen on this tour; fantastic!
- All sections of the community are involved in this campaign and it is a credit to the volunteers that they are determined to lift and support one another to improve Holyhead for the future.
- The ability to secure substantial amounts of external funding to improve Holyhead is impressive and a credit to the Plas Cybi Partnership.
- The community involvement in planting up and selling hanging baskets is excellent.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue to gain support from local Town and County Council and involve them in the many schemes with the volunteers. Their support is essential for the future success of your campaign. It was encouraging that, after the judging tour, the Town Mayor recognised the importance of all the hard work that had been put in to achieve the results we had seen and confirmed that he would support the long-term objectives of the group for future improvements.
- It would be a good idea to network with other Bloom groups and see how they are tackling issues similar those we have mentioned here as areas for development.
- This is your first year in operation as a group, try to consolidate what you have achieved and move forward in a constructive manner working with all your partners to improve the town. You have come a long way in a short time, a truly remarkable achievement to build on!

## Hunstanton, Anglia Coastal Up to 12k - Silver

Hunstanton has several points of fame, from the striped cliffs to the landing point for England's original Patron Saint, Edmund, to name but a few. This west-facing, east coast resort gave the judges a very warm welcome. There had been a dip in fortunes in the public environment before 2005, when the Bloom group started, but since then the Bloom campaigners have been busy trying to reverse this trend. With schemes like Adopt a Bed, interpretive planting and art, many groups have become involved. The beautiful new wolf sculpture characterises these new developments rooted in their historic past particularly well.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The use of sustainable planting to give decorative value where bedding plants would be damaged by wind.
- The Adopt a Bed scheme on the Esplanade Gardens is the most successful of its type seen by the judges.
- The great community spirit and engagement of the allotment tenants.
- Good use of local stone and scree in beds, with xerophytic plants to give a tropical seaside feel.
- One of the most varied and pleasing sensory gardens, with something for everyone.

#### *Areas for development*

- The Oasis roundabout needs replanting, perhaps a project that could be funded through sponsorship.
- Some beds with bare earth areas will need gapping up.
- Continue the excellent programme to increase the proportion of perennial plants to combat weather challenges.
- Current worn grass verge areas may be candidates for planting with tough perennials.
- Keep encouraging participation in Bloom by getting more businesses and retailers involved in enhancing the appearance of the shopping centre.
- Aim for increased numbers in the gardens competition.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The use of appropriate wildflowers along the zigzag path.
- The adoption of the green and gold theme and the general maintenance of the street furniture.
- Searle's proactive approach to education in biodiversity and conservation.
- The pride in heritage, with informative and decorative displays such as the Wolf and Old Pier beds
- The positive regeneration of run down areas and the plans for further improvements.
- The emphasis on reuse of materials.

#### *Areas for development*

- Is there a conservation area on the route that the judges could visit?
- The large 240 litre bins must be very effective but need careful siting.
- Attention to detail is needed on street cleaning in some areas.
- Some herbicide drift has damaged grassed areas adjacent to paths; more care needs to be taken in future.
- Aim to increase recycling initiatives.

## Community Participation

### *Areas of achievement*

- The commitment of Bloom volunteers, together with very positive support from the Borough Council.
- The informative and well-placed interpretation boards.
- The Royal British Legion's funding for the garden at the Cenotaph.
- The success of the Bloom group in fostering ties between various organisations and spreading the message to Ringstead.
- The newsletter distributed to all households and the good range of published information.

### *Areas for development*

- Keep working on schools contacts and see if the High School can find areas in the curriculum where you can contribute; the RHS Campaign for School Gardening provides information on linking gardening to the curriculum.
- Look for more funding opportunities from larger businesses, even if only benefits in kind.
- The gardens competition makes for good publicity; aim to widen the categories to attract more entries.
- Look at the judging tour to ensure you are including something for each section of the criteria, remembering that certain sites can relate to multiple areas if chosen well.

## Huntingdon, Anglia Large Town - Gold

The historic town of Huntingdon is beautifully situated on the banks of the Great Ouse River which provides a focal point from various viewing positions. The town is blessed with some stunning architecture and embellished with excellent parkland, riverside walks and an extensive treescape. The Bloom group, along with the Town and District Councils, can be very proud of their contributions to the beautifully designed, planted and maintained floral features. Volunteer involvement in the restoration of forgotten and neglected gardens at Hinchinbrooke House and at the hospital is to be applauded. With a little more involvement of the business community in the town centre, Huntingdon can look forward to continued success and further recognition in Britain in Bloom at regional and UK Finals level.

## Horticultural Achievement

### *Areas of achievement*

- The hanging baskets and planters at the railway and bus stations were of very good quality and provide attractive entry points for visitors to the town.
- The very attractive and well maintained bedding displays at Castle Moat Road, St Marys Church and the Corn Drill were very impressive.
- The outstanding floral display in the George Hotel Courtyard, which hosts open air Shakespeare plays, was an absolute pleasure.
- The innovative and eye-catching display of *Echevaria* and *Aeoniums* in the drought garden at Castle Moat Road.
- The extensive treescape in Hinchinbrooke House grounds and other parklands and open spaces.
- Increased use of sustainable planting in high profile sites is encouraging.

### *Areas for development*

- Providing tower planters outside the town hall in Market Square to match those opposite would enhance this rather bare area. (Positioning them on pallets would allow for easy temporary removal if required on market days.)

- Discourage the use of plastic flowers in the hanging baskets at the railway station and the Market Inn pub.
- Encourage greater participation by more business premises to further enhance the town centre.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The excellent eco-friendly and appropriate development and maintenance of Hinchinbrooke Country Park.
- The sensitively managed hay meadow and wildlife area in the Riverside Park.
- The cleanliness of all areas visited, and the attractiveness and condition of street furniture at Market Square and the Riverside Park.
- The inclusion of a brief visit to the Cromwell Museum provided an excellent insight into Huntingdon's past and the journey to the present.

### *Areas for development*

- Conduct a survey to identify the excellent trees in Hinchinbrooke House grounds and label them or provide leaflets for a tree walk to enhance the visitor experience.
- A change to the grass cutting frequency of the very well maintained church grounds and cemetery to allow wildflowers to grow in selected areas would increase biodiversity at these sites in addition to providing attractive areas.
- The provision of interpretive panels at appropriate sites in the Country Park and Riverside Park would provide added interest and information to visitors.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The presentation confirmed the inclusion of various groups of volunteers involved in the good work carried out by the Bloom group throughout the year.
- The enthusiastic and on-going restoration of the box garden and perennial borders at Hinchinbrooke House is to be applauded.
- The rewarding and much appreciated rescue of the hospital gardens is a good example of the valuable work carried out by the Bloom group.
- The ongoing support of the local media along with good sponsorship/support of the rail and bus companies is impressive.

### *Areas for development*

- The judges would have liked to meet volunteers involved in the excellent projects at Hinchinbrooke School and at the hospital.
- A school visit or meeting some children en route to discuss their involvement in projects would have added to the tour.

## **Ilkley, Yorkshire Town - Silver Gilt**

The historic Yorkshire town of Ilkley, nestling under the brow of the famous Ilkley Moor typifies all that is good about the Yorkshire Dales and of course the warm Yorkshire welcome. This well established Bloom group, working closely with officers from Bradford Metropolitan District Council, are to be congratulated on keeping the Bloom flag flying for such a long time, with an illustrious history of past results. On the day of judging, the heavens opened however this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the group and actually added atmosphere to the town. This is a strong entry with depth of experience and a great deal of potential for the future. Well done!

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The town centre floral displays provided by Bradford Metropolitan Council were appropriate and in keeping with this dales town and were supplemented where appropriate by the efforts of the Bloom team.
- The appropriate choice of plants in areas of sustainable planting, some supplied locally by Barbara from Old Bridge Nurseries, together with the Sunday maintenance team who worked in various areas in the town including the local police station gardens.
- The grounds of a number of the residential care homes in the town were of an unbelievably high standard, of special note was the Abbeydale Retirement Home which was exceptional, festooned with very high quality floral displays, appropriate permanent planting complimented by good quality areas of lawn.
- The commercial sector is setting the standard with Lishmans Butchers the Dalesway Hotel and the Box Tree restaurant being of special note.

### *Areas for development*

- There was some evidence of chickweed in one or two of the bedded areas, especially in the town centre. Although the judges recognise the financial and indeed climatic conditions are not helping, it was felt this detracted from the overall effect and should be addressed.
- With the exception of the tiered planter, which does offer a degree of the third dimension, the floral displays generally did appear to lack a little height and innovation. Could some sort of feature be established in the town centre using sustainable planting, perhaps celebrating the heritage of the town?
- There were several dead trees seen on the tour route, especially on Denton Road near the old bridge, these should be addressed as part of a routine maintenance programme and replaced with suitable species.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The excellent presentation by the Friends of Ilkley Moor explaining their ambitious yet realistic plans; a real gem!
- The recycling centre was clean and tidy with adequate facilities for the town and helping the local community achieve a high level of recycling.
- The historic nature of the town was demonstrated well in many of the historic buildings such as the listed Lutyens House and its historically significant garden.
- The excellent Darwin Gardens maze and the new project at St Margaret's Park centred around the Panorama Stones were two good examples of an older project and a new project and show considerable commitment by the community to celebrate the town's heritage.

### *Areas for development*

- There was a little evidence of weed growth on some of the pathways, kerbsides and hard landscaping which could have easily been addressed by the use of a suitable herbicide or preferably by manual removal.
- Although photographs of the allotment site were emailed on to the judges, it would have been appropriate on the day to have visited the site and met with one or two plot holders.
- There were one or two incidences of dog fouling on the route; the judges recognise this may occur periodically and the incidents seen may have been isolated but it may be appropriate on future tours to provide the judges with an insight as to how this issue is being tackled.
- The maintenance of street furniture was variable; perhaps a more regimented maintenance programme could be introduced to ensure all seats and hard landscaping features are maintained to the same higher standard.

## Community Participation

### *Areas of achievement*

- The track record of the group is testimony to the high level of support they have achieved over many years and all the members are to be congratulated on this excellent longevity.
- The 15-minute presentation was very interesting, especially the piece about the history and current level of commitment by the Friends of Ilkley Moor group.
- The Ilkley in Bloom Floral Trail initiative is an excellent way of involving local children in the campaign.
- The impressive number and quality of press cuttings as demonstrated in the portfolio, together with the press on the day was particularly note worthy.
- The Ilkley in Bloom local competition is a great way of involving the community in the wider Bloom campaign and it is good to see that the competition has now been extended this year to allotments.

### *Areas for development*

- In the portfolio reference is made to several friends groups, including the Friends of the Lido and of the Cemetery, and the Churches Together group, all being involved in working to improve the town; it would have been good on the day to meet one or two representatives to talk through their projects and be able to share their passion for Ilkley.
- As Local Authority budgets become ever more stretched it would be appropriate to open up extensive discussions with officers from Bradford Metropolitan District Council to explore where you can work even more closely to help mitigate any future funding shortfalls.
- Although several references were made to the involvement of children in the campaign, it would have been appropriate to meet some of these young people and discuss with them their involvement.

## **Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria Large Village - Silver**

The community feel in Kirkby Stephen is all-embracing and is typified by their being awarded “Walkers are Welcome” accreditation and there are few places with a pub as welcoming. The judges have rarely seen a community where so much is achieved with so little fuss. It is a credit to the Bloom group that the judges were made to feel so at home and able to share in the relaxed, welcoming lifestyle set in magnificent surroundings.

## Horticultural Achievement

### *Areas of achievement*

- The diversity of tubs and baskets along the main streets and tucked into corners.
- The Bloom group’s policy of encouraging businesses and individuals to plant and maintain their own displays gives a very personal and individual feel to the village.
- The private garden of Reg Metcalfe would be the envy of many a gardener.
- Silver Street Sensory Garden is a very good example of sensitive planting combined with well-finished hard landscaping.
- The enlightened policy at Stobars Hall which allows residents hands-on experience in the gardens.

### *Areas for development*

- Is there an opportunity to create a more pronounced focal point; enhanced and larger displays in the market area perhaps?
- Garden competitions are a great way to gain publicity and generate wider interest. Offering awards similar to the RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood system, rather than 1st, 2nd, 3<sup>rd</sup>, may encourage the currently non-competitive residents to participate.
- Consider appropriate locations for planting one or two ornamental trees.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the sense of pride in the village, shown by the almost complete lack of litter or evidence of anti-social behaviour.
- Good awareness of recycling facilities.
- Well-maintained street furniture thanks to the proactive monitoring programme.
- The new development and parking facility at Stenkrith Park, giving access to the natural heritage areas and the Poetry Path.

### *Areas for development*

- The Stenkrith wildflower project will need some careful management. It will be worth checking with the Northern Viaduct Trust that they have a management plan.
- Stobars Hall features a large woodland area, where it is planned to open up access for residents and visitors. An audit prior to starting development will help identify any sensitive areas.
- With your agricultural heritage, look for other ways to celebrate the past, along the lines of the 'Bloody Bones' event.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were very impressed to see how many businesses and individuals were using containers to enhance their properties. The role of the Bloom group appears to be to give gentle encouragement and this non-intrusive approach seems remarkably effective.
- Good PR through press and attractive use of the vacant shop window.
- The new Links Centre is a functional, yet attractive use for the old Grammar School building.

### *Areas for development*

- Build on the school's contacts and expand the very encouraging part that the children and young adults are playing in the community.
- Provided you can recruit enough new Bloom members, aim to identify at least one development project a year, for which specific funding can be sought.
- Use your portfolio to show everyone how much you have achieved and your plans for the future. Making the portfolio available on your website could be one way of sharing it.

## **Loughall, Ulster Small Village - Silver Gilt & Category Winner**

This attractive little village in Northern Ireland had an outstanding array of floral effects throughout the area. Local residents are immensely proud of their village and heritage associated with the local apple orchards and cider production. The Country Park and association with the local Ministry of Agriculture added to their achievements. We felt the whole bringing together of various interests worked very successfully in the three main core areas of the competition. A pleasure to visit, with thanks for good hospitality.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Baskets, tubs and containers throughout the village were colourful and of a very high standard.
- The private gardens viewed had a good variety of sustainable and annual planting.
- The Ministry of Agriculture grounds had a variety of good trees and the yews were an inspired feature. The herbaceous border was colourful with a good mix of plants.

- The garden with the children's features, e.g. windmills and pictures was a completely different yet successful approach.
- The two yews outside the church were formally outstanding and the churchyard was well maintained.
- Maintenance of the recreational and more formal areas in the Country Park was generally of a good standard.

#### *Areas for development*

- The dead shrubs at the Old Church entrance following the harsh winter needed removal and replacement.
- Also the *Escallonia* hedge at the school needs replacement and the saplings removed.
- There was evidence of weed growth in the border by the play area in the Country Park. We suggest mulching to control the problem.
- In some areas consideration could be given to better colour theming.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The trials of elephant grass and the willow biomass area will be significantly beneficial.
- The village was immaculate. We saw no evidence of any problems relating to local environmental quality.
- The trials being undertaken on the mushroom compost were innovative and once a suitable mix is established could be a useful source of funding as well as providing resources for local use.
- The research into potatoes and low grass trials could aid future developments.
- It was good to hear of the future plans for the heritage trail.
- The use of the motif on the lamppost was a reminder of the importance of orchards in the local area.
- The new monument was a tasteful and emotive reminder of the past.
- The wildflower meadows despite the lateness of the season were still colourful.

#### *Areas for development*

- Bearing in mind the importance of the local apple industry, would it be appropriate to consider more interpretation, e.g. a sculpture or some other feature for visitor information which could be funded through the Awards for All scheme.
- The use of agricultural artefacts in specific locations would add interest to the heritage and displays in the village.
- The Country Park had good interpretation boards but you should also consider adding the identification of plant species.
- We do have some concern about traffic speeding through the village. You may wish to consider some form of traffic calming.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The efforts being made to assist those with learning difficulties from Orchard House with work in the greenhouses was to be applauded.
- We consider that an allotment area could be developed in the village or by an extension of the small area currently made available to staff at the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Community participation, support and pride in the village was very evident.
- The presentation gave a good overview before the visit.

#### *Areas for development*

- We felt that more involvement of young people in some elements of the campaign would have been appropriate.
- Have you considered the possibility of celebrating the apple harvest in some way? The Blossom Trail is well covered but a later, festive event could prove popular.

### **Luddenden, Yorkshire Village - Gold & Category Winner**

Luddenden in Yorkshire is hemmed in by steep hills and running through it is the old packhorse trail which runs from Halifax through to Lancashire. At one point there were 16 cloth mills running through the valley. Today the looms are long gone and the village mainly consists of terraced cottages and narrow streets with buildings dating from the 17th to 19th Century. The village has fully embraced the Bloom ethos with its attractive sustainable plantings, environmental improvements and involvement of the whole community who have achieved their goal of making Luddenden a bright, clean and lovely place for people to live in and visit. Congratulations on an excellent all-round entry and a very worthy category winner!

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The sustainable planting throughout the village was very well thought out, colourful and attractive with appropriate use of local heritage artefacts to enhance the planting schemes
- The landscaping of the car park area with its sponsored memorial trees has transformed a former derelict site and is an example that larger local authorities could learn much from when designing similar municipal schemes.
- Throughout the village the majority of properties were adorned with pots, baskets or containers creating a very attractive, colourful display.
- Planting boxes containing nasturtiums on the 'Steps to Nowhere' has created a very colourful 'floral cascade'; we suggest continuation of this new feature in future years again using nasturtiums or consider *Thunbergia* or *Ipomoea*.

