

SMALL CITY

Electoral population 35,001-100,000 (Judging time 3 hours)

General Comments

This is the third year that Loughborough has entered East Midlands in Bloom. Increased community engagement and partnership working in support of Loughborough's entry was very much in evidence with the establishment of the Town Centre Partnership and Community Participation Group as good examples. The Judges were introduced to a diverse range of landscape projects, initiatives and individuals, which helped to underscore ongoing improvements in meeting the Award criteria. The quality of grounds maintenance regarding parks, open spaces and highway verges in addition to the Crematorium and Cemetery was very good as were the standards of cleanliness throughout with very little evidence of litter.

Judges – Peter Benham and Richard Welburn

Loughborough Gold Award and Category Winner –175 points

Judged 13th July

* Judges Award:

Three Close Tenants Association

The judges were particularly impressed by:

SECTION A

A good standard of landscape maintenance was seen in all areas during the tour. Highway verge amenity shrub planting was to a good standard and the floral hanging baskets throughout the route were attractive and well maintained. The Woodthorpe Road Roundabout was a good example of an alternative and visually attractive method of landscape maintenance. An overall increase in the number of hanging baskets compared to last year was noted

SECTION B

All the areas we visited were maintained in a clean, litter free and tidy condition. The Waste Disposal and Recycling Centre was accessible, clean and well maintained. Stonebow Washlands are well managed nature conservation and wildlife areas.

SECTION C

The community champions initiative is a positive step to engage the local community in the Bloom. Regular local media coverage promoting the Bloom. Active involvement of Loughborough University and the Town Centre Partnership. Initiative taken to engage ethnic minority communities through the South Asian Women's Project. Good evidence presented of active School participation. The promotional DVD was relevant, helpful and of good quality.

Areas suggested for future development:

SECTION A

The direct involvement of the business community in supporting the Bloom needs to be better evidenced. For example, while the Town Centre was florally attractive, the Council had funded the majority of the floral features and hanging baskets. Comparator data illustrating year on year improvements would be helpful, for example numbers of hanging baskets, trees / shrubs / bulbs etc planted, related community activities, community participation group members etc.

SECTION B

Site interpretation at Stonebow Washlands needs to be improved through the better use of on site interpretive material. The expansion of alternative methods of grassland management should be explored as evidenced by the Woodthorpe Road Roundabout initiative

SECTION C

The community champion initiative needs to be expanded to ensure Borough wide representation. The benefits of the community champion initiative should be evidenced in future entries. Further initiatives should be taken to encourage ethnic minority participation. Further work needs to be done to secure active participation by the business community in supporting the Bloom, for example by the direct funding of the Town Centre hanging baskets and landscape features.

A=89 B=44 C=42 TOTAL 175

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General Comments

Oadby and Wigston is situated on the southern side of Leicester. This year is a busy year for the local Bloom, as they are also finalists in the National Britain in Bloom Competition and are the hosts to our awards ceremony. The judges saw a good range of Bloom initiatives involving children at Little Hill primary school using their outdoor space to grow vegetables, to Brocks Hill Park where pond dipping and walks are offered to appreciate the natural environment. Residents were also actively involved throughout the year maintaining allotments, front gardens and supporting local green space. The quality of the public floral displays, environmental maintenance and planting was to a good standard involving teams from the Leicester University, the Busy B's, volunteers and Council services. A number of new initiatives and improvement have been introduced including new specimen trees, new plantings and increasing the categories of the local bloom competition.

Judges – Peter Benham and Richard Welburn

Oadby & Wigston Gold Award –174 points

Judged 6th July

* Judges Award:

the Volunteers of Brocks Hill Country Park. For their work and continued support in maintaining Brocks Hill Country Park

The judges were particularly impressed by:

SECTION A

A good standard of Horticultural maintenance was seen in all areas during the visit. Brocks Hill Country Park was very busy, with visitors of all ages using the facilities and enjoying the many different areas of the park. A number of new permanent plantings have take place and the new trees in Wigston will enhance the town centre.

SECTION B

The recycling scheme in the Borough is very well supported and has resulted in reductions in disposal and financial savings for the Council. All the areas we visited were maintained in a clean, litter free and tidy condition.

SECTION C

The Bloom has delivered a wide range of community based events throughout the year. All of the groups we met had raised funds for their projects, were very enthusiastic and had plans for future improvements. There is very good support from the Lions and Rotary clubs to promote and resource environmental improvements.

Areas suggested for future development:

SECTION A

We were informed that the Busy B's service will end in September 2012; this will require alternative proposals to be considered if the good work and maintenance support they provide to the community is to continue.

SECTION B

Whilst we saw the Memorial Gardens and the Sock making museum there was no other historical links with events, former or present industry to celebrate the local heritage. There are proposals for interpretation boards to be installed, which together with some directional signage at Brocks Hill Country Park will certainly encourage greater usage and understanding of this valuable resource.

SECTION C

The support for the Bloom should be better quantified to compare measures of how it has grown each year, using volunteer hours, floral features, financial support, attendance at events and increasing competition entrants. It appears that there is limited support from business and future effort needs to be given on the various opportunities where support can be gained. There appears to be limited involvement from members of the multicultural community, youth and parents, and that there are future proposals to engage with these groups.

