

Judges Notes for Summer 2026



Category Cat C6 Parks, Gardens, Cemeteries & Public Buildings

Barnsley Main Heritage Group

Platinum

Overall Impression

This small dedicated team of volunteers maintain and look after a vast, once industrial, site which incorporates a grade 2 listed building. To their credit they have made the site a welcoming place for all visitors to attend and created opportunities for interested people to learn about its history and mining past. The team's ethos is to encourage nature to reclaim the land from its industrial past. This is made harder by the shallow soil in places which has been contaminated with the industrial use of years gone by. However, the team strive to combat these issues by experimenting which types of plants grow best across differing areas of the site.

The team retrieve, repurpose and reuse as much as possible. Dried tree branches have been used to mark out planting areas, stones and bricks found on the site also used in the same way.

There are several individual areas; the old timber yard, herb garden, vegetable patch, the lovely wildflower and wildlife areas, including ponds, hedgehog habitats, a bee bank and a small copse. There are natural walkways around the site taking you into areas where the trees are thriving and surviving.

The Phyto mining project with Brunel University is very interesting. The University have worked with the team in planting and monitoring various plants which draw contaminants out and clean the soil. This fascinating project has been ongoing over several years with further information provide by way of an information board providing further insight into the process.

In the museum it is clear to see the motivation this team have to ensure that future generations do not forget what this site was and how it helped grow the countries industrial future at the time. It is also to learn of how hard and dangerous the work was.

There are areas where visitors can take time to reflect and honour the miners who died at this site in the 1866 Oaks Colliery disaster, including an area to remember the unknown miners who also died in the mines.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Consider working with the local council to install a bin to provide visitors with facilities to dispose of any waste whilst using the site.
- Continue to pursue links to the surrounding sites to connect them and increase visitor experience.
- Consider future planting schemes based on the limiting factors of the site, including considerations towards plants which require minimal watering due to team capacity issues.

Cannon Hall Museum Park and Gardens

**Platinum and
Joint Category
Winner**

Overall Impression

Cannon Hall Museum, Park and Gardens is a wonderful place to visit. The site is around 70 acres and has around one million visitors every year, being recognised as one of the most visited free attractions in England. It was evident that Dan, Roger and the excellent staff and volunteer team work tremendously hard to keep it looking clean, tidy, litter free and attractive to visitors throughout the year.

With its sweeping Vistas, Georgian walled garden and woodland trails the site opens itself up to the past heritage of the site imaginative play and exploration and has a stunning range of apple and pear trees and a very old flourishing grape vine. The range of planting areas were both fascinating and interesting in the walled garden with a sensory area and pond to sit and listen and absorb the colourful vibrant and scented surroundings. Art Sculptures, a sun dial and lecterns with information around plants, composting, trees etc were available and looked fitting for the environment. Both annuals and perennials were used to attract butterflies, bees and insects and encourage biodiversity.

The site has many events and attractions and festivals are held throughout the year which helps generate income, partnership work and increase visitor experience. The holiday activities are great with a mystical Monster walk that is imaginative, explorative and so much fun. The site caters for people and families of all ages and dogs too.

It is a truly great place visit with a dedicated team which is reflected throughout the grounds in the thought, imagination, creativity, maintenance and care of the space.

Well done!

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Consider some interactive 'Fun Fact boards around the Walled garden e.g. can you guess the age of Fruit trees to encourage participation and learning
- Consider plant ID boards for the sensory garden
- Launch a competition for ideas and suggestion or theme for a NEW woodland trail – to raise awareness and increase further footfall

Carlton Marsh Nature Reserve

Platinum

Overall Impression

It was lovely to visit Carlton Marsh and to see this special place on such a beautiful sunny summers day. It was wonderful to see how it unfolded to reveal beautiful wildflower meadows of amazing size and as it was disclosed, containing such a tremendous variety of special plants.

The bird hide that we visited was tremendously well equipped ,with both binoculars and books for people to use as reference and it opened onto an expansive stretch of water with reed beds around it that were a beautiful surprise.

It was impressive to learn of the number of species of flora and fauna which the site takes care of . It was indeed impressive to be shown round the site by people that had such a tremendous knowledge of this special place and it's wildlife and to hear that the people who have been taking care of it for many years have turned the site into something which will be a tremendous legacy for the future.

The people who live near it are very, very lucky indeed. The annual report on the site shows to what an incredible extent the special flora and fauna of the site monitored and recorded and cared for right down to varieties of gallss found on oak and other trees . The effort that goes into this site is very special indeed and all those involved in any way with it should feel very proud .

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- There must be many nature clubs and nature societies where people go out for nature rambles and share photographs and it would be great if as many of them as possible knew about this lovely place so that they could enjoy it without damaging it since these will be careful people who love nature and cherish it.
- There are some lovely seats on site ,beautiful memorial benches but perhaps a few more seats might be appreciated so that people can just sit quietly in mindfulness and drink in the beauty of the site.
- Perhaps it might be possible to produce some simple leaflets based on the route round the round the reserve with various points marked on the route where people could look and see specific things of interest.