##### *Areas for development*

- The judges were impressed with how the rather difficult area at the sub-station had been transformed into a green oasis however, it is felt that the time has come to re-think this area. Improvement could be made by reducing the overall number of plant types and considering replacements such as hellebores and ferns.
- As the only business operating in the village the Lord Nelson Public House is very much involved in the Bloom campaign. The permanent planting around the beer garden is a most attractive, well thought out scheme put together with help and advice from the Bloom group. Aim to find ways to expand this expertise into the floral containers on the front of the building to ensure consistency with those elsewhere in the village.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The Bloom team has made every effort to celebrate the industrial heritage of the village by incorporating features representing this into the planting schemes.
- Some of the best examples in the use of sustainable wildlife planting seen by the judges on their 2011 tour. Of particular note was the area at St. Mary's Church and the riverbank incorporating the 'Bug Hotel'.

- The impressive number of compost bins and water butts seen at various locations throughout the tour, the reduction in the use of peat, use of scarified moss and newspapers to retain water in the baskets were excellent examples of how the Bloom team are minimising the demands placed on natural resources.
- The large number of bird and bat boxes around the village.
- An extremely clean entry with no evidence of litter, dog fouling or fly-posting seen by the judges throughout their tour.

#### *Areas for development*

- Continue with all the excellent initiatives to promote environmental improvement, resource management and biodiversity as an integral part of the Bloom campaign.
- Continue with your goal to enhance the village but not change its make up by continuing to work closely with the Conservation Society.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- It was clearly evident to the judges that everyone is aware of the local environment and that they are doing all that they can to conserve it and pass on this culture to the children and young people of the village.
- The portfolio, presentation and tour were exceptionally well thought out and executed.
- The use of the window in the vacant shop premises to publicise the Bloom campaign and environmental issues with very attractive display materials.

#### *Areas for development*

- Consider the development of a dedicated Luddenden in Bloom website to help celebrate the good work of the Bloom group. Perhaps a group of young people from the village could take this on as a project.
- It was most encouraging to see the number of children and young people being encouraged to get involved in the campaign; continue to build on this good work.

### **Milton Keynes, Thames & Chilterns Large City - Silver**

Having recently re-entered the campaign after a long break, the judges had never visited this city before and were impressed with the landscaping and the variation in the approach to the core pillars of Britain in Bloom. This central large city has an impressive treescape and many green lungs extending throughout its boundaries, with a conservation emphasis in many locations giving an excellent quality of life. Our itinerary covered unusual projects, new initiatives and a spectacular Far-East themed project.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Within the central area there were many successful plantings, e.g. the *Liquidambar* trees. Several trees, however, were stressed, e.g. *Prunus* species and *Acacia* trees adjacent to the Midsummer Boulevard. This needs investigation as to the cause.
- The Tree Cathedral is innovative and unique; it was well presented but perhaps you might consider a viewing platform.
- The quality of the schemes and plants in the Open University Campus was exceptional. We were particularly impressed with the formal logo trimmed beds. Additionally the new sustainable bed adjacent to the Mediterranean area was outstanding. Maybe a leaflet could be produced to publicise the environmental work around the campus.

- The displays at the funeral directors and some pubs were extremely colourful.
- There was a large variety of established trees throughout the area and these created a city of green despite the housing and business environment.
- Maintenance of green spaces was generally good by both the Parks Trust and the Local Authority.
- The Japanese style landscaping at the Caldicotte Business Park was outstanding but may be in need of a programme of mulching.

#### *Areas for development*

- We recognise there is an impressive treescape but we are concerned regarding future maintenance and funding. Clearly this needs to be addressed.
- There were some instances of weeds especially on the roundabout on our exit from the central part of the city.
- Colour was lacking in the main street of Bletchley although there was good tree cover.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The beehives and chicken coop were novel ideas at the allotment site. It appeared to be a very inclusive site for all needs.
- Resource management was adequately covered; we liked the twin separating rubbish vehicle and the electric sweeper. Also the design of the litter bins was a novel feature.
- The DVD and 'The Big Clean Up' was an excellent initiative to involve young people.
- Street furniture generally appeared good. We liked the square at the end of Bletchley High Street but regretted that time did not allow closer viewing.
- The sculpture in the Open University was outstanding; a great example of public art.
- The murals on the Tinker Bridge meeting place were very good and we noted the success of the project.
- The interpretation boards at the Blue Lagoon were good as are the plans to extend provision.

#### *Areas for development*

- We did notice instances of cigarette butts in several areas and thought more promotion of controlling this problem would alleviate this issue.
- Whilst we were given some information on local heritage we felt that more could be done to emphasise this element, e.g. the Windmill and Grand Union Canal.
- 'The Patch' should consider applying for a grant from the Awards for All scheme; it could be helpful.
- We were very concerned about the control of *Crataegus* at the Blue Lagoon. We felt that this approach was very risky and other ideas should be considered. We are prepared to discuss this further at the judges' surgery.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Green Gym Scheme is a good example of encouraging an easier regime of keeping fit and social interaction.
- The portfolio was informative and the presentation gave us a good insight prior to our tour.
- The Buddhist Monastery and Pagoda will leave us with a lasting memory. This was an unusual and emotive item for the tour. We enjoyed the experience and were impressed with the future events planned, e.g. bringing multiple faiths together and the Hiroshima remembrance.
- The sale of cricket bats made from willow timbers was a great initiative.

#### *Areas for development*

- We did not receive enough information about the Hanson Environmental Centre; a short description by a member of staff would have been helpful.
- More could have been achieved in press coverage. This benefits both yourselves and the Britain in Bloom Campaign.
- It was felt that more initiatives involving the local community and youth groups could have been shown.
- The tour was informative and very interesting but we consider that with a little more thought and some changes it could have been more effective. You have much to show and you missed some opportunities.

### **Moor (Huntingdon), Anglia Urban Community - Silver**

The drive to improve the community of Moor is continuing and we are sure that, with further support, progress will be ongoing. Plans are in place for a new funding drive with several businesses being targeted. The judges were extremely impressed by the work being carried out at the special school where all aspects of horticulture have been covered under the direction of Ann Storey; we are sure that this project will become even more interesting to the students in the future.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The open space grass cutting was of a high standard.
- The very colourful hanging baskets were also of a high standard.
- Car parks were very clean and well presented.
- The grass cutting regime at Spring Common was sympathetic and in keeping with a large open green space of this type.

##### *Areas for development*

- It may be appropriate to create a special bed, or organise a tree planting to celebrate the 50th year anniversary of the community.
- The judges felt that several locations seen on the tour could become It's Your Neighbourhood entries, such as Medway Court and Bradshaw Court as starting points.
- Further develop the competitions at the allotments and for residential gardens.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The recycling figures as shown in the portfolio are very good.
- Conservation and biodiversity initiatives are being carried out with an understanding of what is required.
- We were very interested to learn of the work being carried out to locate local apple trees, which have grown from discarded apples.
- Street cleaning was of a good standard.

##### *Areas for development*

- The judges noted that there was a lot of weed growth in hard landscaping areas.
- We felt that an educational programme is required to get people to develop a better understanding of the impact litter has on the environment. This could be done in the form of a school poster campaign with the winning poster being used to promote the importance of properly disposing of litter.

- A welcome to Moor sign might give a better sense of identity and could be considered as another 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration project.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- There is a strong year-round programme of events.
- The presentation and accompanying photographs supporting the work being carried out were of a good standard.
- We felt that there was much support to further develop the efforts being made to improve the town.
- Engaging with young people is gathering pace; the links with the special school will ensure this continues.

### *Areas for development*

- We hope that the new funding drive is a success, this will help the group to complete future projects.
- There may be a need to further publicise the good work being carried out.
- Perhaps shops could display promotional posters, as this would be of no cost to them, and this may in turn lead to more funding or support in kind.

## **Moseley (Birmingham), Heart of England Urban Community - Silver**

A small group of people are working hard to make a difference in Moseley, pulling together a variety of community groups to make a balanced tour. Moseley Park & Pool was an absolute joy to visit and proved to be the highlight of the tour, a green oasis in a built up area. The judges were impressed by the developments undertaken at The Grange. When the oak tree map is installed next year this will be a treat for locals and visitors alike, giving people an understanding of the local heritage in an artistic way.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The corporate tubs and baskets seen throughout the tour were of a high standard and impressed the judges.
- Laburnum Grove was generally of a high standard and created a tranquil place to live.
- Grass maintenance standards were very high at St Mary's Church, and the horticultural features at St Columba's were a pleasant splash of colour.
- Becky Greenhill's work at the church and courtyard, where a safe and tranquil seating area had been provided for young children, was a real asset and created a place for parents to meet.

### *Areas for development*

- Although the judges were shown a range of new planting it would have been helpful to have seen something more established that the group had been involved in maintaining.
- When appropriate, a survey of the tree stock may be beneficial to establish the condition of trees as would the establishment a maintenance programme.
- The St Mary's Churchyard could become an even more vital part of the town once the flagged area is lifted and relayed. Care should be given to the appropriate choice of plants that are relevant to a church.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Christine Williams is managing a wonderful asset at Moseley Park and Pool; this is an outstanding area.
- The survey carried out at St Mary's Church will provide much of the detail required to inform any future development projects.
- The judges were impressed with the work carried out at the Dovecote, a project which will become part of the town's heritage.

### *Areas for development*

- Although the street furniture was of good quality, not all of it was in a clean condition.
- Leaf litter was apparent in many side streets.
- It was clear there were two standards of garden care, some being quite tidy and others below the standard expected at this level of competition.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- We were made aware of the many new projects that are in the planning stage.
- The presentation was very well delivered.
- The idea of using local artists worked, as the quality of their endeavours was very apparent, Samantha McEwan has produced first class work and is worthy of special mention.

### *Areas for development*

- The work of Samantha could result in a great fundraising project; we are sure there will be a great demand for her work.
- There may be merit in the idea of linking the churches through a Floral Trail; this could be depicted in the new oak tree map.
- Perhaps the garden competition could be further developed to include an awards ceremony, this may encourage more people into your campaign

## **Newcastleton, Scotland Village - Silver Gilt**

The village of Newcastleton is nestled in the valley of Liddesdale in the Scottish Borders. It is surrounded by hills and forests with fabulous scenery, abundant wildlife and historical sites. The village was founded in 1793 by the Duke of Buccleuch as a settlement for the weaving trade. The present layout has seen little alteration since it was built. As a first time entrant to the Britain in Bloom UK Finals the Newcastleton Floral Group, which has only been in existence since 2007, are to be congratulated on creating a very attractive entry with a strong community focus encompassing all that is good about Bloom.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Due to the nature of its construction there are no front gardens in the village; however every effort has been made to enhance the streetscene of the village with a wide variety of containers containing colourful displays.
- The three main village squares were very attractive open spaces, which were very clean and tidy with well maintained grass and a selection of attractive trees.
- The new planting boxes in the car park which contained a very good selection of colourful, attractive sustainable planting.

- The screening of the old petrol pumps with a very effective planting scheme is to be commended. This project was the catalyst for what has become a wonderful Bloom campaign in the village.
- The bowling green area, maintained by the bowling club, with its excellent quality playing surface and most attractive floral displays surrounding it.

#### *Areas for development*

- Consider the use of sustainable perennial planting in the raised planting boxes in the three main village squares as an alternative to the current seasonal bedding. Some 'pockets' of seasonal planting could still be incorporated into these schemes to give an added splash of colour.
- The standardising of sponsored planters manufactured by the prison service and containing a co-ordinated range of plants ensured consistency and uniformity along the main street. Consider providing a similar scheme where householders can obtain smaller troughs for outside their homes which could be planted up with a standard range of plant material to ensure a more co-ordinated approach.
- The judges felt that the village has the right balance of floral displays to compliment its natural attractiveness. Resist the temptation to provide too many floral containers that would alter this balance.
- While the war memorial planting was attractive and most appropriate to its location the judges felt that the plants themselves were not performing at their best and didn't have the impact that would be expected. A soil analysis check might reveal a lack of nutrient being the cause.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The village was pristine, reflecting the care and pride of the community.
- The village orchard scheme and the opportunity to sponsor individual trees.
- The bird and bat boxes provided by the Forestry Commission at Dykecroft.
- The woodland tree clearance and re-planting with broadleaves being carried out by the Buccleuch Estates.
- The community tree planting along the boundary of the village park using plants donated by the Woodland Trust.
- The bog garden constructed at the school by the children who had clearly enjoyed being involved with this project.

#### *Areas for development*

- Look to promote the rich flora and fauna of the area for the benefit of villagers and visitors by introducing information leaflets, possibly on-site interpretative panels, and notices in the 'pagoda' in the centre of the village.
- Look to increase the use of water butts to harvest rainwater for use in watering the floral containers throughout the village therefore reducing reliance on tap water and conserving this precious resource.
- Seek to celebrate the local heritage of the village as part of the Bloom campaign displays such as what is already seen in the excellent village clock.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Bloom campaign has generated an extreme sense of pride in the village and this was evident to the judges from all those they met on their tour.
- The level of funding and support which will ensure the continued development of the Bloom campaign and provide benefits for the residents into the future.
- The promotional and publicity materials which the Floral Group is using to highlight the campaign including the very effective window stickers and the support of the local press.

- The judges were most impressed by the plans to re-develop the village park and look forward to seeing how this project develops. Good luck with this most exciting initiative.

#### *Areas for development*

- Continue to seek ways of engaging children and young people in the Bloom campaign outside the school environment.
- Look to develop a dedicated Newcastleton in Bloom website to celebrate and promote the excellent work being carried out in the village. Perhaps a group of young people from the village could undertake this as a specific project.
- Continue the excellent work which you are doing to involve the whole community in the campaign to provide further improvements in the village in future.

### **Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Heart of England Small City - Silver**

A warm summer afternoon's tour of the city began in the Brampton Park Museum, and from there progressed to the crematorium and its splendid range of trees and then the new cemetery, community gardens and schools, the grounds of Keele University and finally the town centre shopping area and an area of urban floral park. We were able to meet the children and teachers at the excellent St Giles and St George's School, and were also impressed with the demonstration of the recycling equipment at Lyme Valley Park.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Good sustainable planting was seen at roundabouts, and also colourful barrier baskets on the main arterial roads. Colour is present via bedding and baskets in parks and main streets in the town, mainly featuring a range of begonias, *Tagetes*, *Rudbeckia* etc.
- We saw excellent community gardening at Cromer Street – the Jubilee Garden – and also at the St Giles' and St George's school, with the rotational beds fully integrated in the curriculum throughout the six years of school.
- Good trees were present throughout the city, and the collection at the Crematorium was of notable quality and diversity. The new 'petal' designs here are interesting.
- The new Cemetery at Keele has a colourful meadow of prairie annuals.
- We were pleased to note the CSR days being spent at Brampton Park by Knight's Solicitors staff.

##### *Areas for development*

- Town centre bedding and baskets are somewhat plain and dull; little trail is present and the colours do not lift the environment. Queen's Gardens has rather flat begonia bedding with severe powdery mildew taking its toll. In both cases we encourage you to be a little more ambitious with your bedding choices and designs (perhaps doing a bit less but to a higher standard), and to continue your policy of increasing the sustainable, perennial planting.
- The Brampton Park rose garden badly needed dead-heading.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Lyme Valley Park includes considerable and important wildlife and biodiversity as explained to us; we also were given a detailed demonstration of your very high levels of recycling throughout the city.
- The small wildlife garden at Basford Allotments is also a well-managed resource, and is used by schools groups.
- Your policy of completely peat-free growing and only sourcing of plants from the local nurseries is bold and effective at minimising negative environmental impacts.

- The tour was clean, with only minor instances of graffiti and litter, and a complete absence of dog-fouling.
- Over 400 community litter picks have taken place in the past year and you also make good use of the clever 'gum boards' in the main shopping areas.
- Your industrial heritage was evident at Silverdale, in the business park and at St Luke's Church.

#### *Areas for development*

- We feel that the tour would have benefitted greatly from a visit to Lyme Valley Park to see it first-hand and also, if possible, to meet professionals or experts at this site.
- We also noted graffiti at locations throughout the tour – e.g Sherwin Avenue, Knutton Lane and Scot Hay Road amongst others – and raising the profile of the negative impact of this should be a future focus for the Bloom.
- Finally, there is scope to make more of your industrial heritage as part of your Bloom campaign – this adds local character and interest.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- School engagement is very good in the city.
- We were followed throughout by your 'in-house' publicity team as well as meeting the local newspaper representatives; it is clear that Bloom has a suitably high profile in Newcastle.
- Roundabout sponsorship is good and is being maintained effectively.
- The work of the Borderlines Project to get disaffected communities involved is good and we saw the work of ex-offenders creating artwork in the town centre.
- The borough staff, including ground workers, were very engaged in the Bloom efforts and we were pleased to meet the Mayor and Chief Executive as part of the tour.

#### *Areas for development*

- This feels very much a council-led entry; we are aware of your friends groups and other partners but feel that you can – and should – make more of their participation in the campaign.
- This is also reflected in the future plans for the city, where the views and participation of the community should be sought and their participation in delivery made a necessary part of the progress.

