

Judges Notes for Summer 2023



YORKSHIRE

Category C1a: - Small Village

Firbeck Village

Silver Gilt and
Category Winner

Overall Impression

On arrival you get a feeling of the old English country garden. Wildflowers around the farm fields, mixed colourful plants in the gardens, with flowers and fruit around the windows. With all the colour and flowers, the village is alive with insects and wildlife.

Honesty boxes selling home grown plants and produce that help fund the community work in the village.

The maintenance and planting of the key areas is looked after by a small, dedicated team of residents. Good use of the soil from mole hills to heel in the overwinter small Christmas trees, and all green waste turned into compost, plus harvesting water to help the environment.

The community in this village is a strong and helpful one, keeping the place to a high standard of cleanliness and public areas are well maintained.

Areas to note, the village pub, the green and grass verges through the village. A large notice board close to the village centre along with word of mouth keeps the residents informed of all events and activities throughout the year. The brightly painted village sign depicts scenes from its history, and really catches the eye.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Interpretation board to describe the history of the paintings on the Village sign would be of interest to the visitor.

Potential to open up a section of the Haha on the entrance to the village, again another heritage highlight that would enhance the entry.

The developments at the village hall, and creation of the new community garden will be a fabulous space for the community to use in the coming year.

Esholt in Bloom

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Esholt is a small village tucked away outside Shipley that because of its link with Emmerdale has a large amount of people visiting the Woolpack Inn for a photo opportunity. The In Bloom group have been maintaining the village for many years and are more the a dozen in number. There are some colourful displays of both seasonal and sustainable planting around the village mostly to property frontages with one hidden delight at Wayside Cottage.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The plans to have a perennial pollinator bed at the play area using spare plants from around the village will need to be planned out due to the tree cover and possibly wet conditions on the site.

Consider sowing wild flowers along the verges to the approach of the village mirroring your success of the wild flower area in the old rec.

Winestead in Bloom

Silver

Overall Impression

Winestead in Bloom was established less than six months ago in February 2023. In this short space of time, they have made considerable progress through a lot of hard work, particularly around the protection and conservation of local flora and fauna. The group of eight regular volunteers is led by Rebecca whose enthusiasm and passion for the natural environment shines throughout the village.

On the approach to Winestead which is a rural conservation area in the East Riding of Yorkshire the judges were greeted by an array of diverse habitats including mature trees, wildflower verges and farmland meadows. The group have continued to improve these areas by the addition of newly seeded wildflowers around the lampposts and telegraph poles throughout the village. These are intended to provide a sustainable alternative to traditional hanging baskets, but more importantly the activity of getting residents together on 'Wildflower Wednesday' to raise awareness of the value of attracting pollinators, birds and bats was the key aim of this event.

In addition to the rewilding ambitions above, the group have encouraged local landowners to participate in the national campaign 'No Mow May'. This has resulted in a wealth of wildflowers colonising on the grass verges and roadsides throughout the village. Also, the 'Winestead Green Canopy' campaign has resulted in over 1100 trees and shrubs being planted by volunteers in Sam's Field and around the village with the help of the Conservation Volunteers.

Although limited, the more formal horticultural features in the village such as the improvements to the signpost next to the post box, are a welcome addition. The small planter of Marigolds and Begonias provides a 'pop' of seasonal colour right at the heart of the community. Other horticultural delights include the private

gardens, which spill out onto the public areas along Bydales Lane. A special mention must go to Christine and Steve, whose garden at Perth Cottage is an oasis of colour including a mixture of well-chosen shrubs, roses, and herbaceous perennials. The Old Smithy also offers a quirky display of planters filled with seasonal bedding and Willow Cottage provides an interesting focal point at the end of the village, which includes an old telephone box that houses the seed exchange. Winestead is a village steeped in history. It is the historical seat of the Hilyard family and is believed to date back to the Saxon times. Most notably Andrew Marvell a metaphysical poet was born in the village in 1621 and the famous cricketer Henry Maister was also born in the village in 1813. It is also noted that the famous writer JRR Tolkien was based in Partington in World War 1, and it is said that he would walk to Winestead Plantation to write chapters for his book which would become the Lord of the Rings.

The In-Bloom group are incredibly active and resourceful, generating community interest and fundraising with a range of activities. Their work extends beyond the array of articles in their newsletter, as volunteering is at the heart of everything the group does. The benevolence of local farmers helps to keep the group resilient and there is a full programme of events throughout the year which includes history days, bat walks, litter picks and pond dipping. Co-operation is clearly demonstrated by the group working with the council and a range of other smaller organisations. Well-done to all the team for their hard work and commitment, and a big thank you from the judges to Rebecca for being our guide for the visit.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Winestead in Bloom have demonstrated their ambition to meet the challenges of Yorkshire in Bloom including community involvement, environmental commitment and forward planning, however going forward a focus on horticulture would be beneficial. The judges felt that there could be potential to extend this area to give even greater impact for people visiting the village in the future.
- The judges were particularly interested to learn about the rich history of the village. The addition of some type of interpretation for visitors would be a real asset going forward.
- Obviously, nature conservation is at the heart of the village, so the erection bird and bat boxes in the Autumn will be a welcome addition to enhance local biodiversity.
- Maybe the expansion of local sponsorship and fundraising activities would give the group greater flexibility and resilience to fund additional features and overheads in the future.
- The judges would like to have met some of other volunteers that have been involved in the village activities, but appreciated that due to work commitments, this was not possible on this occasion. Maybe a consideration for future years?

Category C1b: - Village

Birstwith in Bloom

**Gold and Joint
Category Winner**

Overall Impression

This small elongated village sits in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and it is good to see that the horticultural developments are restricted to the build areas. The group are clearly focused as illustrated by the excellent portfolio, which also demonstrates how the village organisations work together for the common good.

New developments are only undertaken when resources are available for maintenance, although there is list of projects on the future plans board. Fund raising in various ways is undertaken and many methods are used to engage with residents.

The seasonal planters were of the right size for the locations and very well maintained.

A community garden developed in 2020 was well designed and is now a well established feature in village life.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The to do future plans listed in the portfolio is excellent in clearly establishing what the next projects will be.