Churwell Urban Woodlands

Platinum

Overall Impression

Churwell urban woodlands is a very well maintained site covering 3 areas along a linear path some of which follows the track bed of an old miniature railway line.

The team meet 4-5 days a week and over the years have developed many interesting horticultural features with a strong focus on biodiversity this site has something for everyone to enjoy.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- It was good to see that the group had attracted £12k of funding to repair the wooden bridges.
- Consideration could be given to the bird hide area by improving the viewing platform.
- Carry on with development of the wild flower areas and expand the coverage area.
- The Moon garden needs some replanting as some species have started to take over which if left unchecked could swallow the feature.
- Look into funding with regards to some feature depicting the railway on the old track bed.

Cliffe Castle Park

Platinum

Overall Impression

Cliffe Castle is clearly popular with local people who were out enjoying the sunshine in this beautiful park. The extensive grounds are well maintained by the parks team who are to be congratulated for their work in this impressive site. History and horticulture sit comfortably side by side here and there is plenty to do for all ages.

The water features at the lake were particularly beautiful and many parks across the county would be thrilled to have such a magnificent conservatory to call their own! Thank you for an excellent tour of the park.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Continue to progress plans to replace the palm tree in the centre of the conservatory. This will be a massive logistical problem because of the height of the dome. Perhaps some thought could be given to planting something smaller and more easily maintained but still in keeping with the magnificence of the building.
- The rhododendrons on the sloping bed by the museum are suffering and are clearly not happy being in full sun and on a very dry slope. Perhaps some thought could be given to replacing these when budgets allow. Hardy geraniums would suit this site and would be relatively inexpensive to plant amongst the pachysandra which appears to be doing well.
- The ponds in the park are a beautiful feature. Perhaps some thought could be given to appropriate planting in the pool side borders.
- Generally, the interpretation signs around the park were clean, tidy and legible. The exception was the Dark Lane sign which was difficult to read. Perhaps some thought could be given to improving this valuable historic information board.

Conyngham Hall

Platinum

Overall Impression

Conyngham Hall sits in a wider expanse of parkland with limited formal gardens. Both main entrances are colourfully planted to attract visitors in, as is the area around the Kingfisher Café which is a focal point for visitors and activities.

The gardens next to the Hall are maintained as the historic formal terraces and are mainly laid to grass. All areas are clean, neat and tidy. The Community Green Connectors beds have a thriving mix of drought tolerant plants that add colour and scent to that area. The tree walk provides a wide range of vistas across the park as well as views of the spectacular trees. The main vistas over the parkland provide a quiet wow factor, whether looking out from the house or from the tree trail towards the house the views are interesting and engaging. The Jubilee walk continues to provide interest with the Hornbeams along one side and the Cherries along the other. There is year-round interest and structure, with the parkland being sensitively managed to optimise the habitat. The maps of the site and tree walk are to be commended.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

In all Conyngham Hall provides a fine example of parkland management and community working. In order to continue to develop the inclusivity agenda it is suggested that the following be considered:

1. The path along the tree walk is uneven and breaking up. This is making walking difficult for the less able. Re-surfacing of the path should be considered and the natural undulations embraced where tree roots are under the path to provide a new path that rises and falls as it goes under the trees.
2. The introduction of a ramp to enable wheelchair access to the tennis court
3. Provision of information, via either signs or leaflets given out with the tree walk map, describing the approach to differential mowing, managing the under tree areas and leaving trees to degrade naturally to help visitors understand the approach being taken
4. Monitoring of the reforestation initiatives around Knaresborough and Yorkshire to identify preferred under tree species, if any, to add further interest under the trees.

Elsecar Park and Local Nature Reserve

Platinum

Overall Impression

. An excellent public park setting a standard of what the public should expect from their green space. Very well maintained, in all areas including the band stand, seats, bins, play area and paths. Some seasonal planting setting off the lower formal area around the well used band stand. Planting includes good woodland areas underplanted with spring,

importantly there is a programme to plant new trees.

The higher areas lead to the reservoir and nature area with, bird hide, wild flower meadow and sheep grazed pasture on the dam wall. The park is complete with cafe and toilets.

The friends group help with events and fund raising along with working groups with working groups to assist the two permanent site staff. The park and nature area have interpretation boards.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- It may be worth investigating hydration bags for the new tree plantings to give a more even water supply and possibly, reduce the time needed to water new trees.
- When possible an update on the information about the nature reserve would be useful as resident wildlife has changed.
- Continue to engage with other operators such as highways and engineers to gain benefits such as the crossing and new entrance and now the new foot bridge that is required.

Congratulations to the friends group, site staff and management for presenting this wonderful park.