### **Oadby and Wigston, East Midlands Small City - Silver Gilt**

The smallest borough in Leicestershire was fully prepared for the judges, with two busy, colourful shopping areas, schools, environment centre and the lovely Botanic Garden all visited. We were heartened by the commitment of the local authority to the value and positive impact of Bloom, but perhaps most of all by the enthusiasm of all the many people that we met. A most enjoyable tour, hectic but without being rushed, concluded in the Botanic Garden to see not just the historic and current planting but also the spectacular sculpture exhibition

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The barrier baskets, hanging baskets and street level container planting in the main shopping areas of both Wigston and Oadby are of a very high standard – there is little chance that the colour could be missed by anyone.
- We also commend the tree planting in containers in both shopping areas – they make an excellent impact in these difficult locations

- The community spaces at Canon Close and Wickham Road, the two Steeples Oasis, gardens at Oadby Baptist Church and others are all excellent examples of grass-roots gardening action, as are the allotments at Wigston Road.
- There are also good residential gardens with that opposite Wickham Road being particularly colourful.
- Little Hill School has a fine allotment area, fully used within the curriculum, and also includes wildlife areas, outdoor classroom and many other features; children and science teacher (Mrs Osborne) were able to fully explain the use of the features present.
- The University Botanic gardens are lovely, with fine mature trees and herbaceous borders, and four national plant collections within their grounds.

#### *Areas for development*

- The grounds of the Council offices contain beautiful mature trees, and some appropriate use of bedding and replanting, but also a very poor rose bed, large dying conifer and other areas in desperate need of some improvements.
- The Peace Memorial Park has a good bowling green and sensory garden, and a committed Friends Group; it also contains areas in need of substantial improvement, with, we would recommend, a need to vastly improve the bulk of the soil before any replanting takes place; add well-rotted manure or similar to put heart back in. The *Crococsmia* bed should be done first, perhaps with *Agapanthus*, *Hemerocallis*, *Kniphofia* and similar for greatest impact.
- We feel that the levels of business involvement e.g. from public houses, could be much greater; only one or two appeared to be brightening their frontages. The Star and Garter is a notable 'non-performer'. Other prominent properties e.g. the British Legion at Wigston, should be encouraged to get involved, as should the Public Record Office.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Pride of place is very high in the borough – the group is rightly named 'Pride in the Borough' and this shines through in the general cleanliness and care seen throughout the tour.
- Recycling levels are high, including the work by the Busy B's doing composting and sorting for sale back to the public.
- Reduced peat compost is in use and some areas were mulched with own-produced chippings.
- The displays of art and sculpture in the Botanic Gardens are wonderful, attracting many thousands of visitors every summer for the changing display.
- Brock's Hill Environment Centre, an 85 acre site, is a huge resource in the borough; it is an environmentally friendly building, used as a demonstration site and educational resource, with the meadows and orchard of local apples particularly evident on the tour.

#### *Areas for development*

- The local industrial heritage was mentioned on the tour, but little evidence was presented to support the history of the borough. We feel that there is an opportunity to make more of this aspect, perhaps linking directly into the Bloom activities in the types of planting displays that you use. Can the sock industry be designed into the carpet bed, for example?
- Brock's Hill would, we feel, benefit from more interpretation boards to enlighten the visitors to the splendid site.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- This is very much a community-based entry, with enthusiasm oozing from every pore! From the schools to residential areas, parks to environmental areas, people are to the fore.

- We must in particular commend the splendid work of the adults with learning difficulties (the Busy B's), which is having a major positive effect in the main shopping areas of the borough.
- The Pride in the Borough group, which as its name indicates, is all encompassing, is a vigorous, committed and forward thinking approach to raising citizens' awareness of what is available and how people can get involved.
- We also note the engagement with all the communities in the borough and the success of the Churches Together in Oadby project.

#### *Areas for development*

- This is a very strong area for you and so there is little to add. We would encourage you to continue to increase the levels of sponsorship for your efforts, which is visibly bringing benefits, and perhaps also to suggest that you encourage more of your community projects to get involved with It's Your Neighbourhood.

### **Oakham, East Midlands Town - Silver Gilt**

Oakham, a beautifully historic town in Britain's smallest county of Rutland, has a vast network of volunteers helping to keep it at the forefront of the Britain in Bloom campaign. The Bloom group working in partnership with the Town and County Council together with other agencies such as Anglian Water as well as local businesses is proving to be a real catalyst in maintaining and improving the environment for both visitors and residents alike. These partnerships are helping to develop features for the present, celebrate the past and look to the future in a manner that many communities try to emulate but few actually achieve. A very good entry which given time the judges believe will become a top contender in this very competitive category. Well done to all!

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The overall quality of green space in Oakham is superb and members of the Bloom committee and the many volunteers are to be congratulated on their dedication to achieving a high horticultural standard throughout the town
- The County Museum and the Arboretum are integral parts of the town and it was good to see these assets being developed and maintained in a sustainable manner.
- The Prairie Garden recently planted in front of the library was wonderful to see, the selection and positioning of plants to create a mass of colour and textures is quite unique.
- The boundary treatment and internal planting at Oakham School is to be commended; its contribution to the street scene is a credit to this area of Oakham.
- The impressive Adopt a Bed scheme giving ownership to local people is to be commended.

##### *Areas for development*

- It was felt that there were too many residential gardens on the judging tour and perhaps it would have been more appropriate to visit a few selected outstanding gardens to demonstrate good examples of horticultural practice.
- Barrier planters were not as high quality as the colour-coordinated, themed hanging baskets, which were excellent.
- The enthusiasm of the children in the school garden was infectious. Could members of the Bloom group be brought in to help the children develop their gardening skills and to improve the quality of the vegetable garden?
- The excellent redevelopment of the library gardens is a credit to the group; could this obvious talent be used elsewhere to replace one or two areas of planting, perhaps supplementing some of the seasonal bedding with more sustainable planting?

## Environmental Responsibility

### *Areas of achievement*

- The information on recycling that was given at the presentation was impressive with the increase over the last two years being a great improvement.
- The development and introduction of sculptures / features on the roundabouts and open space is superb.
- The Spitfire, the Osprey and the proposed anchor are attractive features with a purpose. The RAF, Anglian Water and Lands End are to be congratulated for the support they have given to these projects.
- On the day of judging, there was no evidence of litter or graffiti. The street furniture was in excellent condition.
- The signage was excellent and clear to see and the idea of placing promotional material in vacant shops was brilliant.
- The self-watering planters were a constructive and positive way to develop and improve the plant material while at the same time saving water.
- The publication of Oakham's Heritage Trail produced by Rutland County Council is a useful document identifying the historical features of this market town referenced in the Domesday Book of 1086.

### *Areas for development*

- It was felt that the visit to Gorse Field Wood, although interesting, was too immature to use on a national judging tour. The size and quality of the planting, compared to the planting on the by-pass that was younger, was poor and it was thought that the lack of weed control around the base of the trees was having an effect on their growth.
- It would have been nice to visit an allotment site, although we did drive past one. It would have been beneficial to see first-hand the commitment of the allotment holders and the quality of their homegrown produce.
- The arboretum is an important historical feature that has been well documented. This area should continue to be developed by selective removal of poorer specimens and replanting in pre-selected sites giving due thought to the eventual size and spread of the chosen species.
- There seems to be plenty of scope for some wildflower planting somewhere in the town, this would add greatly to the entry and would help demonstrate locally that Bloom is not just about cultivated species.

## Community Participation

### *Areas of achievement*

- There are many good examples in this section of community participation but what stands out the most is the complete confidence that the County Council, Parish Council and local business have in Oakham in Bloom as a result of all the success working in partnership with the community.
- The Adopt a Bed scheme is one of the best examples we have seen while judging this competition. The volunteers are showing the people of Oakham that they care for the local environment and are great ambassadors of the town.
- The hundreds of hours that are put in by volunteers to improve the area are fantastic. This proves the 'can do' attitude is effective in improving the area
- The opportunity to engage school children, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers is a challenging one that has been achieved and is showing results.
- Sponsorship, local lottery fundraising and working with local businesses such as "Lands End" is to be applauded, as is the relationship with the Museum.
- Support on a regular basis from the local press and media is impressive and is creating a real buzz for the group.

- Oakham in Bloom are very proactive and have already identified thirteen improvements for 2011 / 2012; this approach is amazing and the group are to be highly commended for their “can do” attitude.

#### *Areas for development*

- Oakham is obviously a very forward-thinking group and the judges believe others would benefit from their knowledge and experience. Why not network with other groups in the area and spread the word about some of the best practice you have developed?
- Continue to work with local businesses to gain support both financially and in kind; this could be celebrated by the introduction in a prominent site in the town of a sponsor board listing the many current, and hopefully future, sponsors of the campaign.

### **Perth, Scotland Champion of Champions - Gold**

Dreadful weather throughout the judging tour could not prevent us enjoying the many horticultural and environmental highlights of the Fair City on Tayside. Euna Scott and John Summers are great champions of their city who ensured that we fully understood what is taking place there. We noted many future plans and changes, both in town centre and parks, as well as increasing levels of community support. The glorious Branklyn Gardens provided the perfect finale to the tour, where we also met the Provost and heard of his support for community orchards in the town.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- A tremendous display of baskets throughout the high visibility areas of the city, all very healthy and full; they are perhaps a little short of flower, but given the dire weather in the area this is understandable.
- We also appreciated the new planting scheme at Needless Road, with herbaceous material – especially *Agapanthus*, replacing bedding in the centre, and the central sculptural feature with climbing plants.
- The Curling display is very good, as are the many residential gardens for example on Glasgow Road, Edinburgh Road and Oakbank Road.
- The lovely Rodney Gardens and exceptional Branklyn Gardens would rightly be highlights of any visit to the city.
- Business sponsorship of baskets and floral displays is maintained at a high level; the grounds at Aviva are also very well kept.
- Green spaces around the city are cared for well, with grass areas tidy and many attractive, well-treed areas in parks and verges.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although we have noted the health of your baskets and containers, the impression in dull weather lacks some colour; the begonia bedding was bright and cheerful at Barrack Street corner, and so perhaps you should consider a wider range of plant material in your containers to take account of possible variations in the weather.
- The dolphin beds at the leisure pool were poor; *Ageratum* is notoriously weather dependent and the *Begonia semperflorens* had not filled in; fresh thinking is needed here on your plant selection. There was an equally dull floral bed of geraniums (on Glasgow Road?).
- Overall we encourage you to continue increasing the use of herbaceous planting.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- An excellent presentation (by Kim) at the Web Walk recycling centre was enjoyed; you have tremendous standards of recycling and the '3 Rs' are very much embedded in Perth and Kinross.
- Street furniture is good and there are many examples of appropriate local art and sculpture, with the thistles, the Curling, the pillars at St John Street, tree grids and many other prominent examples during the tour.
- Overall the city is clean and tidy, and the 'dog' 'litter-bin', 'crisp packet' and other walking adverts for good behaviour clearly help your campaigns in this regard.

### *Areas for development*

- Greyfriars Cemetery has some potential as a wildlife feature, but needs more effective management to achieve success in this regard. Interpretation was present but was brief and again could be improved.
- We were surprised that more was not conveyed of your wildlife heritage during the tour and in the portfolio.
- There was a little litter in some areas and prominent graffiti on a bus shelter; perhaps these areas and also the gum on the expensive paving in the town should be prioritised for the future.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- You have a wide range of exciting developments planned, notably that at Riverside Park, and we look forward to visiting this in the future – especially the renewed heather collections.
- Despite funding reduction, the structure of the 'beautiful Perth' project should ensure its long-term stability and progress.

### *Areas for development*

- Although community participation is high, we do feel that we should have been able to engage with more of the community as part of the judging tour – most notably the young people.
- We saw schools from the vehicle and heard of their gardening but saw nothing first-hand and met no children. We also feel that the tour was a little imbalanced in terms of who we met and who spoke to us; you could make better use of the on-the-ground practitioners.
- There should also be consideration given to getting more of your community partners to meet the judges and explain their role in beautiful Perth.

## **Pitlochry, Scotland Champion of Champions - Gold**

This Perthshire town is famed for tourism and the weather did its best to help on judging day, with sunshine throughout the tour. We viewed lovely residential and community gardens and at the final presentation met a number of the key volunteers from the Pitlochry in Bloom team, who work so hard to maintain the standards for which you are renowned. Features such as the Explorers Garden strongly emphasise the local character and heritage of the town, and create such relevant links with the Bloom campaign. The judges look forward to returning for a relaxed visit in the future!

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- A fine visual impact is made in the town, with hanging baskets appropriately placed, good planters at the war memorial, colourful planting in the war memorial gardens and many other areas of colour; the additional use of wrought iron structures is a local touch of some character adding to the display.

- Many attractive residential and community gardens were seen and passed; we must in particular note the Irvine Garden at the Community Hospital, Trevor and Nikki Hayes' garden, gardens on Tummelbank, Aldour Court and others.
- We very much enjoyed the visit to Explorers Garden, with far too much there too appreciate in the time available.
- Lovely gardens were viewed at Atholl Palace Hotel, McKays on the High Street, Victoria's Restaurant, MacDonalds Restaurant, the Putting Green and other locations in the town; sponsored displays at the Co-operative store were also good.

#### *Areas for development*

- The floral display is good; however, some of the containers were a little thin – particularly those on the arcade; also weeds were quite prominent in the bedding and new perennial border at the war memorial. Efforts should be made to improve upon both of these if feasible.
- We briefly visited two open spaces – both tidily maintained but with areas requiring some work, such as removal of dead conifers etc. We do feel that perhaps Armoury Park should be on the judging route given its prominence as a new development in the town.
- There are also clearly some businesses not joining in with sponsorship – the garage being most obvious; again, perhaps efforts could be made to get them on board.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The presentation at the waste recycling site was excellent and we strongly approve of the green waste compost made freely available to local residents.
- Your heritage as a tourist town is emphasised throughout, with 'Big Tree Country' a particularly strong feature; the Explorers Garden is again a significant feature in this regard.
- Yellow rattle is being established in your wild meadows to control grass growth, and you have sensible plans to extend this by natural seed dispersal.

#### *Areas for development*

- There is a clear pride in your town, but it does also need to take account of some of the less floral requirements; we noted graffiti at the war memorial and small amounts of fly-posting around, both of which should be actively challenged.
- Street furniture was good, though in need of a freshening up in some areas.
- We also feel that the high street should be part of the judging tour, to allow us to appreciate the condition of the main tourist areas of the town.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Bloom is such an established feature of your lovely town that it is now fully part of its fabric; we were pleased to see the strong support of your local councillor during the visit.
- You have excellent levels of engagement with the tourist related businesses of the town and, judging from the portfolio, also with the local schools.
- Fundraising is good and aspects such as your thrift sale and Easter egg baskets are novel and effective.

#### *Areas for development*

- We are a little concerned that everything seems to be funding driven and feel that a prime example of this being inappropriate is the stated need for funding for a bug hotel in the wildlife garden. These are features usually created from pallets and waste materials and require little more than concentrated effort to be achieved.

- The judging tour would benefit from meeting other partners in the initiative, with the absence of young people, school gardens etc particularly notable. Perhaps this could be taken into consideration in the future.

### **Plymouth, South West Coastal Over 12k - Silver Gilt**

This south western coastal city with its maritime history provided an interesting and varied tour. There was plenty of colour and innovative planting in many locations. There was good council support for continuing the campaign, with the added involvement of volunteers and other agencies at various locations throughout the city. The marina area with its ancient history, the Hoe with its spectacular views and Mount Edgcumbe Park were special features of high merit. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to return to visit areas, which were seen briefly during our stay, at our leisure.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Many of the guest houses and hotels seen had very good displays such as the Duke of Cornwall and the various winners of the Best Street entry.
- There were many colourful tubs, hanging baskets and troughs throughout the city.
- The Royal British Legion display was highly appropriate though the plant density could have been improved.
- The Welcome to Plymouth display on the bank was a novel idea to be seen by visitors on approaching ferries.
- There were many good examples of sustainable planting throughout the City though these varied in quality. We noted further planting proposals.
- The community area adjacent to the Harbour Sports location was a delight. We admired the interest of the residents and the It's Your Neighbourhood award.
- The Elizabethan Garden was a hidden treasure. The formal beds might have better been planted with herbs to give a more historical and natural feel. However the colour did provide public interest and the mulberry tree was superb.
- The displays at Edgcumbe House Gardens were superb and our guide very knowledgeable, certainly a place to be revisited.
- The attention paid to the importance of trees throughout the city was notable.

##### *Areas for development*

- The sustainable planting displays passed on the dual carriageway had been supplemented by fringe annual bedding and in our opinion this spoilt the planting. We considered that the sustainable planting was more appropriate in its own right.
- The bed adjacent to Harbour Sports would have been more appropriately planted with sustainable varieties and shrubs to give height.
- Whilst appreciating the impact of the troughs on the inner circle road we felt the trough colour spoilt the whole appearance of the scheme and more should be done to enhance their appeal. More trailing subjects might help.
- The hanging basket colour scheme in the harbour area did not fit in with the surroundings. There was too much white in the content and the effect was lost owing to the colour of the buildings.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- There appeared to be many conservation initiatives throughout the city. We noted the plant count on the banks adjacent to The Hoe and the interest shown in this development and the wildlife trail around the city appeared particularly interesting.
- The displays and initiatives shown to us on resource management were very good and well demonstrated. The provision of electric vehicles and the graffiti removal teams were good initiatives. You scored highly on this aspect, particularly the way the vehicles were demonstrated to us.
- The heritage of the city and its maritime importance was well demonstrated particularly by our guide in the harbour area. The use of artefacts and statues of local heroes and others is to be applauded (e.g. the Totem Pole, Sir Francis Drake and Brunel).
- Generally the city was clean and tidy but we did see some evidence of litter in odd locations and cigarette ends were also visible.
- Your hard landscaping detail is good with the protection of original cobbles and appropriate new paving; also notable is the importance given to listed status on historical buildings.
- The barbeque pads and bins on The Hoe were a good idea and it was well managed.
- Seats, signs and street furniture generally appeared well maintained with some unusual seat features. The heritage benches were excellent.