Should the opportunity occur, the village seats would benefit from a refurbishment, if this happened a program could be used to do so many per year.

Continue to maintain and hopefully strengthen links with the school, and suggest they might become involved with Yorkshire in Bloom themselves.

Increasing the composting facilities would be beneficial especially for leaves.

Spofforth in Bloom

**Gold and Joint
Category Winner**

Overall Impression

It wasn't difficult to see how Spofforth in Bloom have had previous success with their entry into Yorkshire in Bloom. The tour round the village showed a number of excellent displays and features, many well established and maintained to a high standard. Highlights included the Millennium Garden, a space for contemplation and rest, Ginny Greenholes an area for play located seamlessly in an

environmental wildlife area, and also the multitude of strategically located floral displays of perennial and seasonal plants seen throughout the village.

The volunteers working alongside the community have delivered a stunning entry, which thoroughly deserves the plaudits it receives and will undoubtedly go on to future successes. Well done to all involved.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Consider installing hard standing beneath the containers in the grass area adjacent to the bus shelter.

Consider early replacement of the lavender in the Millennium Garden.

The portfolio given to the judges was an excellent presentation of what Spofforth in Bloom accomplish. Having an edited version available on-line would inform visitors to the village of what there is to interest them and what can be seen.

Grassington In Bloom

Gold

Overall Impression

We were impressed by the very active, enthusiastic and welcoming Grassington in Bloom group who have worked energetically to engage the local community and engender support for In Bloom and care for the village. Local businesses have taken Grassington in Bloom to heart as have local residents. Grassington in Bloom is infectious as demonstrated by local businesses sponsoring planters (there now is a waiting list too) and providing their own floral displays at their premises. We saw the same pride shown by local residents gardens and at local holiday let properties. Planting throughout Grassington is a mix of traditional planters, sustainable plants, perennials and herbs. There are many natural areas throughout the village as is fitting for the rural area encouraging wildlife including the bee corridor and wildflower meadow corner. We were impressed by the contributions of residents and businesses both floral and other support.

Grassington's support for In Bloom is communicated very well throughout with Yorkshire In Bloom awards displayed publicly in the Village Square, and other signage and publicity including an annual newsletter circulated to all the village and local area. The open Gardens held this year was a success and has spread the word further. The Grassington In Bloom group are skilled in fund raising and hold year round events and have a comprehensive plan for future projects. Grassington is a very popular place for visitors which poses its own challenges as does the weather given the elevated position of the village in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Grassington in Bloom has embraced these challenges very successfully and Diane, Geraldine, Julia and all those involved are to be congratulated on all their efforts.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

There are opportunities to strengthen your entry both within the portfolio and by providing a route for the judges linking the information to demonstrate the core criteria of In Bloom, including the history of the area, and additional photos of areas unseen on judging day such as the new quiet area on the outskirts of the village and work at the local school. It would be helpful if this could be provided before the judges visit.

Consider a walk round Grassington trail/interpretation leaflet linking In Bloom and local history.

Use of taller perennials in more of the barrels would enhance them and your entry further.

Consider lighter barrels when undertaking replacements.

A photo display or album showing your activities and members of the group would be most helpful both to the judges and as an ongoing record of Grassington in Bloom.

Category C1c: - Large Village

Roberttown in Bloom

Gold and Category Winner

Overall Impression

Roberttown is an attractive village high up in West Yorkshire with an abundance of open space and magnificent views.

Roberttown in Bloom was set up 2019 and since then has achieved so much having coped with Covid. The village is a pure delight with a wonderful community atmosphere.

There is so much enthusiasm within the group and evidence that everyone is welcome, including all ages and abilities and special note must be given to the non-verbal symbol booklet provide for a special little girl in the village. Residents of the care home and Hollybank School (for children with profound and multiple disabilities) can be seen enjoying the lovely walk around the colourful and peaceful village.

This year the group have paid particular attention to the environment after the hot summer of 2022. They have obtained 10 water barrels and their hanging baskets made of raffia were filled with sensory moving plants appreciated by wildlife and will be used next year.

There were so many different displays throughout the village some of which were enhanced with contributions from the Knit and Natter Group. The planting was all vibrant well selected and maintained to a high standard. Of particular note were the Care Home, Commonsides, the Coronation bed, the Village Roundabout, Jubilee Garden, the Community Centre and the Cricket Club.

It was good to see the private gardens and planters in Meadow Close in this newly formed neighbourhood.

It seemed as if everything in this village was re-cycled or re-used and then often brightly painted. Planting where appropriate was suitable for wildlife and sustainable. There were numerous bird and bat boxes.

The visit to the school was a real joy. The children told us about the projects they had done for the coronation and we were shown their lovely garden with wildflower area and the spiritual space.

The group work with and are supported by many groups, organisations and businesses within the village and manage to raise the funding required to continue.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

There is so much going on to such a high standard and this should continue. We heard about many plans for the future, including making the rear of the Care Home a place for the residents to enjoy.

The group all work very hard and are extremely well informed and knowledgeable and we wish them well in the future.

Great & Little Preston in Bloom

Gold

Overall Impression

Great and Little Preston are small parish villages in Leeds. Irina and Steve did a fantastic job of showing us around, and we thoroughly enjoyed what we saw. We started off at a relatively new planter in the grounds of Great Preston Village Hall which had the old stone cross from the bell tower as the main feature, surrounded by various perennials such as tulips, lilies, and agapanthus, and thanks to the alpines, this planter has colour and growth almost all year. We were then shown Woodland Walk which has come a long way since the last visit from judges. The footpaths are marked with bark chippings and signposted to indicate the routes to the Wildflower Meadow and RSPB site nearby. It was great to see that work has been done with the council to mitigate flooding and protect the site. Following one path brought us to the Wildflower Meadow, which can also be accessed via a widened disability-friendly path to the other side. The meadow is a fantastic, high-standard wildflower meadow, and it was great to see that the previous judges' comments were picked up with the addition of yellow rattle. It was also fantastic to hear that the group have worked with the Parish Council to change the meadow cutting time from August to October. The roses that have been introduced to the edges of the meadow will also provide colour and will create a natural border. The planted tubs around the villages were great to see, with various perennial and annual flowers. There is a plan in place to replace old wooden tubs with recycled plastic planters, most being replaced already, and it was great to hear that residents take on the watering of the planters, including the wheel feature at one entrance of Great Preston – it allows all to be included in some way, giving a sense of belonging. Both Whitehouse Avenue beds, maintained by Geoff and Steve, and the Preston Corner beds are looking very impressive. The use of recycled local rock at Preston Corner, and of bee-friendly and colourful plants at Whitehouse