Friary Gardens, Richmond

Gold

Overall Impression

. This garden close to the centre of Richmond may be small but it is packed with a variety of different features reflecting both its own and the town's history. Greyfriars Tower, the remnant of a 15C Franciscan Friary is a focal point at the rear of the garden with the town's war memorial sitting below it. Clearly well used and enjoyed by both residents and visitors, the gardens have colourful flower beds, bench seating, information boards and feature in the historic town trail. The bedding plants have been specifically chosen as drought-tolerant thus minimising watering.

A colourful perennial bed has been created while the border alongside the hospital road provides shade and shelter for wildlife. Another feature of the garden is the memorial sensory garden. Raised beds allow wheelchair access and the informal planting not only provides smell, texture, taste (herbs) and sound but is attractive to pollinating insects.

An open area to the front of the garden is used for community events such as Easter egg hunts, Christmas lights switch-on, and band concerts and the war memorial provides a

focus for Remembrance Day and military/memorial events supported by the nearby Garrison.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- It would be good to see a move to more perennial/mixed plantings to develop year-round interest. Equally, it is recognised that this is the type of garden where some annual plantings are appropriate for effect and the judicious choice of suitable plants is to be commended.
- The hospital road border could be developed further as a haven/corridor for wildlife by the use of bird boxes, insect hotels and similar?
- The Rose border appeared a bit thin in places. Could the roses be included in a mixed border as is increasingly common these days?
- It was good to hear that a programme of cleaning/updating benches is in place and hopefully this will take place over the next year for the benefit of visitors
- The wooden carved 'statue' is now in need of attention. As discussed, it may be possible to re-use some elements within the garden.

Friends of Monk Bretton Park

Gold

Overall Impression

. The historic landscape at Monk Bretton Park is a valuable asset to the village and the Friends group deserve recognition for all the hard work they put into maintaining the space to a very high standard on behalf of the local community.

A historic ridge and furrow landscape occupies the majority of the park's space which is popular with families and dog walkers alike. The group have forged close links with the local council and are working hard to make sure that maintenance is carried out to a very high standard despite the small number of volunteers in the group.

The planted areas of the park are well maintained and there are a number of new benches in the space. There was very little sign of litter or graffiti in the park which was good to see.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Standards in the park are very good but there were areas of planting which could be improved on. Expanding the plant collection to include species for year-round interest along the path at the top of the park would not only create interest in the park out the summer season and support biodiversity in the area. Mulching the

existing beds and borders would also help reduce the work needed to keep them tidy and improve soil health on the site in the face of the hotter summers we have been experiencing.

- Introducing wildflower areas to the park by relaxing mowing under the tree avenue or around the new cairn would add additional summer colour to the area and increase local biodiversity.
- One of the key conversations with the group highlighted that there is a lack of community engagement with the park at a deeper level. The group told me that they had to cancel a regular event because they were no longer able to carry out all the planning and preparation necessary due to a lack of volunteers. To build support from the wider community the group could make more use of their Facebook page and notice boards in the park. While there are regular posts on Facebook, they show off what the group has achieved but don't go into how hard they work to achieve this. Using personalised stories showing the volunteers at work or appeals for additional help from the community might just encourage more people to support the group.
- Consider other ways in which the Friends group can have a positive impact in the park. Are there any social groups that could be established around the park or could links be made with corporate sponsors for volunteering days in the park?
- The pond which was once a thriving habitat for wildlife has begun to drain over the last few years. Attempts have been made to rectify this but could well have made the problem worse. Working with the council and local businesses the group could look at ways to restore the wildlife value of the pond as a long-term project.

Friends of Monk Bretton Memorial Garden

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Monk Bretton Memorial Garden is a fitting tribute to the who gave their lives in conflict. The recent resurfacing works have been completed to a very high standard highlighting the two memorial pillars and the planting on the site.

The volunteers who look after the garden clearly spend a great deal of time and effort to ensure that the garden is maintained to a very high standard and should be commended for their efforts. It was a pleasure to visit the garden and hear all about the hard work that goes into maintaining this valuable community space.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- . The plant selection in the garden was generally to a very good standard. However, the very hot summers we are experiencing are placing additional burdens on the volunteers to keep up with watering. The bedding plants used in the garden this year were selected for their resilience but as a result the impact of the display was not particularly strong. The group may wish to think about replacing some of the summer bedding with perennial planting that would have reduced maintenance needs across the year and have a stronger visual impact going forward. There is also the opportunity to then sow poppy seeds amongst any perennial planting to further emphasise the message of the garden.
- The shrubs at the back of the garden have become too high for the volunteers to manage and are now maintained by the local council. They have begun to overshadow the bed at the rear of the garden and would benefit from some restorative pruning to reduce their size making them more manageable.
- While there are bird boxes mounted on the wall at the rear of the garden these have become lost amongst the shrubs. If the volunteers wish to make the garden more wildlife friendly without compromising the dignity of the space, they could consider selecting pollinator and wildlife friendly species into the enhanced planting they are planning for the border behind the memorials.