### *Areas for development*

- Whilst much information was given on the conservation work undertaken by the council and other groups, no relevant visits were made to elaborate on this important element. You should consider this in future tours of the city.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The presentation at the beginning was very informative. We were particularly impressed with the school project and the childrens' reference book and how it was described by them.
- The initiator of the Maker View Project should be highly commended for his achievements. This scheme should be the catalyst for others in the city. We were very impressed with his enthusiasm and interest in the horticulture and conservation. Similarly the adjacent project, Digging it, at the allotment is also to be applauded.
- Publicity for the campaign was evident on banners, posters, buses and in many other areas. The various initiatives such as Love Your Parks week and others all helped your promotion.
- Your local competition appeared well supported.
- The funding scheme by the Plymouth Community Homes was an excellent scheme along with the Stepping Stones initiative.

### *Areas for development*

- We did not receive an itinerary describing our tour. This was an omission and would have made it easier for us when detailing our report to identify specific locations visited.
- Whilst accepting council support is good and it drives the campaign this may not be possible in future years. You may wish to consider forming a Bloom committee with more voluntary community contribution to help the funding and future leadership of your campaign.

## Richmond Upon Thames, London City - Silver Gilt

As a first time entry into the RHS Britain in Bloom Finals, the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames proved themselves to have grasped the mantle of representing London in Bloom in the competition admirably. This green borough with its many fine parks and open spaces, continues to experiment with bold new initiatives to not only increase biodiversity but create sustainable planting using both flowers and vegetables. They are encouraging by example the gardeners of the borough to engage in community gardening on a wide scale. Of special note were the allotments at Manor Road, the involvement of the Ham United Group and the work to restore Terrace Gardens, together with the nature conservation work at Crane Park. Well done!

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The restoration of the fountain at York House gardens together with the development of the sustainable borders has been a great achievement and really has improved the horticulture and brought the history alive.
- The excellent business contribution made in Church Street, Twickenham together with the considerable support offered from businesses across the borough, including the many public houses with their vibrant and colourful floral displays.
- The gardens competition contributes greatly to the Bloom effort and it was great to meet and view the winning garden at 51 Fulwell Park Avenue; fantastic array of plants tastefully displayed in quite a small space.
- The allotments at Manor Road were a pleasure to visit with a fantastic variety of flowers, fruit and vegetables grown by a wide cross section of the community. The visit to the trading hut and the knowledgeable and enthusiastic committee members we met on the tour are to be congratulated for their commitment and dedication to their plots.
- The visit to Terrace Gardens to view the recent restoration and ongoing development was inspirational, this included the newly planted herbaceous/perennial mixed border and the innovative use of vegetables used as horticultural features.

#### *Areas for development*

- It was generally felt by the judges the borough lacked a central wow factor; many areas were very much up to standard but perhaps lacked a little innovation and impact. Perhaps this could be addressed by the incorporation into the planted areas of some high impact feature or novel way of exhibiting the considerable wealth of heritage in the borough.
- Could the expert allotment growers be asked to help plant and look after the vegetable beds in Terrace Gardens, it seems such a shame to not capitalise on their undoubted skill and knowledge.
- Interpretation was being used on the new herbaceous planting in Terrace Gardens; could similar interpretation be developed for the vegetable beds? This would help visitors, and especially children, to gain a better understanding of the relevance and importance of such initiatives.
- Continue to develop the Gardens Competition and sell it to as large an audience as you can.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The visit to Archdeacon Cambridge School and the guided tour by the children showing the judges the many and varied areas for wildlife and nature conservation together with the sustainable and productive areas of planting was a pleasure.
- The wildflower areas in Crane Park and the expert information provided on the tour by the representative from BTCV was both interesting and informative, it was obvious the volunteers working on this project contributed greatly to its overall success.

- The work of Thames 21 as outlined in the portfolio in clearing the towpath was another example of the community coming together to enhance and improve their environment for others to enjoy.
- The Adopt a Tree scheme is a superb initiative .

#### *Areas for development*

- With so many environmental initiatives going on in the borough it would have been appropriate to meet one or two more of these groups and talk to them about what they are doing to improve the environment.
- The wildflower meadow is such a good way of creating areas rich in biodiversity; could this be replicated in other areas of the borough perhaps, with some form of appropriate interpretation?
- Some of the street furniture was lacking in maintenance and although it is accepted this may be a deliberate policy to allow natural weathering there is also a pertinent case for some form of sensitive preventative maintenance to prevent expensive items decaying before their useful life expectancy.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The work of the Bloom group to secure funding including the considerable contribution from local employer Ebay and the many other businesses supporting the group together with the partnership-working with the Borough Council is a fantastic achievement and the group are to be congratulated.
- The establishment of the Gardens Competition is a great way of engaging with all sectors of the local community.
- The work of the Ham United Group in raising awareness and funding for various projects is a great way of engaging with the local community; this combined with the large number of friends groups, all aids community participation.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although there obviously is an active Bloom group it was quite difficult to assess exactly what they did apart from raise funds; it would aid the entry if a more detailed schedule of their involvement could be explained to the judges and they should become more involved in the actual tour.
- The Growing Grants scheme for schools is a great way of being able to promote school gardening and although we toured a school, on future tours it would be beneficial to visit an area where these grants had been used and see first-hand the value placed by the schools on the Bloom group's efforts.
- It is very evident that the Bloom initiative is proving very beneficial to the borough and it would be useful to be able to put a monetary value on the investment (it is accepted this would be a bit of an estimate; however with such a proactive and supportive council it would be of considerable interest and may help ward off any potential future cuts to their contribution/support).

### **Rosliston, East Midlands Village - Silver Gilt**

Rosliston is a rural village, not far from Burton-on-Trent in Derbyshire, with an agricultural and mining heritage which is celebrated in several of the displays throughout the village. The village falls within the National Forest Area and the forestry centre located within the village provides an excellent educational, recreational and conservation resource. Rosliston is developing a good mix of permanent planting and colourful seasonal displays which greatly enhance the local environment. The commitment of all connected to the Bloom campaign was evident throughout the judging tour and this will ensure the village continues to benefit in the years ahead.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The floral displays in the centre of the village are to be applauded. Of particular note is the area around the village hall with a good balance of excellent quality, well maintained seasonal bedding and some innovative sustainable planting including The Stumpery and the Dry Garden.
- The resident's gardens / areas seen by the judges throughout the tour are to be commended. In particular the Yew Tree Gardens area with its magnificent trees, very well kept gardens and attractive sustainable planting on an area which was previously a difficult to manage grassed area.
- Only one word describes the floral display on the entrance to Chapman's Garden Centre – WOW!! At this focal point this sort of display is most appropriate.
- The Rosliston Forestry Centre is an excellent recreational and educational facility. The new 'Herbie' garden in particular with a layout of a human body containing medicinal herbs which can be used to treat ailments of that particular part of the body is most innovative. All connected with this project are to be congratulated.

### *Areas for development*

- The permanent planting in the new verge-side beds on Linton Road are a good example of a colourful, attractive, sustainable display however, the judges felt that the formal purple brick edging was inappropriate to the rural nature of this particular part of the village.
- The primary school and Bulls Head pub are important contributors to the village's Bloom campaign; aim to find ways to use the Bloom team's expertise at these locations so that the quality of the floral containers on the buildings is consistent with those elsewhere in the village.
- The landscaping at the front of the Co-operative Food store could be much improved to create a colourful attractive area as demonstrated throughout other areas of the village. Seek to work in partnership with the Co-op to explore ways of enhancing this major hub in the village.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The village was extremely clean with no evidence of litter, dog fouling or graffiti seen throughout the judging route.
- The efforts to reduce peat in the compost mix used for the floral containers and the incorporation of water retaining gel to reduce watering.
- The celebration of the local heritage in the planting displays.
- The use of pine cones under the trees in Yew Tree Gardens to create an attractive natural art feature.
- The Bee project undertaken at the primary school.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue with the composting / recycling initiatives and the reduction of peat within the compost mixes seeking advice if necessary from the RHS Advisory Service.
- Investigate possible areas which could be used to encourage wildflowers such as the boundary of the play area site, linking this with the primary school to involve the children in developing this.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The Adopt a Bed scheme operating throughout the village which sees residents taking on the regular maintenance for schemes implemented by the Bloom group.
- The support of the local press and radio in helping to promote the work of the Bloom group and encouraging wider community support for the local campaign.

- The funding and support which the Bloom group receives to secure its ongoing work. In particular Chapman's Garden Centre is to be recognised for the work it does to support the group through donations of plant material etc. Its staging, organisation and sponsorship of the annual flower and vegetable show helps to sustain a good community spirit.

#### *Areas for development*

- Seek to build on the obvious enthusiasm of the children at the primary school by continuing to engage with other children and young people outside the school environment to ensure ongoing development and continuity of the Bloom campaign in the future.

### **Rothesay, Scotland Coastal Up to 12k - Silver**

Leaving the city behind with a short ferry journey to this picturesque island, visitors and the judges are welcomed to Rothesay where a different way of life provides a delightful experience. A waste not want not approach led the judges to name the friendly volunteers as the Rothesay Wombles, helped so well by their own version of Uncle Bulgaria. Here the Bloom campaign brings the efforts of many groups together. The hidden gem of Ardenraig is a joy to see and impressive work is done to educate children to understand and appreciate their environment and to take an active part in improving it.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Superb plantings and glasshouse displays at Ardenraig, with the national collection of *Mamillaria* in safe hands.
- Lades Corner lawns and borders were the highlight of the Pier Gardens.
- The planters outside the tartan shop were a welcome bright spot.
- Make-over projects such as the Bridgend Street, the Watergate Garden designed by schoolchildren and the Lade Corner site.
- Some excellent lawns, with very good attention to edging.
- Mount Stuart's rock and water garden, together with good examples of some unusual trees and shrubs, is a gardeners' delight.

##### *Areas for development*

- Bedding displays need a higher planting density especially in key areas; the difference in quality between the displays at Ardenraig and the ones in the main part of the town are all too obvious.
- If the costs of good bedding are too high, consider converting some beds to permanent plantings, using maritime species to give a relaxed seaside feel. Consider surfacing some beds with gravel and pebbles and use grasses among the plantings to give a year round display.
- The compost in the floral towers is clearly exhausted and consequently the plants are miserable. One effect of having high rainfall is that plant nutrients are soon leached from compost in containers. This needs to be renewed by the implementation of a feeding programme.
- With the planned refurbishment of the built environment in the town, there would be an opportunity to encourage businesses to include facilities for plantings and floral enhancements from the outset.
- The new floral clock may need to have a low retaining wall built around the bed in order to get the height needed.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- "Wombling" at its best; the imaginative reuse of waste materials is evident everywhere.

- Every opportunity was taken to compost greenwaste and other recyclables were separated at the bring sites.
- Bute Produce were conscious of the need to minimise inputs and also generated electricity from a wind turbine.
- Anti dog-fouling and beach habitat quality were well covered, helped by the Glenburn Hotel's adoption of the Beach Watch scheme and Sandra's proactive programmes.

#### *Areas for development*

- Grass edges have been damaged in several areas by weedkiller spray drift, but pavement weeds are still present in many places.
- Street furniture is being renewed and hopefully this trend will be continued to replace the older benches with lower maintenance replacements.
- The judges would like to know more about the marine conservation measures.
- Children's murals such as the Butterflies and the Bottletop RRR display have suffered some weather damage. It would be a little disheartening for the children if this is not rectified or perhaps they can create something new.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Good depth of children's involvement, with the early award of an Eco Schools Green Flag at the Joint Campus. Eye-catching butterfly theme.
- Good relationships with the local press, resulting in full coverage of events and news items.
- Good interaction to promote learning, including apprenticeships, Bute Produce Fairy Berries and on-the-job learning of landscape skills.
- The generosity and goodwill of local residents and their concern for people and their heritage was commendable.

#### *Areas for development*

- The Bloom campaign provides an opportunity to attract attention to your achievements. Explore ways of publicising yourselves, such as the use of a logo, which could be designed through a children's competition. This would help you to identify your inputs and help the public appreciate what you do. This in turn gives you more leverage when it comes to asking the council to increase the support that they give you.
- Look at fundraising activities.
- A plan for future projects helps to focus attention on progress and also helps to identify the needs for resources.

### **Rustington, South & South East Town - Gold & Category Winner**

If anyone wants to see just what a community can achieve by working together then go no further than the idyllic south coast village of Rustington. From the minute you enter this large, yet close-knit community, you know you are entering somewhere very special. Shingle beaches overlooking the Isle of Wight, carefully looked after by volunteer wardens are the front to a community that cares for its environment and caters for the needs of all its residents. The many sustainable and floral displays are admirably provided and looked after by local nurserymen Ferrings and are of the highest standards possible. No stone is left unturned in the passion for providing something the area can be justifiably proud of. Britain in Bloom judges often see the best of British horticulture, but nothing can compare with Rustington; a real gem and worthy Gold medal and Category Winner in the 2011 UK Finals.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were extremely impressed with the quality of the planting and the obvious aftercare provided by the supplying nursery. If there is anywhere in the UK which can equal or better this quality the judges have yet to find it; the professionalism and absolute dedication by Ferrings Nurseries has to be seen to be believed, there really is no other word to describe this partnership and the end result other than superb, very well done!
- On every street corner focal point floral displays abound. This is complemented by the quality of the grass cutting and general streetscene.
- Not only were new varieties of seasonal bedding being used but they were flourishing, leading to plantings which were innovative and stimulating, with well thought-out designs and colour combinations.
- The impressive way the various community initiatives have been integrated into the overall planting schemes, such as the Brownies and Scouts as well as the superb sustainable planting carried out by Rustington Horticultural Association.

### *Areas for development*

- Although it is recognised by the judges that the seasonal bedding displays are some of the best ever seen and there are already some great examples of sustainable planting starting to be developed, there is scope to increase the level of sustainable planting to compliment the displays and add another dimension to the planted areas. If this were done with the same degree of professional aftercare shown by the staff from Ferrings the effect could be tremendous.
- The efforts being made to establish new trees in the street scene are to be commended; could this be built on with the introduction of further street trees of a similar quality to those already established?
- Several areas of innovation in design were already in place, such as at the Chaucer Avenue Memorial; could this be extended out to other areas, celebrating the history and heritage of the village?

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The efforts being made at the new wildlife garden at Woodlands Recreation Ground to introduce sustainable planting to encourage wildlife and various habitat areas such as log piles, insect hotels and bird boxes.
- The plans in place to plant a wildflower area to compliment the new wildlife garden and the involvement of local allotment holders to grow replacement seedling trees to replace any lost in this year's spring drought.
- The excellent beach shingle habitat, with a rich and varied range of coastal plants being encouraged and cared for by the Beach Wardens, led by Marigold Brown.
- The superb maintenance of all the street furniture is to be commended, from litter bins provided and cared for by Arun District Council to the donated seats maintained by the Parish Council, everything was very well presented and appropriate to the area.
- The village was extremely clean and tidy with no evidence of litter, dog fouling or other anti-social activities seen anywhere, congratulations to all concerned.
- The excellent levels of recycling are a credit to the local people and the District Council.

### *Areas for development*

- The plans to introduce a further interpretation board depicting the marine environment along the shingle beach would enhance the area and be a great way of celebrating the rich environment.
- On future tours it would be good to gain a greater insight into efforts to reduce the currently high levels of watering to maintain the floral displays.

- Continue to develop wildlife-friendly areas, perhaps introduce an element of pollinator-friendly planting into some of the displays; perhaps this could form part of a demonstration plot or garden, providing ideas local gardeners could take home. There is a list of Plants for Pollinators on the RHS website.
- Continue to develop features celebrating the heritage of the area or adding a degree of art into the landscape.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The involvement of the Youth Offending Team and inmates from Ford Open Prison is a great way to bring in additional resources as well as provide a link between offenders and the community.
- The local business support for the various Bloom initiatives is superb and without it the group could not function.
- The various community initiatives taking place, from the children and schools, Guides and Brownies through to the Horticultural Society and the church volunteers at both the Methodist and the Parish Church, a real community effort by all.
- The impressive fundraising initiatives raising over £2,500 and the considerable sponsorship from regional and local businesses is to be applauded, as is the introduction of a Rustington in Bloom maintenance van.
- The Design a Flower Bed competition and the active Gardens Competition both engage with and encourage the community to get involved in the wider campaign.

### *Areas for development*

- The excellent initiative to involve the Rustington Horticultural Society in developing a sustainable planting scheme in the village is a great way of tapping into this wealth of local horticultural talent. Can this be utilised to develop other areas of sustainable planting that may be eventually adopted by some of the other local groups or volunteers?
- When a community has reached this level of achievement it is very hard to see how further developments may take place. Networking with other similar groups and sharing ideas would be a great way of gaining new ideas and also allows other groups to learn from the good practices you have developed.
- The current excellent relationship with the Town Council is crucial to the Bloom effort and although it is recognised both work together extremely well, it would be helpful on future judges visits to include a financial statement for the group demonstrating who funds individual areas of operation. This should include amounts raised through sponsorship and individual contributions.
- Many groups keep a record of the number of volunteers and the amount of time they contribute to the overall campaign, be it administration or physical work. This is often used to justify grant funding bids and it could be an advantage to the group to record this information. We'd recommend Rustington start to do this, if not already doing so.