Avenue, were lovely to see. The same can be said for the touching wheelbarrow tribute to late founder members, Jim, and Bob, including the evergreen trees picked for them. Bees were evidently enjoying all spaces when we visited them. One area which really stood out to us was Little Preston Hall. The Hall in itself is a grand building, built in 1736 which has been renovated into apartments for residents, but as we entered the grounds to be shown around, we were greeted with small bungalows surrounding the hall. Almost every house had lovely, well-maintained gardens and colourful plants, and the view they have from their windows is stunning. This was a great hidden gem to be shown. Thank you to all of the in-Bloom group – we look forward to what the future holds!

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- It was great to see that the old wooden planters are being replaced with new, recycled plastic tubs. We can't wait to see when they have all been replaced.
- We look forward to being able to see the hard work taking place at the Parish Field Pond.
- If allowed, we would love to see an information board outside the Little Preston Village Hall, similar to those around Great and Little Preston, such as Preston Corner and at the Wildflower Meadow. Highlighting the Hall's history to locals and visitors alike would be good.

Hutton Cranswick in Bloom

Gold

Overall Impression

Hutton Cranswick in Bloom are a very experienced group with an excellent "bloom pedigree" and this is evident in the efficient way the judging day is organised. It was lovely to meet so many enthusiastic volunteers and hear about why they get involved in the bloom campaign. It is clear that the sense of community in Hutton Cranswick is thriving and that local people are very proud of where they live. Additionally, the support from local businesses is excellent. The White Horse Inn, James White Butchers, Spar Shop, Hutton Cranswick Farmshop and Paul Harrison Cars all contribute greatly to the overall effort. Hutton Cranswick Primary School is a delight and the pupils are full of enthusiasm for their garden and the environment. They are a credit to their teachers and the village as a whole

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Horticulture

- Plenty of evidence of beautiful private gardens throughout the tour particularly on Orchard Lane, at Low Green Lodge, Londesborough and many other locations throughout the village.

- The War Memorial is looked after by Heather and looked beautiful in the sunshine. Seasonal bedding and perennials are used to extend the planting season.
- The violas and bellis in the tubs were free from a local supermarket and were flowering prolifically so it had been agreed to leave them rather than replace them with traditional summer bedding. Good idea!
- The railway station is beautifully maintained by a team of Bloom volunteers and is a great first (and last) impression of Hutton Cranswick for visitors and resident travellers. The sedum bed with the wellies is great fun and low maintenance. Just what is needed.
- The group are using peat free compost and the plants appear to be coping very well in it.
- Lovely planting at the entrance to the SRA. Well done for changing the style of planting to make maintenance easier for volunteers yet it still looks very appropriate for a rural area.
- The perennial planters at Hutton Road were very good. Continue to explore the possibilities of local residents watering these planters and easing the burden on over stretched bloom volunteers.
- For consideration – Continue to try to find a solution to the bark mulch falling onto the station platform.
- The ophiopogon (Black Grass) in the loco at the station could do with bulking up for better effect or perhaps denser planting.
- Continue to choose appropriate planting for the station where there is no water available.

Environment

- The pond is evidently much loved by locals and well looked after by Jess, Paul, Ann and others. It is teeming with wildlife and rich in biodiversity.
- Surveys have been carried out by a retired biologist/volunteer and the results have been very interesting and informative.
- The front borders edging the pond have been suitably planted to soften the edges but are very appropriate to the area and do not overwhelm the pond itself.
- The newly planted Queens Canopy of trees at the bottom of the sports field was an excellent example of partnership working and will provide a beautiful woodland in years to come. 540 trees have been planted by all the local community groups in partnership with the Conservation Volunteers.
- For Consideration beware of accepting plants from well-meaning donations which may be invasive and cause problems in future years. Check carefully before adding them into this beautiful area.
- Continue to look at local surveys that monitor the pond to ensure that this high level of biodiversity is maintained.

Community

- The partnership with pupils from Hymers College has worked well and the ongoing partnership with Network Rail continues to pay dividends in the form of grant funding and sponsorship in kind. The partnership with Yorkshire Wolds Rly is also very productive.
- It is clear that communication of the bloom campaign is excellent with many press cuttings and magazine articles in evidence.
- Throughout the tour all the beds boxes and planters had an In Bloom sign designed & bought with a donation from the Ancient Order of Foresters. This brought a nice touch of continuity and awareness to the village.

- **For Consideration – Have a look at completing a self -assessment within the group this autumn/winter. This would help you to identify your strengths and weaknesses and to, perhaps, produce a plan which will enable the wonderful In Bloom volunteers to continue with their excellent work without feeling under pressure.**

Scholes in Bloom

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Firstly, on behalf of the judges we would like to thank the Village of Scholes for making us feel very welcome and for the excellent well-planned tour and for the hard work you all contributed on the day of our visit, a big thank you to Steve, Lilla, and Jean for making this a pleasurable day.

Formed in 2003 the group has steadily grown with the remit in retaining and developing the green open spaces for the benefit of locals and visitors alike, which is now showing great progress, despite the challenges of the pandemic, into a thriving community all engaging in building links within the village to help preserve its history.

The group have created over 40 flower beds with a good variety of bedding plants giving vibrant colour while adopting sustainable planting within to help with maintenance going forward and we would recommend continuing to look at this and possibly reduce certain flower beds and replace with sustainable planting to help with costs and again maintenance, while still giving all year-round colour and retaining the character of the village, an example is the 2 Japanese Gardens that have been created.