A=88 B=44 C=42 TOTAL 174

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General Comments

This year as last there were some changes to the Bloom route through Grimsby, offering some different points of interest and highlighting different projects. New to the judging route were the grounds of St Andrew's Hospice, Weelsby Woods and the many floral features of Howard Grove Community Group and floral features sponsored by the Bloom committee. A number of sites were visited where there was good photographic evidence of bulb plantings and the journey of the Christmas tree from Norway. The judges were able to see the continued development of the Chelmsford Avenue, Capes Recreation Ground, Courts project, Abbeygate and Peoples Park. The Bloom group had also joined with Cleethorpes to organise a midsummer ball using all the money raised to support the Bloom activities. A number of regular competitions were organised combining fun, education and healthy eating from poetry, musical vegetables, floral wheelbarrows, to a pumpkin competition.

Judges – Peter Benham and Ken Richardson

Grimsby Silver Gilt Award –163 points

Judged 12th July

* Judges Award:

St Andrew's Hospice Garden Volunteers

The judges were particularly impressed by:

SECTION A

The residents in Howard Grove have encouraged every house in the street to have at least one floral planter and maintain their garden. The garden at St Andrews Hospice was an excellent example of voluntary gardening to improve the grounds for the residents and visitors. The maintenance standards, planting and detail to the design was excellent. The striking floral displays sponsored by the Grimsby Institute bring colour to the town.

SECTION B

The landscaping of the Court area has continued to develop with new seating installed in the last year.

SECTION C

We were impressed by the range of competitions that the Bloom organised these include pumpkins, poetry, photography, wheelbarrow gardens, plus the normal gardening categories. Fund raising is always difficult and the joint working with Cleethorpes in Bloom for the Midsummer Ball offers best use of resources and publicity.

Areas suggested for future development:

SECTION A

We could have been shown the floral bedding schemes on the main approaches roads as part of the judging. During the judging we visited the Floral Hall in the Peoples Park, it is understood that the facility is destined to close shortly due to budgetary savings by the Grimsby Institute. It is hoped that a more commercial / educational use can be found for the site with public access maintained. With the interest in environmental matters and the increased interest in gardening, the site offers potential as a visitor attraction and a key feature within the park.

SECTION B

Apart from the highway verges, we did not see any areas demonstrating conservation or bio diversity at close quarters. We were shown very little of the main shopping and commercial areas of Grimsby except for the floral displays in Abbeygate.

SECTION C

The barrier baskets provided by Grimsby in Bloom could be tastefully labelled to highlight to the public the use of Bloom funds to improve the area. It would be useful to see some statistics and evidence to show how the Bloom has grown and developed year on year, with increased entrants, community groups and sponsors.

A=83 B=39 C=41 TOTAL 163

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General Comments

Chesterfield is famous for its crooked spire this is used on logos, hanging basket brackets and is also the linked to Spire Infants where there is an excellent school garden. The judges saw Tapton Park where there is a small formal garden, the Crematorium gardens and the large expanse of Holmebrook Country Park. Nursery and primary school children are encouraged to participate by designing banners to promote the Bloom. The winning banners are draped from lamp columns throughout the town. In addition to entering the traditional bloom competition residents have also undertaken a number of community gardening projects from planting and mowing large public verges, to refurbishing a sensory garden. As part of the many regeneration bids we were told about the future Waterside park project and the Destination Chesterfield initiative which will provide economic and social benefits to the town.

Judges – Peter Benham and Ken Richardson

Chesterfield Silver Gilt Award –161 points

Judged 8th July

*** Judges Award:**

the Friends of Holmebrook Park

The judges were particularly impressed by:

SECTION A

We were impressed with the standard of maintenance of the small garden area at Tapton Park. It is also understood that it is also used for training youngsters to develop horticultural skills. The small sensory garden refurbished by the friends of Holmebrook Valley park is starting to establish. This provides a pleasant vantage point to enjoy the views of the surrounding landscape. It was good to see that the Friends of Pevensey Green continue to manage their open space, and it is hoped that others will be encouraged to follow their example.

SECTION B

We were very pleased to see the investment by Chesterfield to introduce new litterbins with cigarette stubbers throughout the Town Centre. The quality of the local environment was very good which was generally litter-free and well maintained. There were a number of features which highlighted the local heritage of the area

SECTION C

The opportunity for children to design banners to promote the Bloom is a good way of engagement in the Bloom. The Sensory Garden Project in partnership with Chesterfield College is a good example of providing students the opportunity to design a living sculpture and replant area for the benefit of the local community. The Spire Infants school is an excellent example of encouraging children to take a strong interest in growing food plants and the natural environment.

Areas suggested for future development:

SECTION A

With the momentum of Destination Chesterfield it is hoped that more businesses and members of that group will take an active involvement in supporting the Bloom. Entrants to Chesterfield in Bloom could have been featured more on the judging tour. Groups of residents could be encouraged into entering the "Its Your Neighbourhood" category which will help encourage more participation in the Bloom.

SECTION B

The Council is currently embarking on a new waste collection contract, and we look forward to seeing the progress with your recycling targets. There were a number of projects involving the development and creation of natural areas at the Crematorium, wild flower plantings and Holmebrook Valley. It would be useful to see some of these areas more closely as they develop.

SECTION C

There are a number of new developments involving regeneration schemes and it is hoped in the future that the judges will be able to see these proposals as they develop. The portfolio from Chesterfield in Bloom indicates a growing number of entrants in its Bloom competition, new environmental projects and active community groups within the Borough. It would be helpful in future years if more of these could be showcased as part of the Bloom judging.

A=83 B=39 C=39 TOTAL 161