Friends of Monk Bretton Priory

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

The site was founded as a monastery in the 12 century, today visitors can see the well marked plan by the stone remains giving a very good idea of the scale. There is also an almost complete 15th century gate house.

The dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 saw the site being plundered for building materials. The site has been in the guardianship of the state since 1932 now English Heritage.

We are used to the term no dig in the vegetable garden but the whole of the site is no dig which rather limits some horticultural projects.

There are interpretation boards around the site and it is well maintained.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- The freinds group has a plan to increase visitor interest and educational value, they will plant a herb garden close to the site of the infirmary used by the monks. This will be as a raised bed and using plants that were available to the monks with supporting information about the use of the plants. This is being well researched and discused with English Heritage.
- There are plans to use the large building currently used as a store for some form of visitor information, but this will be a project.
- The raised bed in the car park has developed well and was managing to keep going in the hot weather.
- The lavender borter was at its peak and a wonderful site.

Once the herb garden is in place this will increase the horticultural content of the site which can be reflected in the award level. The site model deserves to be on show.

Friends of Wilthorpe Park

Platinum

Overall Impression

The award winning friends group of dedicated people ensure that this park is providing the community with quality green space.

The work includes local schools with some now bringing a class each week for a science lesson. Scouts and Brownies have helped with litter picks and assistance is given to Duke of Edinburgh awards.

The excellent work is advertised by facebook,noticeboards, posters and newspaper articles. The group has undrtaken a range of projects to help the environment and encourage wildlife. This has included bird boxes, bug houses and an information board showing wildlife that lives in the park.

The tree planting and orchard have extended intrest in the park and are essential for the future.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- If possible the plan to plant more trees will continue as many of the park trees are becoming mature along with Ash Die back being present.
- In respect of planting, this year has been very difficult and the group should monitor how plants manage through the year and give thought to what or how replacement plants can be secured if needed.

- When the occasion occurs try to spread the success your hard work has achieved to other groups as an example of what can be done

Friends of Wombwell Cemetery

Platinum

Overall Impression

The achievements of the group are remarkable positive and so valuable that it would not be possible to put a value on what they have achieved. The work started in the early 2000 when the cemetery had become a site for vandals. The group started with big intentions and has achieved so much.

The extensive area of railings and gates have been replaced, a fire damaged chapel restored to be a community space and a fire damaged one restored to be a peace garden. Having achieved all of that the group has continued to improve the site, the two memorials have been erected to mark the site where still born babies had been buried in large numbers. In 2025 a special display frame was made and added to the peace garden to allow for more memorial plaques to be placed in the area.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

After so many years and having achieved so much it is wonderful to see the group still actively working for the cemetery and helping the public in many ways, you serve as an example of what can be done when starting from a very low point to now being leaders in community achievement.

- I was privileged to be the first bloom visitor since 2019 and would congratulate everyone for what is a remarkable story that should be widely known, it is pleasing to see that you are consulted by others who wish to restore a cemetery.
- The wildlife monitor is a very useful record and you make it available via social media along with the tree trail both of which if possible need to be kept up to date and stored to provide an ongoing record.
- Do please invite bloom back in 2027 as seven year gap in recording your achievements is too long.

Friends of Wombwell Park

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

The Friends of Wombwell park have developed a true community park with a wide range of activities some of a large scale such as picnic in the park. This event sees volunteers pack several hundred lunch bags for children.

The park is almost three landscapes the entrance and improved pavilion area provides space for planting of both seasonal and shrubs, a large area is dominated by an a very good range of trees and a leisure/sports area .

The group has also gained support from a range of companies who offer support in a variety of ways.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- The weather has prevented some planting to be carried out and for good reason the plants have been retained in a place where they can be cared for and planted out when weather permits.
- On the 'if only there was a solution' the area around the play area had a small amount of litter whilst it may be wishful thinking it could be worth highlighting the location of the bin and even getting another bin.

The friends groups carry out a range of works but making the park the heart of the community is the one that has most effect for the park is for people to use, well done.

Friends of York Cemetery

Platinum

Overall Impression

Thank you to Alison & Clive for a fascinating and comprehensive tour of this "Oasis in the City". York Cemetery covers 24 acres and is designed to have individual areas such as the Scented Walk, The Butterfly Walk, Fern Garden, Winter Colour Border and the beautiful Herb Garden. The chapel & associated buildings are maintained to the highest heritage standards and now provide a source of income which is reinvested in the cemetery.

The volunteers who give their time to work in the cemetery are to be thanked and congratulated on doing such an important job. They are simultaneously keeping history and heritage alive and creating a haven for wildlife of all sorts.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Progress the hedgehog project with Toni Brunell and try to monitor the hogs once they have been released.
- Whenever possible continue with your programme of bench maintenance. There are many of them but even just doing two or three a year will make a difference to the overall total.