The group have continued to look at wildflower areas around Main Street helping the environmental aspect of the village contrasting the annual bedding and hanging basket schemes. The Peace Flame Garden with a mixture of beds and herbaceous borders is well maintained and compliments the Peace Flame Lantern. The wildflower garden off Main Street is a project the group continue to progress with funding in place for experimental wildflower seeds with the inclusion of a new bench, path and compost area, we feel the involvement with the local school in the project around wildflowers and the insects it would attract could be explored further and to continue the links with the annual bedding competition with the feature bed off Morwick Grove.

The open spaces are well maintained, free from litter and verges planted with bulbs creating further colour and interest throughout the year. The addition of interpretation boards and the new notice board continue to contribute to preserving the history of the village and giving valuable information to its community.

A major contribution to the village is the excellent hanging baskets and the relations the group have built with the local community and the individual sponsorships of each basket and the beds that are maintained by the community, a massive thank you and a testament to the pride the community has in its village, well done.

We must thank the pupils of the local school and Jean along with Fryer for the excellent annual bedding competition which the pupils design and the winner having their design displayed in the bed off Morwick Grove for that summer, the pride the pupils showed on the day contributing to their village was a particular highlight of the day, thank you all for the work you contribute.

The group deliver three newsletters to keep residents informed of current and future plans and continue to explore social media and the judges feel this is an area the group could explore further in helping recruit new volunteers and use social media to find alternative funding options.

The judges are very grateful to everyone who contributed on the day and continue to support their village and the pride they show, we appreciate the efforts and the hard work it takes to help maintain Scholes and without the support of the community would be very difficult so a massive thank you to you all and continue the excellent work.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- We would recommend continuing to look at sustainable planting in the flower beds, and possibly reducing certain flower beds and replacing with sustainable planting to help with costs and again maintenance.
- The judges look forward to seeing the wildflower area develop with a new bench, compost area and path. We feel the involvement with the local school in the project around wildflowers and insects it would attract could be explored further and would continue the links with the annual bedding competition with the feature bed off Morwick Grove. Further links could be made with the local scout group to include more young people in projects.
- The judges feel that social media is an area the group could explore further in helping recruit new volunteers, and also using social media to find alternative funding options.

Category C2: - Urban Community

Beeston in Bloom

Gold and Joint
Category Winner

Overall Impression

We were met by a very enthusiastic group who were determined to make the local area more colourful and environmentally better.

A well-planned route around the area showed off the many projects undertaken by the group adding floral colour and use of a wide range of sustainable quality plant types.

We were impressed by the use of plant containers, new seating which were complemented by the repainted floral telephone relay boxes at Sunny View Gardens in a very busy shopping and dense housing area.

The group has built on the area's local history with floral features of the Miners Memorial, the Suffragette interpretation planting and history of Leeds United seating to add interest for the local community. We also liked the Groups efforts and planting of the Cardinal Triangle on a very exposed and busy road junction. We also visited Evans property Groups offices and grounds which had a wide range of flower beds and quality shrubs and lawn area. Evans are one of a number of supporters who have funded hanging baskets throughout the Beeston area. Special mention must be made of the quality planting at St Andrews Methodist Church and further Improvements made to the Millennium Garden on Cross Flats Park.

A great quality community entry

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Continue with the roll out of the Metal quality benches on key sites throughout the area using some of the historic themes within the area perhaps a Moorhouse Jam seat with the fruit logo. Could local councillor get funding from the housing developer or use planning gain money
- Replacement of the suffragette bench with a robust metal seat.
- A little more work is needed on the wildflower areas we were shown in the church yard to add additional flower and colour.
- Carry out further work on replacement planting for one of the beds in the Millennium Garden in Cross Flatts Park (It was great to see that you have a long-term plan to upgrade the planting over the next few years)
- Need to establish new Links with the City Council now that Richard Gill has retired in order to maximise funding opportunities and Council environmental initiatives.
- Establish a Plan for improvements in St Marys Churchyard with the City Council and Church Authorities including self-set removal and replacement tree planting to replace the mature Ash trees which have Ash Die back and were felled during our visit.
- There is a need to consider the use of Mulch to retain water on the Cardinal Triangle feature as the site is very exposed and this will reduce watering in dry summer conditions. Can the city council or local farmer provide mulch, leaf-mould or used compost?
- See if you can bring on other partners such as Bupa Sunny-View Care Home and schools and more local businesses within the area.
- Continue with Local business staff Volunteer day to provide the group with extra help on key projects.

Starbeck in Bloom

Gold and Joint
Category Winner

Overall Impression

We were lucky enough to have a lovely afternoon to visit this much-loved entry. It was great to see and hear about the outstanding level of local support there is for this small group of very dedicated volunteers. Although the entry is largely a single street in Harrogate there is a real sense of a community and caring about their local environment. There are examples everywhere you look, from the Grow it-Cook it-Eat it garden to the school children designed 'Stop Idling' banner by the station to encourage responsible motoring. It was good to hear that the use of chemicals is reduced as far as possible and that the group is using recycled materials in planters.

The River of Flowers event, which runs through the town. Is a lovely idea to celebrate the anniversary of the group. We were impressed with the skill of the people who had produced crochet and knitted flowers for it.

The allotments are a triumph, down to the variety of flowers and produce grown, the high standard of maintenance and support it provides for several charities. We were pleased to see that the gardening and wildlife skills of local children were important to the allotment group. The group members who keep the lovely grass paths so nicely mown are to be complimented on their work.

Local businesses can play a huge roll in in the In Bloom initiative and there is no exception here. Fine examples are the painting of the tree cages by volunteers and the IT assistance from Spa Studios.

Modern railway stations can be pretty uninspiring, but Starbeck's is a delight, with the group securing grant funding from Network Rail/Northern Trains to transform the platform and access with banners and planters. They have also recruited the rail company's volunteers for an excellent repainting job.

It was lovely that supporters of the group had taken steps to improve the appearance of a derelict building in the street.

The nuttery planted by the group is an unusual and imaginative project.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Consider asking the Council to crown-lift the trees running parallel to the road in Belmont Park. This would open up the view into the park.

Perhaps it might be possible for some businesses to give a little special support by installing baskets, tubs or window boxes outside their premises to support still further the work of the group.

The planters at the station are bright and colourful but consider adding trailing plants to soften the sides of the planters.

