

50 YEARS

RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM



Royal
Horticultural
Society

Sharing the best in Gardening

RHS Britain in Bloom
2014 UK Finals
Judges' Reports

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the RHS Britain in Bloom 2014 UK Finals Judges' Reports. This booklet contains the results and reports for the 71 2014 UK Finalists, including the Champion of Champions. The finalists are listed in alphabetical order and the comments are arranged according to the three sections on the marking sheet: horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation. Included below is a description of each medal award for your reference.

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

MEDAL AWARDS

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

Outstanding

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

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

Very Good

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

SILVER (Overall 120–149 points; 60–74 %)

Good

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

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

Average

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

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

Fair

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

GENERAL RESULTS

Entry Name	Category	Region / Nation	Medal
Aberdeen	City	Scotland	Gold
Ahoghill	Champion of Champions	Ulster	Gold
Bath	Small City	South West	Gold & Category Winner
Belper	Large Town	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
Bracknell	Small City	Thames & Chilterns	Silver
Bray Village	Small Village	Thames & Chilterns	Gold & Category Winner
Bridgers Community Group (Howe Bridge)	Urban Community	North West	Silver
Bridgnorth	Town	Heart of England	Silver
Carrickfergus	Large Town	Ulster	Silver Gilt
Chorley	Small City	North West	Silver
City of London	Champion of Champions	London	Gold
Colwyn Bay	Large Town	Wales	Silver Gilt
Congleton	Large Town	North West	Gold
Cranbrook	Small Town	South East	Silver Gilt
Crawley	Small City	South East	Silver Gilt
Dalton with Newton	Town	Cumbria	Silver
Derry City	Small City	Ulster	Silver Gilt
Dufftown	Large Village	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Dunnington	Small Town	Yorkshire	Gold & Category Winner
Durham	Large Town	Northumbria	Gold
Elswick	Village	North West	Gold
Eston (Middlesbrough)	Urban Community	Northumbria	Silver Gilt
Evington (Leicester)	Urban Community	East Midlands	Silver

Farnham	Large Town	South East	Silver Gilt
Filby	Village	Anglia	Gold
Filey	Coastal Up to 12k	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Glenarm	Village	Ulster	Gold
Glenrothes	Champion of Champions	Scotland	Gold
Great Whittington	Small Village	Northumbria	Silver Gilt
Halstead	Town	Anglia	Gold & Joint Category Winner
Harrogate	Small City	Yorkshire	Gold
Henley-on-Thames	Town	Thames & Chilterns	Silver Gilt
Hillingdon	Large City	London	Silver Gilt
Hillsborough	Large Village	Ulster	Gold & Category Winner
Hunstanton	Coastal Up to 12k	Anglia	Gold & Category Winner
Immingham	Town	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
Kippax (Leeds)	Urban Community	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Kirkoswald	Village	Cumbria	Silver Gilt
Leeds	Large City	Yorkshire	Gold
Limpsfield	Large Village	South East	Silver Gilt
Linlithgow	Town	Scotland	Silver Gilt
London Bridge (Southwark)	Urban Community	London	Silver
Loughborough	Small City	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
Malvern	Large Town	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
Market Bosworth	Large Village	East Midlands	Gold
Moorsholm	Village	Northumbria	Gold & Joint Category Winner
Norton in Hales	Village	Heart of England	Gold & Joint Category Winner
Norwich	City	Anglia	Silver Gilt

Oldham	City	North West	<i>Gold & Category Winner</i>
Perth	Large Town	Scotland	Gold
Pitlochry	Small Town	Scotland	Gold
Port Marine & Village Quarter (Portishead)	Urban Community	South West	<i>Gold & Category Winner</i>
St Andrews	Coastal Over 12k	Scotland	Silver Gilt
St Peter Port	Coastal Over 12k	Guernsey	<i>Gold & Category Winner</i>
Sedgefield	Small Town	Northumbria	Gold
Shevington & District	Town	North West	<i>Gold & Joint Category Winner</i>
Shrewsbury	Champion of Champions	Heart of England	<i>Gold & Category Winner</i>
Sidmouth	Coastal Over 12k	South West	Silver Gilt
Sunderland	Large City	Northumbria	<i>Gold & Category Winner</i>
Tamworth	Small City	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
Tenby	Coastal Up to 12k	Wales	Silver Gilt
Thornbury	Town	South West	Silver Gilt
Town Close Ward (Norwich)	Urban Community	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Tresco	Small Village	South West	Gold
Truro	Large Town	South West	<i>Gold & Category Winner</i>
Upper Hopton	Village	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Usk	Large Village	Wales	Gold
Westminster	City	London	Silver Gilt
Whitehead	Small Town	Ulster	Silver Gilt
Wisbech	Large Town	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Woolton (Liverpool)	Champion of Champions	North West	Gold

RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM DISCRETIONARY AWARDS

The RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards are special awards presented by the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals Judging Panel to finalists that demonstrate genuine excellence in a particular area. As discretionary awards, these awards are only presented when there is a deserving recipient, so not all of the awards are presented every year. The results for 2014 are as follows:

RHS Britain in Bloom 50th Anniversary Award (2014 only)
Chorley

RHS Britain in Bloom Horticulture Award
Oldham

RHS Britain in Bloom Commercial Award
Stockley Park, Hillingdon

RHS Britain in Bloom Young People's Award
Immingham

RHS Britain in Bloom School Award
St Mary's School, Dalton with Newton
Cavell Primary and Nursery School, Norwich