## **Saltburn by the Sea, Northumbria Coastal Up to 12k - Silver**

Interesting local and natural history with iconic views of the recently restored Water Balance Cliff Railway leave lasting impressions of this beautiful coastal town. It was great to see the enthusiastic volunteers and the fun they are having with a relaxed approach that works well for them. Highlights of our tour included the valley and its conservation and educational facilities and the inventive artwork from the half-size engine and model pier to statues and mosaics. The judges were exceptionally warmly welcomed and given a memorable taste of the community's hospitality and a sense of the pride they have in Saltburn.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The creation of the colourful and welcoming area at the railway station, including the new clock tower roundabout.
- The range of flowers, fruit and vegetables grown on the slopes of the Zetland Allotments.
- The transformation at the police station, where Stuart and his helpers had created a bright, welcoming garden of well-maintained annuals, perennials and lawns.
- Lauriston Care Home had used a wide variety of plants together with creative hard landscaping to make a colourful and interesting garden for the residents.

### *Areas for development*

- Aim to revitalise and re-launch the garden competition to increase interest and awareness amongst residents.
- The judges understand the difficulties posed by council cost savings, but there are areas of planting and maintenance that would create a much better effect with a little more input. It may be possible to raise funds to pay the council for extra services or to provide displays yourselves. Alternatively, volunteers could take over maintenance once displays have been planted.
- See if you can recruit someone with the horticultural knowledge to fine-tune your displays, to replace the lady that moved to Scotland.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Excellent proactive work by Barbara in waste management, with only 11 % going to landfill, as recognised by the recent APSE award. Good compost recycling scheme.
- Good understanding of the ecological management of the valley.
- Art in the landscape was well represented by statues, memorials and mosaics which recall the local heritage.
- Good use of volunteers working alongside the council to achieve a litter-free town and beach.

### *Areas for development*

- Look for sites that would convert from the present high cost/high maintenance planting of annuals to wildflower or meadow mixtures.
- There are some aspects of management that would benefit from more attention to detail, such as renovation/maintenance of street furniture, roadside weed control and graffiti removal.
- Despite the 'Pull up on sight' policy, the Himalayan balsam appears to be spreading. Review the control programme.
- The planting of ornamental perennial grasses within some of the existing beds would reduce the need for annual replacement costs and labour.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The enthusiasm and infectious good humour of the Bloom group was a pleasure to encounter.
- Good partnership-working between the Bloom group, the council and other organisations such as the Friends of the Valley.
- Gratifying response from sponsors and residents to fundraising appeals and events. Successful results from grant applications.
- Excellent educational facilities at the Valley.
- Useful contributions from other organisations, including the prison service, Community Payback Scheme and Groundwork.

### *Areas for development*

- A visit to a school and some more information on the involvement of young people would have been welcome.
- Keep exploring funding sources to ensure viability of future projects and to consolidate existing ones.
- The community at Laurel Road were setting a good example for self-sufficiency and local ownership in planting and maintaining the roadside areas. Could this initiative be promoted and replicated perhaps by encouraging and supporting groups entry in RHS It's Your Neighbourhood?

## **Scotlandwell, Scotland Small Village - Silver Gilt**

This small village in Scotland has great community support for the campaign. There have been many developments in the last two years and you should be applauded for your efforts. The enthusiasm of our hosts was infectious and their hospitality was very enjoyable. Well done on your efforts to improve your village, we left with fond memories.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The tree planting of willows and birch alongside the track to The Moss Brae was very good and was developing well.
- The Kirk tree planting of 999 tree specimens was impressive and you should be congratulated on this initiative.
- The Well Country Inn displays were colourful and imaginative.
- The varied beds around the Well Garden were highly effective and we were pleased to see the hollies had been removed.
- The combinations of colours in the baskets and tubs and other containers were well balanced.
- The displays at The Moss Brae were highly effective.
- The Jam Valley initiative was innovative and highly appropriate for the location.
- The combination of sustainable planting in most locations was highly effective and the self seeding elements seem to work well.
- The Bach Flower Project to link species and educate people of their benefits is highly appropriate in the present climate. Good to see a small village promoting this initiative.
- Residential gardens and areas seen were of a standard consistent with a small village.

#### *Areas for development*

- You should be careful with the area of Himalayan balsam; it can become intrusive. You should pull it out before seeding to avoid further problems.
- The bed at the edge of the new housing development would be better planted with more suitable perennial species.
- The tubs alongside the car sales area are an improvement but we still consider more could be done to soften this area.
- At the eastern boundary the areas around the trees could be mulched more successfully, to prevent strimmer damage and ease maintenance.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The surveys on flora and fauna were admirable and should be extended.
- The Bee Aware Campaign was very informative and along with the Bug Hotel provides a habitat for important pollinators.
- The village was immaculate, no problems here.

- Whilst we accept it is difficult for recycling in parts of the village, we did appreciate the efforts made in the pub to recycle batteries, stamps and spectacles.
- There were several notice boards in the village to keep the residents informed about the campaign, including the pub.

#### *Areas for development*

- The Well Garden mineral water is an important element of the village heritage and this should be better promoted.
- You should consider researching the possibility of a water turbine to harness power and possibly raise income. An engineer could advise on this matter.
- We noted the heritage elements in the village and felt more could be done to improve this aspect.
- It would be highly appropriate to introduce more agricultural artefacts into the village scene; the cart was a great example.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- We wish you well with the fundraising for the Wash House renovation.
- There was obvious support from the majority of the community and we admired your Adopt a Tub/Basket scheme.
- The Buy Local Produce leaflet is highly appropriate for this small community; a great initiative.
- The presentation was informative but could have been improved with some form of images (e.g. display boards with photos, slide show of digital photographs etc).

#### *Areas for development*

- The community herb garden was a great idea but we would suggest you consider the introduction of an allotment area in the village.
- Your funding and support proposals are admirable however, these seem centred on the well area and perhaps a wider range of fundraising could be considered.

### **Shadwell, Yorkshire Large Village - Silver Gilt**

For a first time entry in the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals, Shadwell demonstrated an admirable understanding of the ethos of the campaign. Enhancement projects were identified, planned and executed professionally and with a laudable regard for the end result. In the nine years since the conception of the Bloom group, it is no exaggeration to say that the village has been transformed, not only in appearance, but also socially, with a new community spirit and less anti-social behaviour. There is now a genuine village feel and the slow absorption into the City of Leeds is no longer apparent to the visitor. The engagement of school children was emphasised by the presence in almost every window in the village of 800 reproductions of posters made for the children's competition and it was clear that knowledge of the Bloom activities extends right through the village.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the number of sites that had been adopted and enhanced by the Bloom group. A good range of plants had been used, mixing perennials and annuals to good effect, with a special mention for the school and bus terminus beds and focal point at the village hall.
- The very pleasing balance of recreational and ornamental features at the play park.
- The strong support from sponsored baskets, beds and private gardens.
- The enthusiastic adoption of the allotments, with hopes for an additional area.
- The pleasant and cared-for atmosphere at the remembrance garden.

- The active tree planting programme.

#### *Areas for development*

- Continue to refine plant choice to best match particular growing conditions e.g. dry shaded sites. The long-term performance of some of the annuals may be improved by changing to different varieties and by a better feeding regime.
- Improve impact and plant performance by moving towards larger containers.
- The impact at the village hall could be further enhanced by decorating the building itself, using hay-racks and perhaps more hanging baskets to soften the dark stone frontage.
- With so many good residential gardens, could the Gardens Competition be more effectively used to raise awareness and participation levels?

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The very clean environment thanks to the public awareness created by the clean-up campaigns.
- The good composting facilities and the scheme for recycling compost at the allotments.
- The awareness of the ecology and the careful planning for the future at Dan Quarry.
- The change in use and renovation of an existing building to provide excellent facilities for the active and committed Scouts and Guides.
- The provision of bird boxes, planting of native trees from the Woodland Trust/RHS scheme and leaving some hedgerows uncut on a 3-year cycle.
- The on-going fencing programme and care and maintenance of the old stone walls.

#### *Areas for development*

- Progress the plan to collect rainwater, particularly from the Recreation Hall, for use on the allotments.
- Dan Quarry provides an excellent educational opportunity and the judges will be interested to see how the well thought out management plan resolves the conflict between preservation and exploitation.
- The wildlife area at the school will benefit from some intervention to make it more of an educational asset.
- Keep up your dialogue with the church authorities by trying to demonstrate the benefits of extending the biodiversity and reducing the sterility of the St Paul's churchyard. This can be achieved by some well-chosen new plantings and a review of the grass management regime.
- To help preserve your independent village character, look for opportunities to celebrate your natural heritage, such as farming and quarrying.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- A truly community-based entry, with contributions from so many people and organisations, coordinated by the hard working, hands-on Bloom group.
- The adoption of a large number of projects spread right through the village.
- The judges have never seen so many Bloom posters in windows, with the primary school posters in almost every window.
- Enthusing the neighbouring Slaid Hill community.
- Impressive funding record, with donations from various hopefully sustainable sources, including in-kind donations.

### *Areas for development*

- You have set a tremendous example in your area. Aim to blow your own trumpet and spread the message to more communities by increased contact with the media and through your new website.
- The judges were made aware of the good relations with the primary school and it would have been helpful to meet some of the children at the school.

## **Southport, North West Coastal Over 12k - Silver**

This western coastal town with its famous Victorian history provided a varied and interesting itinerary. There is a pride in many areas shown by the interest of the various community volunteers. In addition to the historical significance, we were shown new horticultural and redevelopment initiatives that will secure a future for this town's tourism potential. There is an excellent treescape throughout the area, interspersed through many open spaces and parks. There are also the renowned Dunes which stretch for many miles and are a conservation area of national importance treasured by local residents.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- A well produced floral clock and carpet bedding
- The Birkdale Community Group is to be commended for its efforts in the village. The beds around the trees and the displays on business premises were a delight. The Cheese Centre and Gastro were particularly attractive.
- The proposals to re-establish the herbaceous border at Rotten Row were to be applauded. It will need careful planning to introduce the right varieties and take out more invasive species. It was great to see the local school involved along with the friends group.
- The new beds outside the Lady Maris Pilkington Centre were an excellent example of sustainable planting. This was repeated at some other locations throughout the town.
- The vases on Lord Street and the floral beds at the Botanic Garden and Kings Garden were very colourful but you might wish to consider rationalising these features.
- There appeared to be an ambitious tree planting programme and the treescape throughout the area was well established with many varied species.
- Many commercial properties and pubs had good displays, in particular The Auberge, the hairdressing salon and also the Windmill.

#### *Areas for development*

- The Fernery and the Botanic Garden were unique; however some form of interpretation or a leaflet would enhance the visit.
- We recognise the problems with many of the hanging baskets and the steps being taken. The group at Birkdale Station may wish to consider a self-watering style of basket, which may help to reduce the amount of watering – an Awards for All grant could be considered.
- The Chinese restaurant area in the centre of Rotten Row detracted from the rest of the area.
- We noticed on our way to the Memorial that many of the *Carpinus betulus* trees were stressed.
- No visit nor mention was made of an allotment; it would have been helpful to know about how you support his area.
- There were weeds around tree bases in many areas and on some veranda roofs.
- 'The Old Ship' was all plastic flowers; try to encourage them to use the real thing.
- The boat on the Seabank Road roundabout could have been planted with seasonal bedding to enhance the permanent display.
- Standards of maintenance throughout the town were variable; strive to ensure they are of a consistently higher standard.

- We noted the application for a grant for the rose garden in Hesketh Park. This is badly in need of a redesign but also there is a need to establish whether roses are suitable for this location as existing specimens did not appear to be doing well.
- The floral bedding in the Botanic Garden is very colourful but a little overpowering; you may wish to look at some rationalisation.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The Eco Centre was a great project in the right place with cycle links and a park and ride scheme.
- The work by the Civic Society is good and the Town Trail is first-class.
- The open air theatre at Hesketh Park was a good idea.
- Management of street furniture was generally acceptable. We were impressed with the high standard of paving.

### *Areas for development*

- We were disappointed there was no appropriate officer at The Dunes location, to give us more information on this area of national importance.
- We observed several areas with litter and cigarette ends, particularly the pub used for the presentation.
- Considering the importance of the veranda in Lord Street, we felt that many of the pillars needed repainting. As this is a conservation area we assume the Planning Department could serve enforcement notices.
- Some standardisation of colour of the street furniture could be considered.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Southport Flower Show continues to thrive with a very enthusiastic Chief Executive. Keep up the good work here as it encourages tourism.
- Nice to see Tesco and Dobbies working with their local communities.
- Good to see the scout group involved in the Botanic Garden.
- The Birkdale Community Association's work at the station and the improvements to buildings and horticultural elements were first class.
- It was good to see the Rotary and the Lions clubs and the Soroptomists and others involved in local projects.
- The Wesley Street initiative is a major success; the businesses involved are to be congratulated.
- We were pleased to have a Cabinet member as part of our escorting group and we also appreciated the local Ward Councillor's interest in Hesketh Park. This showed a genuine pride in supporting Southport as seen in other people we met.
- The unique presentation was a welcome change. The Bedford Park picnic blanket layout was clever and made the point very well.
- It was good to see the developments and proposals in Hesketh Park with the local volunteers and friends doing a good job, especially at the rockery. The fountain reinstatement is good. The cafe proposals were ambitious. Keep up the momentum on the involvement of local schools.

### *Areas for development*

- The Churchtown Village Garden is a gem, including the work with local schools; however, the central area needs further thought. You could develop the willow or provide more sustainable planting. We felt the present arrangement needed further thought and a nearby dead tree needed attention.
- Whilst we applauded your press coverage, an interview with the press in attendance or a press call on the day would have been a great opportunity for additional promotion of your involvement in Britain in Bloom.

- The Botanic Garden should be marketed better with perhaps a trail for children and other features developed. It's a good attraction and more thought needs to be given to its promotion and development.

**St Martin, Guernsey**  
**Small Town - Gold & Category Winner**

The small town of St Martin has displays of flowers at almost every location that is large enough to carry a tub; we feel that this is an important aspect of the floral heritage of the island. There was a great sense of community spirit, which was very apparent at the thank you BBQ, which was held at the end of the tour. The school children were so well prepared; a big thank you to them and their teacher Jenni Jerome. The press coverage was outstanding, with TV, radio and news all being eager to obtain an understanding of what was expected of and delivered by the entrant.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The floral impact was of a high standard as was the cultivation and there were many businesses providing floral displays which further enhanced the entry.
- We were impressed by the care and good horticultural practice being used in the church ground's Grow Ltd.
- There was a good mixture of both new and established beds throughout the tour.
- The appropriate mix of bedding and perennials at the parish hall was impressive.

#### *Areas for development*

- The verges on many of the green lanes were in need of maintenance; however we do understand that this is in the hands of the landowners.
- The standard of the residential gardens slipped towards the end of the tour in the area of the approach to Sausmarez Manor.
- Japanese knotweed was a problem; we would recommend that a specialist company be contacted in order to utilise the latest eradication techniques.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the inclusion of the donkey sculptures and the donkey trail.
- Recycling and street cleaning is of a high standard; we saw no evidence of either fly posting, graffiti or dog fouling.
- A composting programme is providing a valuable growing medium for all types of plants being used in St Martin.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges felt that even though there was a great deal of biodiversity and conservation, there was little in the way of interpretation. Leaflets or signage would help the public understand the projects undertaken.
- Although a Flora and Fauna survey has been carried out, the judges would have been interested in hearing the outcome; maybe the people who conducted the survey could have given the judges an update on the tour.

## Community Participation

### *Areas of achievement*

- The press coverage was very good, we are sure this will further promote and raise awareness of the Bloom campaign.
- There is very little doubt that the Bloom drive is reaching every corner of St Martins, this is further supported by the amount of funds received by the Bloom group.
- It is clear to see that all of the work undertaken is making a difference to both residents and visitors to the area.

### *Areas for development*

- The judges were of the opinion that the presentation would have been better delivered in a more formal setting.
- Display boards could have been used to further promote new and ongoing projects, maybe PowerPoint could be a valuable tool, as seen at the school.

## St Saviour, Jersey Town - Silver Gilt

A warm welcome greeted the judges to this busy island community, with the evolving group of enthusiastic volunteers doing their very best to establish a new committee and drive the campaign forward. The partnership approach taken by the group, working with the parish staff, local residents and the schools was a good example of how communities can, by pooling resources, really make a difference to the quality of life for both residents and visitors alike. It will be very interesting to see how this group develop their new ideas to improve the parish over the coming years.

## Horticultural Achievement

### *Areas of achievement*

- The quality and choice of plants both seasonal and sustainable, skilfully put together at several key locations around the parish, such as at Victoria Cottage Homes and the Parish hall was exceptional.
- The considerable efforts by the owners and staff at Longueville Manor to retain the original features within the grounds, especially the efforts to put the walled kitchen garden back into production to supply the hotel kitchen, were commendable.
- The inclusion on the tour of a visit to John and Barbara Hidrio's award winning garden was an inspiration with its pristine, interesting and horticulturally perfect planting - a real delight.
- The newly created school allotment developed under the watchful eye of Fiona Murphy shows lots of promise for the future.
- The ongoing development of the roadside along the "Road of the Cold Winds" is to be commended and shows residents' commitment to enhancing their environment beyond their own house boundaries.