Perhaps think about including some pots of herbs, including mint or lavender near the seats on the station platform to bring in fragrance and encourage butterflies and other insects to bring in movement and colour.

Calverley in Bloom

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

The group continue to do an excellent job of making the absolute most of their village with some sterling horticultural work, the promotion of some intriguing local history and garnering some wonderful community spirit.

Engaging with the local school children to plant the three replacement memorial trees at Brookfield Country Park is an excellent idea, as was the poster competition. St Wilfrids Church continues to be a real wildlife haven and Mary and the team have set a great example of recycling and sustainable management. The wildflower beds at Town Wells and in Victoria Park are fine examples of what can be achieved by just starting small.

It was a privilege to visit the Old Vicarage Day Nursery, where 'natural play' is encouraged alongside gardening.

The Platinum Jubilee bed in the park and much of the plantings at Brookleigh are a triumph and the residents here are doing a superb job.

Calverley Old Hall will be a fascinating place to visit when the renovations have been completed

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Possibly creating a small pond at St Wilfrids would provide a valuable addition to an already richly biodiverse site. Perhaps Community Payback could be appointed to clear the pathways that are currently restricting access.
- Perhaps consider filling up the rockery at the front of the Old Vicarage Day Nursery with shade tolerant perennials like Hostas, Heuchera 'caramel', Convallaria and Hellebores for year-round interest.
- Perhaps consider a Tallest Sunflower competition for the children at the above site.
- Consider repairing the timber border of the Petanque bed by the cricket field in Victoria Park.
- If possible, explore grant funding opportunities, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve the Town Wells.
- If possible consider extra weeding of the planters such as those at Town Wells to raise maintenance standards
- If possible, consider asking the Council to remove any small bits of graffiti on bins and road signs.

Rawdon In Bloom

Gold

Overall Impression

This entry is an excellent example of what a small group of volunteers can achieve with relatively little resource. The village was a pleasure to walk around, being very clean and well-maintained. The group are big on sustainability and it is to their great credit that almost all the bedding plants are grown 'in house'. There are some excellent well-thought out planting schemes such as those at Layton Road, the rockery by the Emmot Arms and the sheltered housing complex at Billing View. The judges especially liked the "mobile planters."

The level of communication and involvement across the community was particularly impressive with the use of a variety of mediums to appeal to all age groups and abilities from social media to simple notices displayed in the planting beds and the village bakery and community library. There is also considerable effort to involve all age groups within the community from the local schools, Cubs and D of E volunteers to the more mature residents in the sheltered housing units. The Victory Garden allotments had a true community feel with many plot holders stopping to chat with us and discuss composting and peat free compost. This is a strong entry with a good community feel and future plans to further improve the environment in a well-planned and sustainable manner which will avoid them overreaching their capacity.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Consider removing the epicormic growth from the trees to open up the view of the public open space at Littlemoor.

Perhaps install a couple of bird and bat boxes in the memorial garden. Consider the planting to include more species tolerant of dry shade: Fox gloves (*Digitalis*), *lamium maculatum*, Hardy geraniums.

Consider expanding the use of mulch to more of the roadside beds and in the Garden of Remembrance to help retain soil moisture.

We look forward to seeing the proposed tree planting on Greenacre Lane come to fruition.

The number and quality of the bedding plants which are grown by the group is impressive. Grow perennials for both use in the planting schemes and for plant sales would also increase sustainability

Category C3a: - Village

Wilsden in Bloom

Silver Gilt and
Category Winner

Overall Impression

The bloom group has moved from making two very successful entries limited to the cemetery and park in 2022, to entering the whole village for 2023. This now reflects the work they carry out directly in many parts of the village, such as the war memorial, village green and long planter. The excellent work in the park continues in spite of the major disruption caused by the installation of cables and large control box to serve the car charging points in the adjacent car park. The group act as a conduit for others by either joining organizations that give access to things like trees, and also to making direct appeals for goods and services. This is well illustrated at the school which is supported by the group and has now become an entrant to YIB. The conservation work in the churchyard continues to be successful and the notice board is a good point of information.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The group has become successfully involved in many areas and projects in the village, but consideration needs to be given to ensure that they have the capacity to carry out and maintain new works.

It may be worth having a detailed look at the village and arrange the future plans into an order that will bring most benefit to the community.

Given the location, elevation and exposure to the weather plant choice is important, but the park entrance shows this is being achieved successfully.

The award level reflects the stage of development that the new entry is at and reflects the fact that a wider area is included in the judging process.

Menston In Bloom

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Our starting point, Menston Community Centre is clearly the heart of the village. Carefully considered planting all around the building has given many opportunities for involving several community groups and enhancing the identity of the local community.

The Jam and Jelly hedge is a fantastic idea and together with the Hawthorne hedge has increased the opportunity for biodiversity in the area. The involvement

of the community library and the pre- school in both promoting the group and involving children are great.

The planting in the Peace bed and the Memorial bed is well thought out. Moving into the wider village there are many smaller areas where the group has made an impact, from the repair and planting of the lovely planters to the development of the Railway Garden and their input in Menston Park and Butterfield Park.

Menston Primary school was a revelation with its fabulous grounds and remarkable outdoor provision.

We were also interested to see the developments from other groups working within the Menston Community Association to enhance the area both at Cleasby Road/Miss Porritts Field and at High Royds Memorial Park

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Consider encouraging Menston Primary school to enter their Grounds for Yorkshire in Bloom in their own right. Not only does the school have great potential but it would free up more judging time for Menston in Bloom.
- We were interested to hear about the new planting proposed for the pedestrian route to the station and look forward to seeing the developments in this area as the new lift to the station is completed.
- A more formal garden is proposed for the entrance to Menston Hall and Ali's garden. Careful selection of the plants and materials to be used in this area will allow a for a formal feel without the maintenance implications for the group going forward.
- There seems to be a huge potential to work with the Menston Primary school, both children and parents to encourage them to bring the enthusiasm for the outdoors which is being fostered in the school grounds out into the wider village.