Harold Park

Platinum

Overall Impression

Harold Park is an excellent example of a well-managed park where it is clear there is a strong, effective partnership between the Friends of Group, Bradford Council and a range of community groups and organisations. The park has also achieved a Green Flag Award.

It is an accessible park at the heart of the local community, enjoyed by local residents, such as for family celebrations, walking groups, the Angling Group, community coffee mornings, and a gardening club. Volunteer gardeners meet on a Friday morning to carry out maintenance work in the park. The community café and warm space make good use of the former bowling hut. It contains archive material on the history of the park as well as a nature hunt identification sheet for children to use in the park.

The Sensory Garden is a focal point for gardening sessions, with benches that are accessible for wheelchair users, where people including local home-schooled children can take part in practical tasks. Health and wellbeing is promoted in the park with outdoor gym equipment and a Scenic Strole and Daily Mile walking route to encourage people to use the space for exercise.

There are a wide range of community events throughout the year. These include a Summer Gala, which raises funds for the Friends of Group to continue work in the park, an Easter Egg Hunt and Easter Bonnet competition, Halloween event, Remembrance Service and Christmas Market.

The park and events are promoted on social media, posters are displayed around the local area and a notice board is updated with relevant information.

Thank you for meeting with us and showing us around the park with such enthusiasm.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Continue your work to support climate resilience and biodiversity in the park, examples include plans to continue appropriate plant selection and soil health improvements.
- Consider ways to engage more young people as volunteer gardeners in the park, continuing to build on events such as the RHS Great Big Green Week and other national campaigns. Activities such as bulb planting with young people work well as they can revisit the park and see the results of their work in six months time.

Hillsborough Walled Gardens

Platinum

Overall Impression

. Firstly a big thank you to Colin, Christine, Andy, Melvyn and Caroline who we met on the tour of the gardens for a very pleasant and informative tour of what the groups wishes and aims are. Hillsborough Walled Gardens is a tranquil oasis and a valued Heritage asset within Sheffield. The dedicated volunteers have restored and maintain this community asset offering horticultural beauty, historical features, a wildlife area, offering a quiet retreat for visitors.

As you enter through the Hillsborough Disaster gates, on the right, you are greeted by a wonderful herbaceous border planted with an excellent variety of plants all carefully considered for the colour and location and provides an excellent array of colours all maintained by Colin to an excellent standard with no signs of weeds or pest and disease. As you walk around the herbaceous border and part of this site is a wildlife area with a pond. Newly constructed bark paths with an interpretation board and seating makes this an ideal spot for local wildlife making this a valuable asset for our wildlife to thrive within urban areas, a big thank you to Caroline, who volunteers every Tuesday to look after this area and for the tour round.

Within the Walled Garden itself, planting includes ornamental trees such as cherry, olive, acer, eucalyptus alongside herbaceous borders and sensory planting for year round interest. Other inclusions are raised beds, decorative borders, trellises with clematis, wisteria and laburnum, a small fountain and seating for reflection.

The group compost on site and grow plants from seeds. There is very good evidence of self-funding through plant sales and various garden events throughout the year which raises the gardens profile

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Continue to restock the rose garden beds to fulfil its potential for colour and sensory smell.
- Consider timber treatment for the raised beds, benches, trellis, which was mentioned in the tour as an ongoing project.
- The judges look forward to the project to move the two tombstones from Ward End Cemetery, which have some historical importance to the side of the Bradbury Makers Shed with the inclusion of an interpretation board which will make an excellent feature.
- Continue to explore funding opportunities through Ward Alliance monies and further assistance from Sheffield Council to help sustain this valuable asset for the community.

Keighley Civic Centre

Platinum

Overall Impression

The hanging baskets and railing planters that grace the front of the Civic Centre are overflowing with healthy flowers providing a significant pop of colour which complements the architecture.

The colour scheme of the planting, coupled with the historic police post box and railings help to integrate the Centre with the Town Hall garden and surrounding streets reinforcing the strong local Keighley identity.

The main hall within the Centre hosts a range of classes and events for the community which is complemented by the community café and the art classes that run in a smaller hall at the front of the venue.

In all the Civic Centre is a credit to Keighley.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

It is suggested that the following are considered:

- The conversion of 1 or 2 of the rail planters into herb gardens, which could then provide herbs to the community café or for 'pick your own' for the wider community
- Addition of water points within the rail planters / hanging baskets to provide a source of water to insects and birds, especially in the summer months

Keighley Town Hall Square

Platinum

Overall Impression

The Town Hall square is a horticultural oasis in the centre of Keighley with the Cenotaph acting as a focal point amongst the flower displays.

Easily visible from the main roads the square provides colour and interest for drivers whilst providing a calm area for people to sit and contemplate, with the planting colour scheme radiating out from the square down neighbouring streets providing unifying avenues of colour.