### *Areas for development*

- Continue with efforts to involve local businesses, not just hotels but other commercial enterprises; this would help maintain and build on the visual impact of the work being done by the group in partnership with the parish workforce.
- It was disappointing not to visit any park or larger public open space on the tour and although timescales are always tight on such occasions the judges need to gain a comprehensive picture of what is available within the whole of the entry.
- A little more information either in the portfolio or on the tour about the Gardens Competition would have been helpful in assessing the value of its growth and would have helped the judges understand fully how this growth had been achieved. We did like the idea of using the refuse collectors to disseminate entry forms, very novel.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The ongoing development of the woodland at Jardin des Buttes as a wildlife haven is to be commended, although it is recognised that in order to encourage a wider diversity of habitats a comprehensive management plan would be of benefit.
- On the day of judging the whole parish was exceptionally clean and tidy free of litter, dog fouling and other detritus; a credit to the team responsible.
- The planting of the Royal Windsor Oak to mark this year's entry into RHS Britain in Bloom has left a legacy for the future. The establishment of one of these in the entrance to Grainville School is excellent and should inspire children to appreciate and look after their environment for many years to come.

### *Areas for development*

- It would have been interesting for the judges to learn a little more about the heritage of the parish.
- Perhaps look at developing a community composting facility, or encourage home composting, especially noting the considerable past history in this area as explained to the judges on the day.
- It will be interesting to see how the future plans for the woodland at Jardin des Buttes develop, especially the proposed new disabled access.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The establishment of the newly formed committee with clear aims and objectives obviously needs time to develop; however this dedicated band of "Bloomers" is already making a difference within the parish.
- The impressive children's painting competition, together with the various initiatives to involve children in all aspects of the campaign (including the aptly named "Mud Club") is to be commended.
- The work of 17th St Saviour Guides in helping maintain the floral displays and their obvious enthusiasm shows great commitment from the youth of the parish.
- The obvious commitment of James Le Selleur at Victoria Cottage Homes is truly inspirational; he is an unsung hero within the community and makes such a difference to the lives of the many elderly residents.

### *Areas for development*

- It would have been appropriate on judging day to meet other members of the group, including more of the Jardiniers.
- Although it is recognised the group is newly established, it may on future visits by judges be appropriate to explain a little more clearly from where the group's funding is derived including how much is parish funded and how much is raised by the group.
- The portfolio, although helpful, was a little lacking in content and while the judges recognise this is a new group perhaps a little more information could be provided in any future documents as this does help the judges by providing supporting/additional information to what they have seen on the tour.
- Consider developing an interpretation board at the Jardin des Buttes woodland explaining the various flora and fauna to be found on the site.

## Stockton, Northumbria City - Gold & Category Winner

On the banks of the River Tees lies the once industrial city of Stockton, birthplace of the railway. This now vibrant and bustling city boasts a rich and diverse cultural community who in recent years have taken the Bloom ethos to heart. Past Gold winner in both Britain in Bloom and Entente Florale, this entry continues to go from strength to strength. The city, steeped in heritage, is also moving forward to embrace modern day life with a vast array of cultural activities and a very forward-thinking approach to the environment. Not only a floral city but also a clean and green one, with a community to be proud of. A worthy winner of the highest accolade in RHS Britain in Bloom: a Gold Medal and Category Winner for 2011. Well done!

### Horticultural Achievement

#### *Areas of achievement*

- A visit to Stockton High street is a joy to behold with baskets and barrier planters brimming with high quality plants, bursting with colour amid a bustling vibrant retail area.
- The standard of grass cutting across Stockton on Tees is exceptionally high, with numerous tree planting initiatives providing a lasting legacy to enhance the area.
- The grounds of St Francis of Assisi, superbly maintained by the local community to a very high standard.
- The excellent allotments at Preston Lane; very well tended plots with the addition of a brilliant initiative by John Doherty to run allotment gardening courses.
- The visit to Thornaby Cemetery, a real gem gaining national recognition as a past winner of the Cemetery of the Year competition.
- The high level of floral displays in Norton Green and the High Street demonstrate the Local Authority are not concentrating all their efforts in the city centre.
- The good support received from Wellington Square shopping parade, providing high quality displays as well as working to ensure any vacant shops are made to look as attractive as possible.

#### *Areas for development*

- It was felt that some of the planting in Ropner Park had suffered from a lack of maintenance or possibly a lack of irrigation early in the season which had contributed to the poor condition of some of the plants.
- It is good to see the Bloom team are developing links to the many community groups in the city; could this be further extended to engage with other partners to create an independent Bloom group?
- Although many fine examples of sustainable planting exist in the city, could further use of sustainable plants be encouraged? This would in some cases help mitigate the need to use so many seasonal plants, safeguarding the high standard in the more prominent areas.

### Environmental Responsibility

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The nature reserve at Billingham Beck Country Park with the high level of community support offered by the friends resulting in a superb facility, which is both environmentally and educationally of the highest standard.
- The “Five Lamps” and “Spitfire” roundabouts are excellent examples of both the heritage of the area and art in the landscape, both features using quality artefacts within the wider landscape.
- The efforts being made in several retail areas to mask empty shops with locally produced artwork, creating a feeling of vibrancy in difficult economic times – an initiative to be highly commended.
- The maintenance of the vast majority of the street furniture was very good despite the very high pedestrian footfall in all of the public open spaces and retail areas.

#### *Areas for development*

- There were a number of instances of fly posting evident in the High Street. Develop a zero tolerance policy, especially in relation to empty shops.
- Although the visit to the Tees Barrage to learn about the future plans for the white water rafting course were interesting, the value of spending time there in the Bloom context is questionable.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The sheer track record of Stockton Borough Council goes before it with a consistently high standard achieved over several years.
- The work of the friends group at Billingham Beck Country Park is a model other parks could follow, providing their passion could be replicated.
- The ongoing regeneration of the Stockton area and its cultural quarter, which is developing and creating employment is a great testimony to the council.

#### *Areas for development*

- The development of a voluntary, independent Bloom group is an absolute must if Stockton is to remain at the top of the Bloom tree. This should include representatives from all the current partners and be widened out to include some other active members of the community.
- The visit to Hartburn Primary School was of questionable value as the grounds are not of sufficient quality and badly need redeveloping. Could this be something the Bloom initiative could make a priority?
- It would be interesting to see a breakdown of the financial impacts of the Bloom initiative, especially in these tough economic times.

### **Stony Stratford, Thames & Chilterns Small Town - Silver**

For a first time entrant at national level, Stony Stratford provided us with a most enjoyable tour. The Saxon church seen at the end of the morning was the highlight of the tour. There were two locations which would be ideal for RHS It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN): Belwether Court and King Georges Crescent, if encouraged to register, would provide them with five levels of progression. The signs on entering Stony were impressive. The community plays a large part in this small town and there was a strong sense of pride and reverence for local history.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The baskets were very full and well grown.
- The sports area at the Ancell Trust was of a high standard.
- As mentioned, the church frontage is a joy, so bright and vibrant set off by the wonderful stone of the building.
- The York House project has got off to a wonderful start, we are sure this will improve even further.
- The medieval garden was of great interest and expert advice was delivered well on site.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although the baskets were well grown, the judges were a little concerned that the dark blue petunias had become dominant. The baskets did not always provide the display expected, this was most apparent where they were growing against darker buildings.
- There was a good selection of mixed plants in the beds; however maintenance was clearly a problem as the plants were not as vibrant as would be expected.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The Ouse Valley ponds were a very good part of the entry.
- Street furniture was of a good standard. We liked the stone artwork to the entrances to the town which gave the town a unique identity.
- The entry was clean and free from graffiti, fly posting and dog fouling.
- The bluebell project is good and worthy of future expansion.
- The bottle greenhouse at Queen Eleanor School was most interesting and we are sure it will be well used.

### *Areas for development*

- As mink appear to be a problem at Ouse Valley ponds it would be advantageous to consider a monitoring programme.
- The judges would encourage further selected tree removal in the bluebell wood, in order to open up the canopy and encourage understory growth.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- There was clear evidence that there was strength in the community working together.
- We were encouraged by the several education programmes in place covering a wide range of ages of children.
- The presentation was delivered to a high standard.
- The funding partnerships were strong and as a result we were assured of the future development programme was safe.

### *Areas for development*

- It may be appropriate to recruit more volunteers to the current workforce as the workload becomes even greater.
- The involvement of the wider community could be the catalyst to building future neighbourhood groups which would strengthen the Bloom initiative in Stony.
- We like the idea of the Brownie badge and, with a little guidance from the Bloom group, we feel this could be achieved.

## **Tenby, Wales Coastal Up to 12k - Silver Gilt**

Formerly the largest working port in Wales, Tenby today is a magnet for tourists looking for an attractive venue for a holiday or day by the seaside. The old buildings' walls and cosy little lanes are everywhere adorned with suitably complimentary floral displays. Sea views abound and the whole town has an air of exuberance and celebration. This is a holiday resort that has clearly benefited from the Bloom team's efforts.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The displays of annuals were of a consistently high standard with bedded areas were planted at high density, giving the maximum impact. The floral towers and the new barrier planters along the Esplanade were particularly floriferous.
- Some excellent private and business gardens and displays.
- The innovative choice of plants at the Giltar Hotel was very pleasing and worthy of special mention.

- Seating areas with sea views were cleverly sited, enhanced by newly-renovated hard landscaping and gardens.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges saw a great deal of splendid floral and sustainable planting but, in order to allow enough time to do justice to the other judging criteria, you could trim some of the time spent in town which is primarily floral.
- The Catholic church is a rather sombre “blank” which will stand out all the more when the car park next door is further developed. It would add extra appeal if there were some floral features here.
- The new permanent planting at the Croft will need further infilling and weed control.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Despite the high footfall the town was commendably clean.
- The litter picking on the beaches and cliffs was clearly effective.
- The plans to bring in Scots pine to Caldey Island to support a colony of red squirrels.
- The generally high standard of the street furniture, together with an effective maintenance programme.
- The re-design of Gilroy Phillips’ garden to eliminate anti-social behaviour.
- The recycling shrubs and other plants.

#### *Areas for development*

- Keep looking for projects that celebrate the local heritage such as the port and fishing industry, the babaloobies and beehives. The “Blue Stone” project will prove very worthwhile.
- Be sure to present enough evidence of projects and initiatives supporting conservation and biodiversity.
- The visitors’ economy must generate particular challenges in terms of waste collection and recycling; it would be interesting to know how these challenges are met.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Excellent PR, demonstrated by posters, press articles, competitions and the extensive BBC TV coverage.
- The idea of returning a laminated photo of prize-winning posters and their originals is commendable.
- The twice-yearly fundraising event at the harbour.
- Initiatives such as the “Floral Foxglover” guide and prize are an excellent way of gaining publicity whilst raising funds.

#### *Areas for development*

- It is useful to be provided a route itinerary as this helps the judges to identify the people they will meet along the route and also helps them to identify criteria points.
- A list of sponsors and other sources of funding is of use for the judges to understand your current position, as well as helping to identify future sponsorship opportunities.
- Look for opportunities to build contacts with other organisations, particularly in the field of nature conservancy.
- There will be an enormous PR opportunity from your new website, especially with good links to social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

## **Tetbury, Heart of England Small Town - Silver Gilt**

It was very clear to the judges that the residents of Tetbury have a huge sense of pride in their town. The many floral baskets and containers were generally of a high standard. The shop window competition was proving to be an important part of the fabric of town life. The support from many town groups gave extra impetus to the Bloom campaign and contributed to its achievements. All areas of the town covered by the tour were clean, and special mention should be made of the car park toilets. The children's artwork at the gap site was very good and was proving to be a hit with all those who passed by.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The design and the selection of colours used in the mixed beds were well thought-out.
- Cultivation was of a high standard and baskets were colour-coordinated to complement the various buildings on the tour.
- Grass cutting was of a high standard.
- The many aspects of the church were well thought out, giving quiet places for people to sit and reflect.
- The judges were impressed with the market hall, which is a focal point in the town centre.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges would have liked to have visited a school to fully evaluate school involvement.
- Also, if we could have visited a recreation ground or sports field, this would have given us evidence of additional maintenance practices and enabled us to better assess their standard.
- we recognise that the group are aware of the growing problem with *Impatiens* but we would still advise avoiding these plants in future projects.
- Pockets of a wildflower seed mix similar to that used at the ford would extend the season and would add further interest to the grass bank at the car park.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- As mentioned in the introduction, the judges were impressed by the overall environmental quality of the town.
- The wildflower meadow at the ford was impressive, and may become the catalyst for future similar schemes.
- There is a clear understanding of recycling requirements.
- The composting area at the church is being used to very good effect.
- It was good to see young people being involved in the design and implementation of the artwork at the gap site.

#### *Areas for development*

- It may be of value to link with your local Wildlife Trust or similar body in order to get a better understanding of what plants and other initiatives are appropriate for your town in order to further encourage wildlife.
- Several bench seats were in need of a fresh coat of paint or varnish.
- The judges would have liked to have obtained a better understanding of heritage in the town; maybe you could incorporate the mill or brewery heritage, for example.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- This section is the strength of the entry. It was clear that the community plays a large part in the management of the town's special image.
- Funding and support in kind are very well administered and, as a result, future development is assured.
- Publicity through the shop window competition is outstanding.
- The presentation was of a very high standard and very enjoyable.

### *Areas for development*

- Although the new allotment project was illustrated in the portfolio, we felt that this could have been better portrayed with a site visit.
- A lot of good work has gone into producing the itinerary; however it was felt that a summary version would have been better for the judges on the day.
- Because of the volume of work being carried out by the group, it would be advisable to encourage new members to join.

## **Thornbury, South West Town - Gold**

It is clear that Thornbury has a self-motivated Bloom team, led by Sue Aitkin, that has done everything to incorporate the values of the campaign into their work. The enthusiasm of its members is infectious and their commitment to detail and dedication to the campaign and their town is clear for all to see. The work of the Bloom group benefits everyone in the area and links into many other local organisations. It is instrumental in enhancing the quality of the environment but the greatest benefit of all is in the friendship and camaraderie that the Bloom has brought to the community. In 2011 the group celebrates their 20th anniversary which demonstrates the admirable longevity of the group and the benefits of taking part in Britain in Bloom which are also plain for all to see. Long may your Bloom campaign continue!

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The variation in plant material and the choice of colour within the hanging baskets was good and was seen as a clear way of showing individuality and adding a greater interest in the town.
- The quality of plants was exceptional and the general maintenance excellent. The introduction of two new flowerbeds added to the already attractive displays. Of special note was the central pump feature.
- The new tree planting was noted and will add to the already established tree-planting programme that will provide mature trees for the future.
- Daggs Allotments were a delight to see and the people we met were interesting and committed to the growing of fruit, flowers and vegetables. The way the allotment holders worked together to achieve their results was to be supported. It was evident that the whole site and its tenants were a good example of social gardening; tea breaks were shared when the bell on the site was rung.
- The communal areas were a pleasure to judge and the standard and quality was great. The volunteers were very committed to their individual projects and need to be applauded. The church garden and the community garden were beautifully designed, with carefully selected plant material that tastefully created a place of peace and tranquillity. It was noted that many groups use both of these valuable spaces and benefit from them.
- The Anchor Pub was a delight to see and its location on the main highway was a good focal point to promote Thornbury in Bloom.

### *Areas for development*

- Although the colour schemes in the planting were generally good, care should be taken in the selection of plants that are dark in colour. Regal colours are great when the sun shines, but on days when it is overcast or slightly dull, as on judging day, the impact is lost. Bright cheerful colours are always a good bet in any situation.
- The area at the side of the police station, although satisfactory, could be improved by adding a little more interest with perhaps the planting of ornamental and ordinary vegetables. We are sure members from the allotments would help in putting an exciting and colourful display together. This would also be educational, adding further interest to the area.
- The grass cutting throughout the entry was of variable quality. It could be improved by a slight adjustment of the mower, leaving the grass slightly longer would have improved the general appearance and reduced scalping in places creating a lush green sward.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The wildflowers in the grass verges were a wonderful sight and should be developed further.
- The Manorbrook School wildlife project, with the involvement of the children was excellent. Their enthusiasm and commitment to the project was a pleasure to see.
- The use of the old salmon putcher made from willow was an ideal way of displaying plants and its use as a way of celebrating Thornbury's heritage is to be congratulated.
- Park Farm Fishponds, although not visited but referred to in the portfolio, is an interesting site and believed to have recently received Ancient Monument Status.
- There was evidence where graffiti and litter problems were being dealt with in a positive way. The litter busters were doing a great job in educating children not to drop litter.

### *Areas for development*

- It may have been appropriate to visit the Fishponds Project and see first-hand the work going on there.
- Interpretation boards explaining their origin of certain features would have been useful, for example at the salmon putcher.
- More sustainable planting using a mix of perennials and grasses would benefit the area and would help to reduce the maintenance costs and encourage greater biodiversity.
- The introduction of wildflower areas into the grass verges is a great idea; could this be extended into other areas perhaps with different species allowing some areas of previously mown grass to remain uncut as habitat havens?
- The excellent diary of wildlife kept by Val Gregory at the meadow over many years was such an asset; it may be appropriate on future tours to incorporate this a little more in the judges' visit.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Community involvement was excellent and the clear direction from the Bloom committee to its volunteers was very evident.
- The portfolio identified all year commitment and the publication to encourage support was an excellent initiative.
- Jack and his wife's private garden was a pleasure to see and an inspiration to anyone visiting the site. What a wonderful and exciting experience for any gardener, to see the beautiful combinations of colour, texture and scale and the sheer wow factor - amazing.