Category C3b: - Town

Todmorden in Bloom

Gold and Category Winner

Overall Impression

There is certainly a "Wow" factor for residents and visitors provided by many beautiful hanging baskets, large planters and barrier planters. Barrier planters are provided by the Council with many paid for by sponsors and the Council does the watering of them all, including 70 lamp post hanging baskets and 50 shop baskets. These are all made up by the group and sold at a profit to shops and businesses to help fund plants.

The group try to give colour in flower beds by using perennials. The delightful Rochdale canal is made lovelier by planters and 26 others in a competition for different categories including several with a variety of herbs planted by Incredible Edible plus artwork and posters reflecting Todmorden's history and culture - these are also part of the station's charm and commuters are welcomed with a Lovers walk and beautiful planters and hanging baskets - residents also add to the floral planting with lovely front gardens. Centre Vale Park is a wonderful immaculately maintained place to visit with a very moving Garden of Remembrance, trees have been removed to plant perennials, the Bandstand has been renovated and the Tennis club is being extended with funding from Tennis England .

There is a lovely herb garden sponsored by Calderdale Council with log piles for wildlife and compost - another compost bin is in the Patmos Garden which is on the site of an old church and has been renovated by the In Bloom group. Schools and Todmorden College have also been involved in the design of a new circular paved bed which incorporates an arched Church window. There is funding from Town Deal for the College's Green Futures which promotes practical and sustainable futures. The Peace Garden which was done in 1986 by The Nuclear Disarmament group has baskets provided and watered by the local Council along with an annual Christmas tree and very large planters in front of the Town Hall which are part of the Council's "Welcome Back " fund. All in all it was a pleasure to visit Todmorden and it's welcoming committee and to see the pride and dedication the In Bloom Group have in making their town such a special place to live - very well done to all.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

Just Keep up the good work!

Elloughton cum Brough in Bloom

Gold

Overall Impression

Judges were treated to a meticulously well organised tour of Elloughton cum Brough by Coleen and Sue, and organisation is clearly something this group does to an exemplary level as they help to make their local area vibrant with colour and cleanliness.

Almost every street sign is decorated with wonderful annual bedding plant displays, there are multiple established beds that are maintained to a high standard, grassed areas are of a high standard and there are multiple wild meadow areas. A special mention must go to Val, Marilyn, Jill, and Mary for their dedication to maintaining the circular flower beds outside the Half Moon Pub. The judges were also impressed by the work of Dave for his mini woodland at the corner of Humber Crescent, Judy's wildlife borders on Centurian Way, Paul and the team at

Spindlewood and Sues recycled fabrics manikin at the corner of Dale Road/Welton Low Road.

Links to local history and heritage are made in several eye-catching displays, including the bus shelter on Welton Road that has been painted by mother and daughter (Paula and Amy) with a mural celebrating the Kings Coronation and with a roman map depicting the history of Petuaria, a water pump display on Main Street maintained by Margaret and a plane donated by local manufacturing giant British Aerospace.

They tie in brilliantly with local businesses and organisations to create a good source of funding and resources, as well as support with watering planted areas. Shaun who is the groups fundraiser has had great success in attracting grants, in addition to multiple fundraising events they hold throughout the year.

Links with the 4 local schools have been made, where volunteers take gardening club sessions with the children, and they also link in well with the Petuaria Centre's work with helping disabled people get involved with gardening. The group also has the support of local students volunteering on the Duke of Edinburgh award. The judges would like to give a big thank you to Jess at the Petuaria Centre for showing them around on the judging day.

A local community notice board proudly displays previous Bloom awards, as well as plenty of information on events which the group hold within the community, this is in addition to an excellent website and facebook page to spread the word of their work.

This group of 17 core volunteers estimate they saved the local council over £16,000 of work during the past year, and really help to enhance the image of their village and should be proud of their efforts. They have been forwarded into the Britain in Bloom competition for 2023 and we wish them the best of luck!

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- The wall planted area near the shops could benefit from draught tolerant species of plants.
- The seat outside of the estate agent and "Dave's bench" are in need of re painting.

Market Weighton

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Market Weighton's Bloomin' Lovely is a very impressive entry back into the Yorkshire in Bloom competition after many years. The main focus for the Market Weighton Wildlife group is engagement, with sustainability and pollinator planting together with excellent florals around the town. Their aim to revitalise certain areas and make Market Weight more attractive to residents and visitors at the same time as ensuring wildlife thrives is working. Good engagement with the local community, groups and school was demonstrated throughout. The engagement with local businesses has been very successful with full support shown

throughout the route. The Town Council is in full support of Bloomin' Lovely together with assistance from East Riding of Yorkshire Council. We were in no doubt that the community in Market Weighton is supporting this In Bloom entry - their Facebook page also demonstrates this. The Wildlife group is hardworking and well organised, drawing on the strengths of individuals in the group. The work at and with the School, Giant Bradley Community Day and the Market Weighton Hedgehogs has been very productive. The bee trail counting competition is an excellent way of involving local children. Planting and development of natural areas are planned well and we were shown development plans past and future such as the planting of the Community Shelter, the Monkey Run and the Duck Pond area. During our visit we did not see graffiti or litter and the floral displays were very colourful and appropriate for their situation. The group has been very active and successful in fund raising and obtaining donations in kind. The production of the Giant Bradley and The Hedgehog and Giant Bradley and The Robin children books by Cathy and David have also generated funds for Bloomin' Lovely. Our thanks to Cathy, David, Jenny, John, Linda, Sophia, Daphne, Cllrs Diane and Jean for a very interesting and informative visit.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Consolidate your plans and the areas you have started to develop such as the Duck Pond area, this will raise your entry to the next level.
- Continue to plan and design future projects, providing evidence including funding and future entry development. We look forward to seeing evidence of the blooming of the 1800 native bulbs you plan to plant later this year.
- Consider an In Bloom/history walking trail - publicise on Facebook and around the Town.

We would encourage a photo display or album showing your year round activities and the work of your members of the group and other volunteers. This would be most helpful both to the judges and as an ongoing record of your work. We know you are planning to produce this.