Planting is abundant and healthy from more formal beds, through to the tree pits and includes seasonal planting and perennial beds to provide year-round colour and

structure. Theming of some of the beds, along with two memorials to local heroes, adds to the community interest and involvement.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

In all the Town Hall Square provides a visual feast for the eyes and is a credit to Keighley. In order to continue to evolve the garden it is suggested that the following be considered:

- A review of further opportunities to increase the community focus of the garden with further events, especially if the neighbouring green space can be linked to provide additional space.
- Consider a school competition to design a flower bed or planter to encourage younger members of the community to engage with the garden.

Knaresborough Castle

Platinum

Overall Impression

Knaresborough Castle continues to balance the needs of a historic monument whilst being integrated into daily town life. The current cleaning/maintenance of the remaining walls is welcomed and can only add to what is already a very well maintained site.

The Castle environs are used by numerous visitors and locals every day and the comprehensive programme of events in place is year round and has something for everyone, further demonstrating how the Castle is central to town life.

The planting is vibrant and healthy with key areas being around the War Memorial, where the plants set off the stunning memorial beautifully, and the Children's design flower bed, next to the bowling green, recreating the winning world cup design.

The grassed areas show minimal impacts of recent weather and a flower bed, which last year was underwhelming, was noted to have a more robust display this year. The Castle has to be commended for its range information boards which are written in plain English to support visitor engagement with them.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Knaresborough Castle is a testament to the hard work undertaken to maintain the high standards of presentation combined with the desire to ensure that the Castle is enjoyed by

all. In order to maintain these standards, it is suggested that the following be considered:

1. Early discussions to take place regarding tree works/ground maintenance regarding the obscured views of the river to gain a consensus view of what is needed and when.
2. Whether a QR code could be easily added to the information boards providing a link to foreign language translations.
3. Whether the overall length of the schools competition bed could be reduced to allow for perennial planting to support pollinators without compromising the overall impact of the flower bed.

Myrtle Park, Bingley

Gold

Overall Impression

In the relatively short time they have been formed, the Friends of Myrtle Park have done an admirable job managing, developing and promoting this small park in the heart of Bingley.

Several history and interpretation boards, wonderful stump carvings and well maintained and thought-out planted areas make for very pleasant and interesting visit.

They have developed the veterans hut building into the 'Park Hub', now a highly valued community asset and information hive.

With events aplenty, their impressive fund-raising record and organisational nous, the Friends' have made a huge contribution in making the park a very popular local attraction. There is strong evidence for year-round activities and works in the park.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- The standard of upkeep is impressive considering the resources available, but perhaps standards could be raised further by employing the local Payback team backing up the council grass cutting by extra strimming etc. and possibly tidy up the tree bases at the lime avenue area by removing the epicormic growth.
- Continue to develop the sunken garden area as and when with shade tolerant and drought resistant plants.
- Continue to develop the beds close to the cenotaph with sustainable planting. The 'adopt a bed' scheme mentioned is a good approach and it would be interesting to see the outcome of this.

Judges are looking forward to seeing the 'memory phone' in action in the future. This is a fantastic idea to provide an oral history.

Peasholm Park Friends

Platinum

Overall Impression

The park is a wonderful, free amenity which is enjoyed by visitors of all ages with its oriental themed gardens including statues, bridges and pagodas. The park is planted with shrubs, trees and grasses with formal bedding near the entrances. As well as the vast boating lake fed from a natural glen where ducks and geese share the water with colourful dragon boats, there is also a tree walk, a yachting pond and an island.

The well tended grounds, seating and litter-free paths are maintained by the Parks Department, Friends of Peasholm Park and Keep Scarborough Tidy. It's interesting history and the many activities which take place by day and night are publicised on notice boards which continue the oriental theme.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- There is a good mix of perennial and annual planting to give a colourful welcome and a holiday feel to the park.
- The pathways were litter-free and the ample seating provision was in excellent condition and allow easy access for disabled visitors. Even on a busy day, there are quiet, shady spots to be found. The park does not rest on its laurels and is continually renovating and planning new projects.

Roberts Park

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Steeped in history with UNESCO status, the park offers Victorian era design featuring a dramatic tree-lined promenade, bandstand complete with locally manufactured cannons, magnificently restored shelters, and a cricket ground bordering the banks of the River Aire. There is also a grand statue of Sir Titus Salt standing proud within the park.

There are many impressive veteran trees including Coast Redwoods, plus detailed interpretation regarding the history and layout of the park.

Desire lines have been effectively stopped or minimized where possible through the use of fencing and pyracantha. This approach has proven successful, as the plants blend harmoniously with the surrounding environment.

The Friends group organise a busy calendar of events, including utilising the bandstand to great effect for regular musical and theatrical performances. There are also larger events held in the park that attract visitors in their thousands. In addition to these events, various groups utilize the park for recreational activities, including yoga, Tai Chi, and combat training courses, among others.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Once a site-based gardener is appointed then consider, where possible, the tidying and weeding of the numerous shrubberies.
- There are several very well made and characterful benches along the promenade that would benefit from a repaint if possible.