- The Community Composting initiative was just amazing and all those involved are to be congratulated on such a positive service to the community. The scheme raises many thousands of pounds and involves partnership working with the council to achieve the best results. The idea of providing logs to the community from timber removed from the compost is a brilliant idea. This was by far the best example of a community-driven composting scheme the judges have ever seen.

#### *Areas for development*

- It would be nice if some pressure could be put on the powers that be to move forward on the listed derelict building adjacent to the community garden project, possibly with the intention of integrating it with the community garden as it was originally. There are grants available for such improvements, but there is an obligation on behalf of the authority to use its powers to issue a building repairs notice to stop further decay.
- Thornbury in Bloom is a great example of what taking part in the regional and national campaign can bring to a community. It is evident the group enjoy what they do and participation leads to all sorts of social interaction. Could this infectious enthusiasm be used to encourage other regional groups? Perhaps it is worth asking your region to put you forward as a mentor that other groups could learn from.

### **Uddingston (Glasgow), Scotland Urban Community - Silver Gilt & Category Winner**

The strength of this entry lies within the community's involvement, which is apparent throughout. The choice of plants and horticultural maintenance was very high, giving an excellent display throughout the area. Rarely do we see church involvement that is so strong. The strength of the group is apparent and it operates with a very broad brush throughout the community. It was a delight to meet children from the after school children's club at the Baptist Church, who were happy to turn out to show us their planting efforts despite the wet weather.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were especially impressed by the choice of plants in the many containers and baskets throughout the tour. It was clear that great care had been taken and good horticultural practices were in place.
- We would like to make special mention of St John the Baptist Church whose entrance was a joy.
- The close links with the railway station were apparent, giving a welcoming display to travellers arriving by train to Uddingston.
- The initiative of the window dressing competition is a good idea which fits well with Bloom.

##### *Areas for development*

- There was some evidence of over use of chemical herbicides on verges.
- Consider developing a floral/history trail of the many churches encountered on the tour.
- Although the cenotaph was a well planted and respected area, it was noticed that there were weed species in the fine turf.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- From the information given and the statistics published it is evident that resource management is a priority for the group.
- This was a very clean, litter-free tour with very little evidence of anything inappropriate.
- The cycleways and footpaths are an important part of the area and were embraced on the tour.

- The whole series of new planters are producing the desired results, giving a sense of pride whilst saving water resources.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although the judges tried hard to find a sense of local heritage it was thought that this was an area which could be further developed, perhaps by encouraging churches to participate in a floral trail; this could be supported by a leaflet.
- The significance of the Wilkie Plough and the castle as strong heritage features could be embraced.
- Although there was evidence of wildlife conservation perhaps knowledge from within the group could be given, either on the tour or within the portfolio; maybe a leaflet explanation would be sufficient.
- Would the area surrounding the castle be an appropriate location for a wildflower meadow, which would in turn encourage wildlife into the area. The judges felt this could be considered.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the range of ways the group were raising funds for the initiative throughout the year.
- The judges would like to make special mention of the press coverage and the support of the person from the local free press.
- The strength of this group, ably led by Liz Wilson, was apparent through the evidence of ongoing projects, funding and ongoing support from businesses.
- There was clear evidence of year-round community support for the event programme, which in turn generates funds for the group's projects.

#### *Areas for development*

- This is the entrant's strongest section; however more different information could be given in the presentation to complement and not duplicate the portfolio.
- Further encourage It's Your Neighbourhood entrants as this would further support the group's efforts and would add to your strengths.

### **Upton Upon Severn, Heart of England Large Village - Silver**

Upton is a community which has had to pull out all the stops to recover from the floods of 2007. This year presented another climate obstacle in the form of a drought, which has seriously affected plant establishment and growth. Despite these set backs, any visitor will be impressed by the range and placement of the floral displays throughout the village. As a fundraiser, the Human Fruit Machine must be unique and a great talking point.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The six floral boats were colourful and appropriate to the locality.
- The placement of the baskets and the tubs along the riverside gave a relaxed holiday feel.
- The impressive yew avenue to the chapel.
- The bright and cheerful pub and tea garden displays.

#### *Areas for development*

- At this time of year, nutrient levels in the containers are getting too low. Some form of nutrient top up would greatly improve appearance.
- Some smaller baskets were also stressed; a move to larger baskets might help with this issue.

- Continue to work with the primary school to develop a range of horticultural links to the curriculum; the RHS Campaign for School Gardening provides these links and you could mentor the school through the campaign's benchmarking scheme.
- There may be opportunities to move some existing plants to more closely matched positions and soil condition.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The use of murals to decorate high visibility areas and memorial benches such as the Upton Blues Festival seat.
- The planting of local heritage fruit varieties.
- The impressive recycling statistics.
- The efforts to establish trees such as black poplar and English elm.
- The collection of plastic bottles for the school greenhouse.

### *Areas for development*

- The Ham SSSI is an asset that deserves more detailed information and a visit.
- The cemetery could be a good location to develop an area to encourage increased biodiversity.
- Look at ways of celebrating the local heritage, such as brick-making and the boat hauliers.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Good presentation of events held throughout the year, including a diversity of fundraising events.
- The comprehensive press coverage involving Upton News and the Malvern Gazette.
- The sponsorship promotional material was excellent.
- The public display of awards in various venues.
- The impressive assembly of the various interest groups at the end of the tour.

### *Areas for development*

- The ambitious list of "to-do" tasks will require some additional resources; be careful not to overstretch the existing volunteer force by recruiting new volunteers.
- It would be useful for the judges to be shown some details of the group's financial planning.
- Aim to use your fun fundraising events to recruit more volunteers, as well funds.

## **Walthamstow Village (London), London Urban Community - Silver**

There is a strong feeling of community cohesion in this entry; we were made aware of the baseline from which the entry has come from by council officers. Pockets of fresh land suitable for floral dressing are hard to come by; however the group have endeavoured to plant sustainably in the locations that are available. The current enforcement initiatives are proving successful in keeping environmental quality problems under control, and as a consequence Walthamstow Village has become a better place to live and visit. The committee are to be applauded for their determination and their capacity to make a difference – well done.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were impressed by the sustainably planted raised beds, which were full of colour and located on key junctions for maximum impact.

- We were impressed by the Henry Maynard School, several horticultural initiatives were ongoing, and this is proving to be of high value to children from the surrounding area.
- Don's garden was fascinating for the selection of fruit and vegetable plants as part of his theme this year of growing your own.
- The garden of Mr & Mrs Martin was stunning.

#### *Areas for development*

- The hanging baskets which were provided by the local authority could have been of a better standard; the impact expected had not been achieved. Is there capacity for the volunteers to take these on?
- In the museum garden the judges were concerned that the identification storyboards bore little resemblance to the plants being grown and that the historic element seemed to be lost. We feel that this is of concern as this location has the potential to be a major educational asset to Walthamstow.
- The judges were given to understand that there were several volunteer groups working in the church grounds however, their work appeared to be a little disjointed; maybe if there was an overall coordinator for all the groups, improved results could be achieved.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Considering the compact nature of the streets and paths the judges were impressed by the standards of street cleansing. There was no evidence of fly posting or graffiti and litter was minimal.
- The children at the Henry Maynard School were being made aware of their impact on the environment, although this project is in its early stages the judges are sure that in time this will prove to be a most valuable asset.
- The recently installed lamp posts were in keeping with the conservation area, as was the signage.
- The judges noticed that chemicals, which could be harmful to the environment, were not being used.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although we understood the verbal presentation on heritage of the built environment, we felt that this could be more stream-lined with help from staff at the library.
- There could be a funded project in and around the library premises, for example the story of the alleys, profile of the streets in relation to the old field system, etc.; this could take the form of interpretation panels.
- It was noticed that several of the ornate street benches were in need of refurbishment.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- As the interest in this project grows and more people become engaged, we feel that even more progress can be achieved and future potential increased.
- The education through the school project and gardening club should further strengthen commitment to the environment of Walthamstow Village residents.
- The judges were impressed by the delivery of the presentation; this gave us a good indication of the efforts being put in by the group throughout the year.
- The judges were impressed that horticulture was being used as a tool to further rehabilitate clients at the Turning Point Centre.

#### *Areas for development*

- The Front Garden Challenge is proving to be a success. Maybe to further promote this initiative some quirky classes could be introduced, such as crazy container or other classes appropriate to the confines of the gardens in the area.

- Although the intention is to create a wildflower meadow, the judges suggest that expert advice should be sought to determine the correct cultivars for the proposed site.
- You may want to extend the advisory notices about volunteer time and efforts to plant up beds to other locations beyond the village square.
- The judges would have benefitted from an itinerary for the tour.

### **Wareham, South & South East Small Town - Silver Gilt**

This entry is very proud of its heritage and the Saxon sword project has given a new identity to the town. The baskets and planters throughout the town centre were of a good standard. We were very impressed by the school garden, which was only just installed in spring 2011. The Hemsbach Court Garden was a good addition to the tour and we were given a very warm reception by the residents.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The selection of baskets provided a ribbon of colour running through the main streets of the town centre.
- Many of the businesses were well presented, using a good range of plant types and appropriate containers.
- The colourful planters link very well with the buildings.
- The grass cutting at the school was excellent and the cutting regime on the ramparts works well, creating lines that the public follow on their walks.

##### *Areas for development*

- Although we were shown a good selection of residential gardens, many were not of the standard expected of a national finalist.
- It is good to see some areas where future improvement is planned but be sure to balance these with more established projects evidencing what has already been achieved.
- In future tours, it may be appropriate to include one of your churches.
- The judges felt that after developing such a good standard at the Saxon sword roundabout, when building a second roundabout, it may be appropriate to depict the industry of clay as another focal point for local heritage.

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The quality of the River Frome water and the fact that salmon use of the estuary is increasing, is proof of the good work carried out by the environment agency.
- The wildflowers in the Wareham Mile add another dimension to the tour.
- The Scout eco building impressed the judges with the latest building techniques being used to lessen any impact on the environment.
- The recycling statistics are good and ever-improving.
- The town was clean, bearing in mind the number of people passing through and visiting the town.

##### *Areas for development*

- Not all street furniture was clean and most would be improved with a coat of paint or varnish.
- As we were made aware that £500 has been given by Anglian Home Improvements for a school project, we feel it may be appropriate to spend the money on upgrading the wildlife garden.
- Similar interpretation boards to those seen at Priory Meadows could be installed to provide information at strategic locations along the walls.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The judges were very impressed by the school project that Tony Gibbons was leading.
- Publicity material was seen in many shop windows; we feel this encourages more involvement from the community.
- Funding is well managed and support in kind was first rate, offering many options for the future.
- There were several very knowledgeable people on the tour, which strengthened its delivery.

### *Areas for development*

- The judges were a little concerned about the small numbers of group members.
- As mentioned funding is good; however, without new members to drive these new projects forward, we felt that future progress may be a little fragile.

## **Warkworth, Northumbria Large Village - Silver Gilt**

Historic Warkworth with its beautiful castle, bridge, riverside and proximity to the Northumbrian coast is well worth a visit. Here there is a great partnership between the Bloom group and the councils and other organisations. This is a key factor in the results that were so clear to see. Particularly impressive were the high number and quality of residential gardens, with well-chosen and meticulously cared-for displays. The replanting of the Millennium Garden had been expertly executed and added to the impact that one cannot fail to notice and appreciate. This entry boasted artistic children from a school that made understanding the environment fun. The judges were fascinated by Welly Wednesday and would love to come again to meet the enthusiastic guides and volunteers.

## **Horticultural Achievement**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The re-design and replanting of the Millennium Garden has been a great success, producing a delightful area, with the bridge and wall baskets close by.
- All year interest is maintained by the use of a good range of plants together with seasonal displays.
- Some very high quality residential gardens, including Sally's, Mr Fiddes' and the Greensfield Close and Riverside estates.
- The removal of the shrubs along the churchyard wall has opened up this beautiful area, with its well-balanced plantings and restful lawns. Well done.
- The focal point at the bottom of Castle Street, highlighting the two pubs and the post baskets.

### *Areas for development*

- The colourful display of containers along Castle Street is a main attraction for visitors. Where there is room, the adoption of larger containers would increase the impact and make maintenance easier. If you are able to encourage this trend, it would make a real difference.
- Offering the youth group some advice on choice of plants and planting might help them to achieve a better result.
- There are a good number of businesses and retailers with floral enhancements but there is still scope to recruit one or two more, which we would recommend.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- Very clean award-winning environment with rapid response technology for reporting any areas needing attention.
- Promotion of recycling sites to reduce contamination, with 85 % recycling rates.

- Well managed street furniture, signage and interpretation making for a pleasurable and memorable visitor experience.
- The C of E First School with the facilities and enthusiasm to give children a good understanding of their natural environment.

#### *Areas for development*

- It would be interesting for the judges to meet someone with first-hand knowledge of one of the conservation areas.
- Make sure English Heritage understands that you do have common interests and that there are areas such as the Castle, where joint initiatives could be undertaken.
- Consider an area for wildflower planting using seed of local provenance.
- Is there a heritage trail or could one be devised?

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The partnership between the Bloom group and Northumberland County Council is proving a winner, helping to produce some very high standards of planting and maintenance.
- Comprehensive calendar of events, projects and planning.
- Judges note significant progress in engaging volunteers from a range of backgrounds.
- The generosity of individual sponsors and organisations such as the Rotary.

#### *Areas for development*

- Develop and utilise the new logo to publicise your work and to dispel the popular belief that it is the council that do all the work.
- Continue to widen your field of influence by engaging with other local groups and networking more.
- Develop website links.
- Keep working to gain local publicity through the media and posters.

### **Whickham, Northumbria Large Town - Silver Gilt**

This former mining town near Gateshead in the North East of England has been transformed into a very attractive residential area for people working on Tyneside. It retains proud links to its past through the evocative sculptures in the excellent Watergate Forest Park, but is also a very attractive town of the present day. The Hermitage Garden is a fantastic asset to the town, where the judges were in awe of the enthusiasm, drive, skill, and far sighted vision of Dave Peacock in rescuing this beautiful, peaceful haven; the judges would have lingered much longer if only time had permitted. The plans for a wildlife area in Chase Park are to be applauded, and the involvement of children in this and other environmental projects through the schools and Catherine Lanson-Clough should be encouraged.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Hermitage Garden was an outstanding example of Dave Peacocks' enthusiasm and skill to recreate a haven of horticultural excellence; an inspiration to others.
- The Library Garden has transformed a derelict area subject to anti-social behaviour into a little gem. The former grot spot has been transformed by vision, hard work and volunteer maintenance and is now a place of tranquillity for library users.
- The tour showed excellent examples of residential front gardens, especially those at the Birches and Bank Top Hamlets.

- The Manor House residential home gardens showed examples of sustainable planting, colourful containers and maintenance standards of the highest order.
- The displays of begonias at Church Green were very impressive in this lovely and prominent area.

#### *Areas for development*

- The bedding in Chase Park lacked impact and the judges were disappointed to see the amount of weeds and lack of dead-heading.
- There was a poor response from retailers, with the exception of the Travellers Rest pub, which had floral impact despite the fact that it had yet to re-open following refurbishment.
- The judges were disappointed to see weeds in the shrub beds approaching the Central Nursery, and the large sycamore seedlings/saplings in the shrub beds in Chase Park.
- The rose bed at the rear of the solar crusher contained old and tired plants, whilst those on Whickham Highway looked regimented and too small for the area. The judges recommend replacement and enlarging with a mixture of roses and sustainable perennials.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The Watergate Forest Park is an excellent facility for the town with a good range of habitats for wildflowers and wildlife. The judges were impressed with the young park ranger who provided all the information requested in an effective and pleasant manner.
- The solar powered recycling unit in the town centre was the first seen by the judges and they hope that this prototype is successful and brought into greater use.
- The positioning of on-street recycling, in addition to kerbside collection and bring-sites helps to increase recycling rates.
- The judges were pleased to see the bird boxes constructed by Front Street School, Parochial School and Gibside Special School positioned in Chase Park.
- The cleanliness of all sites visited.
- The interesting sculptures in the Watergate Forest Park linking it with its past as a coal mining area.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges were pleased to hear of the old seating replacement programmes but suggest a programme of maintenance for those awaiting replacement.
- Research the availability of peat free/reduced compost and carry out trials as necessary using the RHS Advisory Service if required.
- The judges suggest that some areas currently subject to a close mowing regime be allowed to grow and become wildflower areas.
- While impressed with the kerbside and green waste collection service, it would be useful on future judging tours to meet the recycling officer to discuss initiatives and performance figures in this area.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Volunteer involvement at the Hermitage Garden and Library Garden is very impressive.
- The involvement of Catherine Lanson-Clough in promoting an appreciation of the environment to children through novel and practical methods; the judges were impressed with her education pack for children.

#### *Areas for development*

- Greater community involvement could be derived by asking schoolchildren to design the butterfly beds through a competition. The chosen designs could be planted and all others prominently displayed in public places and the media.

- Adopt a Bed or Container schemes could raise the profile and volunteer numbers for the Bloom group.
- The group may need to become more proactive in decision-making, especially in view of possible changes in local government priorities.
- The portfolio could provide more information on the financial structure of the group, including information on sponsorship and expenditure.