ShIPLEY In Bloom

Silver

Overall Impression

ShIPLEY in bloom has reformed with an objective to achieve greater community involvement, sustainable planting and planting edibles for the community. Along with the usual challenges the group are faced with a major redevelopment of the town centre at a date to be announced. That however has not stopped the group and the creation of a green corridor along the busy Saltire road is an example of the progress being made. This has been done in cooperation with Community Homes at Wycliffe Gardens where mowing has been reduced and community planting of wildflower seed has taken place. This is a challenging development as closely mown front areas to houses have become areas of long grass so providing information to residents was key to its success. This is further enhanced by the

development at 62 where recycled planters have been used to provide food crops and some ornamental plantings, this reflects a similar project at the police station. Whilst at Wycliffe we were privileged to visit the school which has an excellent school garden producing fruit and vegetable's, our excellent guides who were school pupils showed us round. The project is well supported by staff and parents , who give holiday cover.

The group has initiated a good number of community events to engage both local and business people in many aspects of environment protection and maintenance. The restating of the bloom group and developments in the area may have delayed some planting projects , but the foundation and support now in place should ensure a successful future.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The forest garden bed is a good imitative but perhaps some information could be provided, as the projects develop methods of providing information could be considered. Whilst one does not want to be over run with signs the work has the potential to educate and train people so ways to pass information on would be helpful.

The portfolio was a great help but ensure documents you produce are for your records and benefit as paper work can be a lot of work.

A little more emphasis on the nature aspect of the nature reserve would be helpful. The award level reflects the development of the projects and planting at this stage, and we do acknowledge the work and planning that has gone into reforming and gettingthe project on the ground, with this foundation future success is assured.

CategoryC3c: - Large Town

Knaresborough in Bloom

**Gold and Joint
Category Winner**

Overall Impression

It was lovely to visit Knaresborough on a nice summer day and meet a group of such dedicated, hard working people who are making a real difference to their community. It was lovely to hear how the people of Knaresborough work together and help each other to do the very best for the town. There are many original and creative projects going on which was lovely to see.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The planting combination at Knaresborough House was very interesting and unusual. It was great to see such a creative variety of plants used. Obviously a great deal of thought and horticultural knowledge had gone into it. The rewilding initiative at St. John's Church was pleasing to see and the habitat piles and bug hotels will greatly benefit wildlife. The notices telling people what they are is a good idea. The Celtic Prayer Knot is a lovely idea. In a stressful world the church and its grounds provide an oasis of calm. The art work focusing on the heritage of the town was everywhere. In each case it was beautifully carried out and a lovely feature of the town.

Flowery tubs and baskets throughout the town were a lovely feature. It was good to hear of the high value put on Knaresborough's trees, especially the lovely specimens around Conyngham Hall. The Gardening Competition and Pubs in Bloom Competition are good initiatives. Perhaps it would be possible to add a Businesses in Bloom Competition. The groups use of social media really helps communicate activities going on around Knaresborough.

It was lovely to hear of the many year round activities in the town. Perhaps other areas could be found for rewilding like the lovely area at St. John's Church.

Continue working on developing the raised beds at the church. Perhaps more tubs focusing on pollinators could be developed in the town.

If possible include allotments in the Bloom tour, judges would love to see them.

Keighley in Bloom

Silver

Overall Impression

Keighley is a town with obvious pride in its open spaces and parks, and works to enrich its built environment with the use of planters, hanging baskets and flower beds. It was a pleasure to meet members of the Keighley in Bloom group who have done so much over the years and we are sure that the residents will be very grateful for all they have done to enhance the town.

The group are supported financially by the town council and plant up many of the containers to be found in the town centre. They run a successful 'tallest sunflower' competition for local schools and a garden competition for residents and businesses to enter. A brief visit to some of the gardens involved in the competition clearly showed the dedication and hard work put into them and the owners have every right to feel proud.

Many organisations and groups within the town also work to improve the locality and Keighley in Bloom are aware and supportive of their supplementary work.

It was a pleasure to visit Merlin Top Primary Academy who have been supported by Keighley in Bloom and to see the wonderful progress they had made in the school garden which was started only a year ago. We were also pleased to hear of the horticultural knowledge being acquired by the pupils.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

A2 There are a couple of planted areas in the Valley Gardens that are approaching the need for refreshment or renovation as circumstances allow. This not a major issue.

B3 In general very well managed but there is a question over the maintenance of reduced mowing areas with the dilemma of removing grass cuttings or not to be resolved.

C1 With so many groups and volunteers the problem is how to demonstrate public communications in a simple and precise way whilst thought could be given to this, it is expected that there may not be a simple solution.

Mirfield In Bloom

**Gold and Joint
Category Winner**

Overall Impression

Excellent team ethics & spirit is at the heart of Mirfield In Bloom, the enthusiasm & determination to succeed & make Mirfield a nice place to live shines through on all levels.

The 'buy in' from the town is evident throughout from the well manicured lawns & hedges of private residences through to the businesses in the heart of the town. Partnerships with the Town Council & other stakeholders are excellent which in turn attracts valuable funding to enable the group to make forward plans.

The quality & design of floral features is to be commended as is the environmental inroads the group are developing with a couple of on-going projects.

A splendid portfolio/slideshow showcased achievements & forward planning. Everyone involved in the In Bloom group should be immensely proud of their achievements!.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

An ecology survey could be undertaken at Sunny bank Nature Reserve to capture data on Flora/fauna, thereafter regular surveys could form part of any improvement/master plan.

The introduction of the interpretation/information panel for the Motte & Bailey is much anticipated. A structured plan of action from specialists may be advisable on firstly how to tackle the Bracken & secondly seek advice on the on-going maintenance.

Consider the use of bark mulch on beds such as the Community Garden, this often free resource will help to conserve moisture & keep weeds down as well as being aesthetically pleasing.

The use of some dot/specimen plants may add to the overall effect of some planters adding height & variety especially in high profile areas in the town centre. A sustainable planting approach could be adopted at the railway station with grasses & drought resistant planting to add diversity to the entry, this would

negate the need for intensive maintenance & watering & more importantly showcase the group's understanding of protecting the environment.