Royston Canal Club

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

The volunteers who run the canal club are clearly deeply passionate about the site and their efforts to maintain and improve the area should be highly commended. The stretch of canal managed by the group has been transformed into a delightful haven for local wildlife as well as being popular with fishing enthusiasts, walkers and cyclists. The path forms part of the Trans-Pennine Trail and has been looked after by Royston Canal Club for several years. The small team of volunteers in the group have worked closely with the local council to ensure that the site remains well maintained and safe for people to use with footpaths, fishing pegs and signage greatly improved over the last few years. It is clear however that the team is now starting to struggle for new volunteers and that the work is starting to overwhelm them. The angling club is thriving however with plenty of young people signing up for annual permits on the day we visited.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The work on the canal is being carried out by a decreasing number of volunteers and:

- Some of the problems of littering are caused by people fishing the site. Consider adding 'Please take your litter home' signage to the pegs to remind people of their obligations (This could be stencilled onto the bed of the pegs to save money)
- Engage with younger members using the canal to develop volunteering opportunities. Schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards require candidates to learn new skills and commit to community service and may be a way of recruiting new members

willing to help paint fences and maintain vegetation.

- Corporate volunteering days may also be a way of getting larger tasks completed. While these are not usually repeated by the same companies each year, they can be a good way to bring revenue into the club allowing further pegs or benches to be installed on the site.
- Funding for the site is covered by a mix of club fees and council budgets which covers the day-to-day management of the site. However, there are grants and funds available to support community projects which may be worth looking into in order to further develop the site and bring more long-term sustainability to the area.
- Wider community engagement is limited. Consider updating the website which has not been updated since 2018 to highlight the excellent work that is being done to keep the club running and actively recruit new volunteers. Reaching out to groups within the community who are not currently represented on the website to engage with the sport could increase membership and help recruit new volunteers.

South Cliff Gardens

Platinum

Overall Impression

The judges were most impressed by South Cliff Gardens which comprise The Italian Gardens, The Shuttleworth Garden and the Prince of Wales Garden.

The Italian Gardens, which meander down to the sea, comprise 52 acres looked after by Head Gardener Chris and his small team.

Here there is formal planting, a pond, statues and urns in this garden with seating and shelters.

Shuttleworth gardens is very attractive with a good variety of sustainable planting. It is looked after by the council and volunteers and has a miniature garden with a water feature which is looked after by a Friends group and is popular with young visitors. It holds children's events and there is plenty of seating.

The Prince of Wales Gardens has an open aspect with a good choice of plants, a pond and fountain, urns and statues. There is seating and a long, deep shelter making it a year-round venue where activities are held.

The Beeforth Hive is a great addition to the top of the Italian Gardens where many activities take place such as Yoga and school activities. It is popular with all ages with the addition of a children's playground and wheelchair access. The Grade II listed clock tower with paths lined with colourful bedding is a popular place for photographing weddings.

The Shuttleworth is a flat, safe garden to relax in. The Prince of Wales Garden with its shelter is an attractive place to sit.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- The area of the rose garden which is failing is being investigated and samples of soil have been sent off to RHS. Chris is looking into more sustainable, rabbit-proof planting.
- The railings of the miniature garden would benefit from repainting.
- Lottery funding is to be used to renovate part of the Prince of Wales Garden

Spa Gardens, Ripon

Gold

Overall Impression

The Spa Gardens provide a lovely welcoming green space sitting between the old swimming baths which are under renovation and the newly reopened Ripon Inn Hotel.

The Spa Gardens have a splendor of annual bedding displays which together with the many mature trees enhance the site and give it a very distinct local identity.

The beautiful gardens provide a peaceful place to sit and relax, either on the many benches or in the lovely café, or to play bowls.

The notice board gives information on the many events which also take place in the gardens, including performances during the Ripon Theatre Festival and Summer Afternoon Concerts in the bandstand.

Ripon is proud of its links with the army which stretch back many years; the gates of the gardens and the bandstand were festooned with knitted poppies for VE Day.

The range of events and atmosphere of the gardens truly reflect the ethos of making the park fit for all.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

We look forward to seeing the finished works to tie in the site with the refurbished swimming bath site.

- Continue to encourage schools to have an input in the design of the flower beds.
- It was good to see the investment in providing the festoon lighting to improve safety and extend the use of the gardens into the evening. It will be interesting to see how this develops.
- Suggest consideration of using more perennials and grasses both to attract pollinators but also to reduce the resources required for growing, plating and watering. It would be interesting to use white flowers and pale grasses and leaves which stand out in the dusk to enhance the extended use of the gardens being encouraged by the festoon lights.

The Rose Garden Mortomley Park

Platinum

Overall Impression

It is a real pleasure to walk into this lovely area of Mortomley Park and to see and hear how much it is appreciated by the local community. As it started as a real wilderness this small group have made it into an area to be proud of and presents all the qualities of an excellent entry. There are some beautiful trees some of which are fairly mature but others are recently planted, many of which are designated with a specific reason.