### **Whitby, Yorkshire Coastal Up to 12k - Gold & Category Winner**

Nestled by the beautiful Cleveland Hills and the North Yorkshire Moors and surrounded by a stunning coastline, Whitby has a fascinating history making it a fantastic destination for visitors and residents. The enthusiasm, hard work and passion of the Bloom group is more than a match for the weather, which is harsh at times, particularly last winter. Art within the town and landscape, together with historical interpretation, has been taken to an exceptional level, demonstrating the healthy pride of residents. This pride is harnessed well as proven by the sheer volume and range of community involvement. Partnerships abound with mutual support and understanding. The way that the Bloom message is spread and the involvement of young people is impressive, with future horticultural talent epitomised by young Kadir.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The variety and profusion of planted sites of annuals and sustainable plants throughout the town such as the floral clock, Crescent Gardens and the Fisherman's Toil.
- The herb planters at the dockside and other plantings representing the town's heritage. The Jurassic garden is another, among many, of the inspirational gardens to be seen.
- There were several excellent roundabouts, with a particular mention for Pete's roundabout.
- Kadir Jonturk's vision in introducing flowers to his neighbourhood for the benefit of all, including those of limited mobility.
- Ruswarp village centre is a little jewel.
- Pannett Park, with so many good features that the judges have nominated it for the RHS Britain in Bloom Public Parks Award.

##### *Areas for development*

- Continue the plan to put in appropriate plants to stabilise the steep slope at the Abbey YHA garden. In the longer term, reduce or remove the *Hypericum*, which tends to take over.
- Could you offer your expertise to help improve the quality of some of the traders' displays; perhaps a subject for one of Chris' day courses?

#### **Environmental Responsibility**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- There can be few towns where pride in their heritage shines through so strongly. Not only is this seen in the number of projects, but in the quality of their execution and maintenance.
- Allied to the excellent heritage features are the many eye-catching and well-sited artworks.
- Cleanliness was of exemplary standard; not easily achieved in a town which thrives on its visitor numbers.
- Children at the Stakesby Community Primary School were getting an admirable grounding in resource management and ecology.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although the judges enjoyed visiting the areas set aside for conservation at Sneaton Castle and Pannett Park, it would have been interesting to hear from someone from Calla Beck (perhaps at the presentation), even if a visit to the site could not have been fitted in.
- The recycling rate seemed to be rather below average. Is there a reason for this?
- Seek advice before taking the step to introduce new species at Pannett Park wildflower slope; perhaps the introduction of yellow rattle would be the first step.
- Have you considered offering your teaching skills to a wider audience such as neighbouring areas not yet involved in Bloom or encouraging and supporting It's Your Neighbourhood groups in and around Whitby?

#### **Community Participation**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The extraordinary depth and reach of the awareness campaign, using all the media together with high quality visuals, including posters and flags.
- The partnership arrangements working with other organisations for mutual benefit and the generosity of spirit in helping others.
- Volunteer numbers put Whitby in a strong position for the future, particularly as so much effort is put into support and education of the next generation.
- The 'Big Book' legacy record will provide a fascinating story of the Bloom's development.

##### *Areas for development*

- Although funding is soundly based and providing adequate resources for current projects, it would be useful to collate the figures and in-kind values to get an overall figure; this could be useful for future funding bids and management planning.

#### **Whitehaven, Cumbria Large Town - Silver Gilt**

The port of Whitehaven on the Cumbria coast was second only to London in the 1800s, exporting coal and importing tobacco. While the port area has changed to an attractive leisure harbour side, the lovely Georgian architecture has thankfully remained. Copeland Council and the community-led Bloom group have worked very hard to embellish this appealing townscape with horticultural features of very high quality. This quality reflects the skill of the workforce and the dedication and enthusiasm of the volunteers involved. The use of peat-free compost is to be applauded and shows a commitment to environmental responsibility others should follow. Whitehaven's emphasis on changing into a quality tourist destination is evident to any visitor.

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- Whitehaven is developing a very good balance between innovative annual bedding displays and sustainable perennial planting.
- The quality of the bedding plants and other planting material was some of the best seen by judges on their tour.
- The entrances to the town were very welcoming, for example the new Pelican Wall at the north entrance in traditional Cumbrian stone and attractive sustainable planting.
- The outstanding design, plant quality and maintenance at St Nicholas Gardens and Trinity Gardens were a delight and a wonderful asset to the town.
- Many of the business premises were participating in the "in Bloom" campaign. Of particular note was the Georgian House Hotel which was adorned with flowers enhancing the front and is an example for others to follow.

- The judges were amazed to see the sheer quantity and quality of plant containers at St Gregory and St Patricks Catholic School, and the boundless energy and enthusiasm of the headmaster, Mr Dwyer.

#### *Areas for development*

- The coir compost in the hanging baskets is free draining and may allow nutrient to be washed out easily. The judges suggest alternative feeding regimes to overcome this problem, evident in some baskets.
- Continue to develop sustainable schemes as at the Copeland Centre but include plants that will give winter interest, such as *Cornus* spp and coloured/variegated evergreen foliage.
- Some weeds were evident at the Pelican Wall sustainable beds.
- Discourage the use of plastic flowers at the Wellington Pub.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The move to peat-free compost in all hanging basket and container displays is to be applauded and is an example for others to follow.
- The judges were impressed with the number and quality of the artworks throughout the town depicting Whitehaven's heritage.
- The general streetscene infrastructure was attractive and well maintained.
- The involvement of local children in producing imaginative artworks and their display in prominent positions.
- It was pleasing to note that several empty buildings were being refurbished so that the town centre remains attractive and eager to attract new businesses.
- The judges were impressed with the facilities at Mire House Pond.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges would like to have meet a conservation officer or knowledgeable volunteer regarding management of wildlife areas across the town.
- It would be useful for future judging tours to include a recycling officer to discuss initiatives and performance in this area.
- It was disappointing to note that street cleansing did not match the high standards of horticultural performance in several areas.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- We were pleased to note that the campaign is being led by the Bloom group with excellent support from Copeland Borough Council.
- The sponsorship of containers by local businesses and the support of local media is impressive.
- The involvement of schools and the work of the Bloom group in promoting this interest.
- The active participation of the Hensingham Disability Group in the Bloom initiative.
- The community involvement in the excellent and enjoyable Trinity Gardens Planting Day.

#### *Areas for development*

- Encourage older children and young people from outside the school environment to participate in Bloom led activities.
- The judges would like to have met some of the volunteers at the sites where they had been involved in projects.

## **Woodsford (Leeds), Yorkshire Urban Community - Silver Gilt**

The strength of the community involvement is key to the work achieved during the short time that this group has been in operation. It was clear to the judges just how much passion there is for the Bloom in this community, as a result the changes that have been implemented are remarkable. There are several skilled people involved in this group who are talented in many different ways. We offer this new entry our best wishes for the future and congratulate them on an excellent result.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The changes that have taken place at the village green and canal area are a credit to all those who have been involved.
- The work at the school was of high quality and has involved many people working with the children.
- We were impressed with the orchard and the fact that some of the fruit trees were locally sourced.
- The planters were placed very well and showed the town to be a vibrant place in which to live.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although many small businesses are on board, they rely on the Bloom group to deliver the floral impact seen on their premises. Encourage more to get involved themselves; maybe they could create their own floral features with advice and encouragement from the group.
- Once the new park has been further improved to include more paths, trees and maybe a meadow, this should be publicised to judges either on the tour or through the portfolio.
- Not all private gardens were of the standard expected at this level of the competition; take care when planning your route to avoid these areas in future.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- Woodsford is a very clean and pleasant place to live and the importance of recycling is understood by all those residents we talked to.
- The containers were of a good standard and the hand made items added even more evidence of recycling practices.
- Management of the vacant site was excellent and brightened up what could have been a dull area.
- It was wonderful to see the village green used by so many people; this is further proof of the success of your work to improve the area.

#### *Areas for development*

- The judges would like to have been given a better understanding of the local heritage of the area, maybe more features linked to mining or the canal would have helped.
- More information regarding conservation would also have been of help; perhaps this could be the focus for a new project.
- Once agreement with the railway station staff has been obtained, we are sure floral decoration will enhance this important transport point.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The group works very well and they have achieved great results given the baseline from which they started.
- Funding is covered very well and the results are very clear.
- There is sense of pride in the work carried out and the friendships made in this community.

- The judges were impressed by the number of homes displaying the Bloom posters.
- The children singing at the nursery was a delight.

#### *Areas for development*

- Although this group has progressed at a very fast rate, the judges were a little concerned that more members need to be encouraged into the group in order to keep this up.
- The work carried out by Pat on her estate is the model for others to follow.

### **Wrexham, Wales City - Silver Gilt**

As a first time entry into the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals and after only five years in the Wales in Bloom campaign, the Wrexham in Bloom team can be justifiably proud of their efforts. The partnership they have developed with the local schools, Community Councils and volunteers is helping to make Wrexham a cleaner and greener borough and city. The many and varied environmental initiatives, including working with Tidy Towns, is really paying dividends and pride in the area is evident for all to see. The extensive and very active network of friends groups are working in partnership with the council to take ownership of their local parks and are becoming very essential in helping to drive forward improvements. The team behind this are to be congratulated in bringing together a very good entry and, in time, the judges are sure this grass-roots approach will help Wrexham to achieve greater success in both the Welsh and UK Finals campaigns. Well done to all!

#### **Horticultural Achievement**

##### *Areas of achievement*

- The excellent Erlas Gardening Project is a great way of involving adults with learning difficulties in the wider community, helping to restore the old walled garden and producing fruit flowers and vegetables for sale.
- The fantastic allotment site at Prices Lane is a great example of “Home Growing in Action” complete with a guided tour by local produce show rivals Monty and Neville.
- The work done by volunteers at Nightingale House Hospice in maintaining and developing the garden is to be commended.
- Visiting the private gardens of Peggy and Jackie was an absolute treat, two very contrasting gardens within sight of one another both showing high horticultural prowess.
- The work to develop the Crescent Road Community Garden shows a real commitment by the community, working in Partnership with Wrexham Borough Council. It will be interesting to see how this partnership and indeed the garden develops.
- The achievement of gaining five Green Flag Awards for the borough’s parks is testament to the commitment of the council and the community to their green spaces.

##### *Areas for development*

- Although the floral displays in the town centre were of a high standard they did seem to lack the “wow factor”, perhaps a re-think on the style of planting may achieve this by adding some perennials and grasses into the displays .
- The considerable improvements taking place at Acton Park and Belle Vue Park are helping to develop these parks; continue to engage with the community to both restore some of the older features and develop new ones. The work by the friends group in developing the Japanese garden in Acton Park is a good example to follow.
- The work with the business community in the town centre, in streets such as Charles Street, is helping to improve the environment for shoppers and visitors and we recommend this be extended into other areas.

## **Environmental Responsibility**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The ongoing work in Acton Park in engaging with the angling club is a great way of improving the park and involving a wide cross-section of the community.
- The excellent way the fishing club and the council have integrated the “Pegs” into the lakeside is an example many parks and clubs could follow.
- The informative presentation regarding recycling in the borough was really interesting and showed Wrexham’s strong commitment to this aspect, including the impressive rolling out of food waste collection and the compost giveaways.
- The town was very clean and tidy with no signs of litter, dog fouling or detritus; well done to all concerned.
- The visit to the newly refurbished museum showing Wrexham’s considerable heritage gave a great insight into the town’s past.

### *Areas for development*

- Although it is obvious from the portfolio that there are several areas where active conservation is taking place, there were no large scale projects included on the tour. Sites such as the Caia Park Community Woodland are interesting and would help judges assess this area of the criteria better.
- The number of children taking part in habitat-based learning as outlined in the portfolio is an incredible achievement; it would have been good to meet some of these youngsters on the route and see how they had benefited from this programme.
- The portfolio mentions that some of the parkland areas are managed as wildflower meadows; perhaps a little more public information on these would have been helpful. This could be in the form of an interpretation panel on each site explaining the variance in maintenance regimes.
- The impressive amount of public art in the town is a great asset and we suggest this be developed further to include links to the wealth of local heritage.
- There was a variable quality evident in the condition of the street furniture; some benches were maintained to a high standard whilst others looked a little neglected. Try to ensure this is consistent at the higher level.

## **Community Participation**

### *Areas of achievement*

- The work with the schools as outlined in the documentation provided is most impressive and will show dividends for years to come. This can be no better demonstrated than by the judges visit to Borras Infant School with its Forest Schools project, recycled bottle greenhouse and allotment plots.
- The impressive amount of press coverage and sponsorship gained by the Borough Council, as outlined in the portfolio.
- The banners showing which individual schools had been involved are a great way of publicly acknowledging their support.
- The obvious support given by some businesses in providing displays and supporting the campaign, of special note was the sponsored roundabout scheme.

### *Areas for development*

- The development of an independent Bloom group is crucial if the campaign in Wrexham is to continue to gain momentum. This could quite easily be achieved as the council have already engaged with many partners, both from the private, voluntary and public sectors.
- The ongoing work at Erlas Walled Garden is crucial to the community it serves. With such an extensive site, is there scope for a community shop staffed by the volunteers in which they can sell their produce? This would have the added benefit of bringing the wider community onto the site to see the marvellous work going on and would allow the volunteers to interact and learn new retailing skills.

- The development of friends groups in the parks is a great way of harnessing local support and increasing volunteer numbers; could this concept be extended into other areas of the town, perhaps through encouraging new It's Your Neighbourhood groups and facilitating more mechanisms for sharing ideas between groups.

## **York, Yorkshire City - Silver Gilt**

After a considerable absence from the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals, this historic city is back with a vengeance. The active partnership being developed by the City Council involving many other agencies and members of the wider York community is steadily building an unstoppable entry which in a very short time is proving itself to be more than capable of bringing top awards and recognition back to the city. The obvious enthusiasm of members of the group in promoting the campaign together with the sheer calibre of the natural and built environment of the city provides the visitor and resident alike with a great sense of civic pride and will, in time, enable the community to achieve the highest awards in RHS Britain in Bloom.

### **Horticultural Achievement**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The floral displays at York racecourse are of the highest quality as is the grass maintenance; a real credit to all involved but especial note must be made of the Head Gardener, Ian Halstead, who after a lifetime of work at the course is still producing displays worthy of the highest accolade; truly inspirational.
- The vegetable plots at Hartrigg Oak were a delight to see; well-tended, productive plots allowing residents easy access to the benefits of growing their own produce, near to home. This drive for "grow your own" has been further extended into the public realm through the excellent Edible York initiative.
- The support for the allotments at Low Moor, with the Community Kids Allotment providing a safe environment for the children to get their hands dirty whilst learning about growing plants and tending their crops.
- The impressive new sustainable planting including the fernery in Museum Gardens and the information provided by Ian Cooke, the garden's guide.

#### *Areas for development*

- Some of the displays provided by the Local Authority were of variable quality, including the barrier and hanging baskets. Bedding displays on traffic islands seemed to be a little flat; this could be overcome by the addition of dot or specimen plants.
- With the exception of the vegetable beds provided through Edible York there was very little innovation in the planted areas. Perhaps this could be addressed by incorporating an element of sustainable planting or themed sculptural features into the beds.
- The planting outside the retail park near the inner ring road had obviously suffered through the winter period, with many dead shrubs present; this should have been addressed.
- The maintenance of some areas of green space outside the immediate control of the City Council was of poor quality, especially on the southerly approach to the city and on the roundabout near to the designer outlet; perhaps this could be improved subject to discussions with the Highways Agency.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The historic city centre, famed for its rich built heritage has many preserved features, too numerous to mention, but all very well maintained and shown off to their best.
- The new hard landscaping at York St John University is a credit to the designer, with suitable planting to soften and give all year-round interest.

- Given the size of the city and the number of visitors the whole area was clean and tidy with very little litter or detritus in evidence; a great credit to the street cleansing team.
- The recycling team are to be congratulated on their proactive approach admirably demonstrated on the tour in the new Eco Depot and at Hazel Court recycling facility.
- The information provided by the City of York Countryside Officer on the various aspects of York's environmental policies past, present and future was inspirational.

#### *Areas for development*

- It was good to hear of the future plans to use wildflower mixes on one of the roundabouts to encourage biodiversity and link the city to the countryside in a sustainable way. This could also be a very positive way of tidying up some of the more outlying areas previously mentioned.
- There were several instances of visible graffiti on the route; even if this is on private property this must be tackled if the city is to promote greater civic pride.
- Although recycling is promoted widely by the council, it was difficult to assess how the Bloom group were promoting this in partnership with the Local Authority; perhaps this could be explained further on future judging tours.
- The introduction of dedicated, managed wildflower areas will greatly enhance this section of the judging criteria.

### **Community Participation**

#### *Areas of achievement*

- The excellent community initiative taken with the children at Low Moor Allotments, encouraging them to experience growing a range of vegetables, fruit and flowers.
- The considerable support provided by the various York in Bloom partners including the Racecourse, numerous hotels and businesses and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- The introduction and encouragement of the innovative Edible York project is to be commended and although the judges recognise it is in its early stages we encourage its extension to other sites.
- The excellent awareness campaign undertaken by the group with banners, posters and press coverage on the day.
- As a first time entry into the UK Finals, this was an fantastic effort which will no doubt go from strength to strength. Well done to all!

#### *Areas for development*

- The introduction of a residential gardens competition by the Bloom Group should be considered as a means of further engaging the gardening community of the city. If this recommendation was taken up, judges would be able to view and meet some of the winning entries.
- As there are one or two fledgling It's Your Neighbourhood groups in the York area, it would be appropriate to meet one or two representatives and be able to witness first-hand the important work they are doing to improve their own area and how they fit into the wider York in Bloom.
- Now that the group have established themselves it would benefit their future development to network with similar sized groups in the area to share best practice.