Category C4a: - Small City

Harrogate in Bloom

Gold and Category Winner

Overall Impression

This very successful bloom group continues to act as a co-ordinating body for a number of groups and bodies who contribute in the widest sense to the environment of Harrogate. Those involved include Horticap, RHS Harlow Carr, Methodist Church, Harrogate BiD, Allotment holders, conservation groups, Agricultural society and the council amongst many others.

The floral displays in the town and on the approach roads are excellent and maintained to a high standard. This is matched in places with perennial planting and alternative mowing regimes to improve bio diversity. Harrogate BiD is promoting bloom to encourage more visits to the town with a major promotion programme. All the combined groups demonstrated commitment to working to improve Harrogate with year round programs and plans for the future. Congratulations to all involved and for venturing out on what was a very wet day.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

A2 There are a couple of planted areas in the Valley Gardens that are approaching the need for refreshment or renovation as circumstances allow. This not a major issue.

B3 In general very well managed but there is a question over the maintenance of reduced mowing areas with the dilemma of removing grass cuttings or not to be resolved.

C1 With so many groups and volunteers the problem is how to demonstrate public communications in a simple and precise way whilst thought could be given to this, it is accepted that there may not be a simple solution.

Category: - BID /Town or City Centre

Halifax BID/Discover Halifax

Silver Gilt and
Category Winner

Overall Impression

The vibrant Halifax centre looks cheerful with its many colourful hanging baskets, tubs and railing planters. The area maintains all year impact with Christmas trees and lights. Both public and private areas are well planted and maintained. Examples of suitable sustainable planting can be seen by the Piece Hall and Minster and the newly renovated Bus Station has a living roof. This bustling centre attracts shoppers, tourists and concert-goers is generally litter free and clean. Halifax BID's free Good News Paper and Heritage News keeps the public informed and their interaction with local businesses is mutually beneficial.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

The Halifax Hub and Tourism Centre is situated centrally in the Woolshops Shopping Centre and Chloe and Mandy clearly keep their fingers on the pulse. Information boards and finger posts facilitate navigation for visitors to the Piece Hall, Minster, Remembrance Garden and specialist museums and buildings in Halifax centre.

The Woolshops Shopping Centre has an impressive waste management record with zero waste going to landfill and more than half of the refuse generated being recycled.

The streets and street furniture were generally clean with the exception of some bins and lampposts.

Consider engaging more with youth groups as you have with Trinity students. Publicising in Bloom participation and activities. Perhaps posters or a competition for the best poster or tub could attract further support.

The historic Piece Hall could benefit from more impact at the entrances.

Ripon in Bloom

Silver Gilt

Overall Impression

Ripon in bloom has good links with North Yorkshire County Council and Ripon BID all provide the flora displays around the town, all of which add to make Ripon a blooming attractive place to visit. Ripon In Bloom have an internal competition for private gardens and businesses which is held every year and awards are given out at a celebration event hosted by the Mayor. Then there are the hidden gems on the periphery of the town centre such as the Work House, Spa Gardens and Temple Gardens which are all being managed by different organisations and clearly interlinked in the common cause RIPON.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

It would be a good idea to link with the council, Arcade, BID and suppliers to better coordinate the quality, colour and selection of plants for the many floral baskets/ displays around the City.

Look into conducting a trial on peat free compost around the market Square within the barrier planters, making sure that there is appropriate signage to raise awareness with members of the public.

The Bedern Bank project is very ambitious and clearly has already improved the entrance to the city thanks to the In Bloom Group and partners , however it may be better to maintain this area for a year until more funds are raised to carry out a more comprehensive revamp.

Category C5: - Coastal Communities

Filey in Bloom

Gold and Category
Winner

Overall Impression

A very enthusiastic and committed group of volunteers presented a stunning entry for the judges to assess. Collaboration with other community groups was highlighted, in particular: Keep Filey Tidy, Filey Lions and the Friends of Filey Parks, to achieve a common purpose of making “Smiley Filey” a great place to live and visit.

The group works closely with the supportive gardens team at Scarborough Borough Council to provide colourful and well maintained floral displays throughout the town. Ongoing engagement with the town council, county council and local businesses ensures the sustainability of the group’s excellent work. Of particular interest were the horticultural displays, enhanced by a number of artworks and features. These included the Bathing Hut, Bee and Fisherman’s Beds and the refurbishment of the Shipwreck Bed currently in progress. Congratulations to all for a job well done.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Review some of the established planting in the Glen and Crescent Gardens to create a longer season of interest, perhaps introducing more shrubs with winter stems.
- Consider mulching the rose beds to improve moisture retention and aid flowering.

- Consider pruning some of the mature shrubs in Northcliff Garden to enable visitors to better enjoy the sea view from the benches.
- It was great to see the renovated model train by the railway station and the raised planters. Longer term, additional planting in the area would create a longer season of interest.
- Roadside directional signage to the excellent Filey Dams would allow more visitors to see the great work being done by the knowledgeable volunteers to maintain this important habitat supporting biodiversity.
- The planting by the doctors' surgery close to the bus and railway station, would benefit from a review.

Category C8: - Grown Your Community

Owd Martha's Yard

Gold and Category Winner

Overall Impression

Owd Martha's Yard is a well-loved public area. This is a well organised group who makes good use of the impressive resources they have built up over a number of years.

Immediately you can see how much care and attention has been devoted to the area which has developed over time and is constantly evolving.

The garden is an example of where people from a wide range of backgrounds have contributed with various projects to create this welcoming space.

There are year round attended events in the garden that are well supported. The latest was the celebration of the Kings' Coronation. The garden has been decked in red, white and blue with lovely fun displays.

The creative use of recycling/re-use of galvanised pots etc. adds to the diversity and style in this garden and I am sure this is something the young people coming to the garden will be able to learn about.

There are a number of different areas in the garden from the children's area, wildlife area, vegetable plot, memorial garden, quiet areas to sit as well as the impressive composting and water harvesting systems in place. Owd Matha's Yard is a shining example of what can be achieved by a community group.

Judges feedback on areas for consideration

- Continue with the re staining of the fencing.
- Look forward to hearing about your current ongoing project with the library in creating a quiet reading space for children.
- Consider if the living roof can be extended to the sides of the shed.
- The wildlife area requires a little more work which you are aware of. Great to see the hedgehog house, bug hotel and pond.