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The central area is fairly formal in structure with some memorial beds. There are some beautiful roses as well as other sustainable and annual plants.

The long grass looks good and appropriately mown with good strategically placed pathways. Good composting is practiced and there are bird and bat boxes with evidence of hedgehogs,

This small enthusiastic hard working group have achieved so much for the benefit of the community and the environment they need many congratulations. Well done to you all.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- So much has been achieved by this small group but I am sure more help would be welcome.
- Continue to work with apprentices and any groups who are willing to volunteer.

Thornes Millenium Green

Gold

Overall Impression

. Situated along a busy trunk road, the Millenium Green is a green haven of mature trees, shrubs and sustainable planting, offering a peaceful and cooling retreat from the heat of the day. Local school children were involved in designing the original fencing and gateways to the site, depicting wildlife and are a focal point as you pass by to draw you in.

The area is well maintained with seating space and lawns, by the Trustees & Volunteers who are constantly seeking funding to maintain the space for the benefit of the community. They run a bonus ball, car boots and use vinted along with a grants and other support from the Local authority. Green waste is composted on site, and mulch is available on request from the local authority. There's space for wildlife, with bug hotels, bird boxes and a variety of plants to support bees, birds and other pollinating insects

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- The removal of one of the paths has created space for more sustainable planting, which the group have taken advantage of, maybe potential to provide additional fencing to compliment the existing to complete the boundary.
- There may be options to look at a more maintenance free/reducing pathway, instead of the difficult gravel path; such as "Flexi Pave"—porous bounded rubber/gravel system that can be installed over tree roots, however that would require a substantial financial commitment initially.
- Great idea of having evening volunteer sessions to drum up interest for those that can't make a daytime slot, hopefully this will offer options for others to get involved.

Overall Impression

. As one of the most visited public parks in Yorkshire, the 17 acres of Valley Gardens has much to be admired, from its floral displays, themed gardens, attractive borders and mature tree collection; through to its sculptures, busy area for children and performance area. The high standards of maintenance seen throughout the judging visit, due to great teamwork on behalf of the local authority and the dedicated Friends of Valley Gardens volunteers, was impressive.

The very well organised volunteers have raised funds for a number of projects, seen these executed and then help ensured they are kept to a high level. Stand out successes include the detailed World Tree Trail, which is a remarkable achievement, and the refurbished Japanese Garden. As an English Heritage Grade II listed garden the historic elements are easy to identify, however great efforts have been made to ensure new and modern features seamlessly blend with the old, adding further interest for visitors. There was much to be praised at Valley Gardens, but overall it was the commitment from staff and volunteers that deserves the credit for a well-presented entry, well done.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

1. The areas of uncut grass designed for wild flowers, pollinators and habitats are in stark contrast to adjacent differently managed areas. Some method at site of informing inquisitive visitors of the reasoning behind the contrasting management of these sites would be useful.
2. It was encouraging to see a volunteer donate funds for benches to enable them to use whilst they were still able. As charging for entry and having multiple donation boxes located about the park is not practical, could not the idea of “donating for a bench now rather than later” be considered and developed, as donating to a charity is tax beneficial? The use of QR codes may also make donating easier for some.
2. It was encouraging to see a volunteer donate funds for benches to enable them to use whilst they were still able. As charging for entry and having multiple donation boxes located about the park is not practical, could not the idea of “donating for a bench now rather than later” be considered and developed, as donating to a charity is tax beneficial? The use of QR codes may also make donating easier for some.
4. The changes in the climate are having an impact on species choice for perennial borders. Establishing a demonstration bed of selected drought tolerant plants to show visitors, coupled with moisture retention methods with added interpretation signs could be a consideration.

York Museum Gardens

**Platinum and
Joint Category
Winner**

Overall Impression

Thank you to Steve Williams, Gardens Manager at York Museum Gardens, for an extensive and in depth tour discovering the highs and lows of looking after an important botanical garden whilst managing the expectations of over a million visitors, commercial pressures and climate change!

The new border inside Lendal Bridge gates makes a great first impression and it's hard to believe that it's only been there since March! There are many mature and rare trees in the garden and it was interesting to hear about how these veterans are being managed. The Edible Garden, The Japanese Garden and The Prairie Border all looked stunning.

It was particularly interesting to learn about the Tansy Beetles and the work being done to maintain their fragile habitats.

So much to see and admire! Congratulations to the team for a superb entry into Yorkshire in Bloom.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Continue to progress plans for the Camassia border to be planted in autumn. This will make a lovely spring addition to the garden.
- Continue to progress your plans for the bird feeding station when budgets and time allow.
- Continue to work with the Events Team and the Art Gallery Team to find a balance/compromise between commercial pressures and maintaining a most beautiful botanic garden in the heart of the city.