RHS Britain in Bloom Conservation and Wildlife Award
Tresco

RHS Britain in Bloom Environment Award
London Bridge

RHS Britain in Bloom Pride of Place Award
Port Marine & Village Quarter (Portishead)

RHS Britain in Bloom Tourism Award
Shrewsbury

RHS Britain in Bloom Heritage Award
Pitlochry

RHS Britain in Bloom Public Park Award
Roundhay Park, Leeds

RHS Britain in Bloom Community Award
Truro

RHS Britain in Bloom Community Champion Award
Chris Beard, Harrogate
James Perry, Ahoghill
John Summers, Perth
John Jordan, Malvern
Ken Gillance, Moorsholm
Margaret Carter, Shevington
Penny Stocks, Wisbech
Richard Budge, Truro
Roy Freer MBE, Dunnington

Stan Sedman MBE, Shrewsbury
Sue Lane, Tenby

RHS Britain in Bloom Outstanding Contribution Award
Walter Dinning
Mark Wasilewski MVO

REPORTS

Aberdeen, Scotland City – Gold

In Britain in Bloom's fiftieth year it was a great privilege to visit one of the very first entries into the competition and witness a revival of horticulture driven by community involvement. The council has become a facilitator rather than a sole provider of service and now works actively with the local community and many businesses in the city to deliver high-quality affordable displays worthy of the area's horticultural heritage. The many Friends' groups now being established are actively supported by the council and have a genuine sense of ownership. There were many horticultural gems in this historic city. However, the pride and skill being demonstrated in both Duthie and Seaton parks are a great testament to knowledge and dedication of one of the great ambassadors to Britain in Bloom, David Welch, who would be very proud that his legacy lives on. Well done!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Quantity and quality of the baskets, barrier planters and window boxes was superb, with many pockets of seasonal colour along the route.
- High quality of the many green spaces with well-managed grass verges and parkland around the city.
- Excellent Winter Gardens are the jewel in the crown of the recent restoration of Duthie Park, with a good range of plants grown and displayed to perfection.
- High-quality residential gardens were viewed on the tour along with a very good example of an RHS It's Your Neighbourhood entry at Albert Terrace.
- Quality of the seasonal and permanent planting at both Seaton Park and Union Terrace gardens was superb.
- The work with local schoolchildren on the 'Design a flowerbed' competition is to be commended.

Areas for development

- The rockery in Duthie Park, recently restored by the very knowledgeable and enthusiastic members of Aberdeen Rockery Club, is acknowledged as very much work in progress. However, it would have been advisable to have it further developed before showing the judges.
- The judges recognise the work being done to promote allotment growing within the city and it was great to meet the volunteers with their produce stall: however, on future tours the inclusion of a good allotment site may be advantageous.
- Consider including some interpretation at the children's 'Design a flowerbed' site at Great Southern Road.
- The judges were unsure of the value of the new carpet beds in Rubislaw and Queens Terrace gardens, especially their siting under the canopy of large trees.
- Aberdeen botanic gardens is a challenging site to take judges to, as its academic purpose is in contrast to the management and maintenance of high-quality general horticulture.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The excellent art project around the city used a 'Dolphin' trail to tempt people into areas not normally visited.
- The condition of the street furniture and lack of litter, graffiti and detritus was a credit to the maintenance teams and the many Friends' groups around the city.

- The enormous investment in high-tech 'Big Belly' Solar compactors was a very good way of reducing emptying costs and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.
- The 'tree for every citizen' planting initiative, now complete, was a great way of 'greening' the city, as were the newly established wildflower areas.
- The ranger station at Lochinch is a fantastic facility for schools to visit.
- The work being done by the Friends of Union Terrace gardens to paint railings in the gardens demonstrates great partnership working.

Areas for development

- The dead tree on Albert Terrace needs removing as quickly as possible (regardless of ownership) as it is becoming dangerous.
- The tree for every citizen scheme is an excellent initiative, but now careful consideration needs to be given to thinning and future management.
- The work being done by various members of the community to clean up Aberdeen is a fantastic initiative; on future tours the judges would like to have a little more information on this.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The support through business sponsorship for the many baskets, barrier planters and window boxes was outstanding.
- The considerable support now being given to and by the various Friends' and Neighbourhood groups shows a marked increase, which is benefitting everyone.
- The coverage by the press on the tour day was exceptional and showcased Aberdeen's efforts to engage effectively with the media.
- The ongoing commitment from the council to develop community involvement in its open-space management is clearly paying dividends.

Areas for development

- Consider putting Seaton Park forward for Green Flag status.
- The visit to St Joseph's School did not typify the obvious commitment to engage with schools effectively. It is recognised the school was on holiday; however, the grounds are a little tired, perhaps on future tours visit a more modern school with a better-quality school garden.
- The initial presentation, although a very good advertising video for Aberdeen, did not address the needs of meeting the criteria – perhaps this could be reviewed in future years.

Ahoghill, Ulster Champion of Champions – Gold

The slogan used to describe this rural community in County Antrim is 'A great town just pretending to be small'! With its roots in agriculture it now largely serves Belfast as a commuter town. A number of business premises had become vacant, causing the Traders' Association to create a voluntary group with the aim of regenerating the heart of the village. The community has taken responsibility for all environmental maintenance and improvement in the village, which is evident to all who live there, visit or pass through. All residents are aware of the ongoing campaign, and pride of place and community spirit is at the fore. With a new Community Centre, Business Park and Presbyterian Church, there are signs of improving economic activity. A Village Renewal Project will undoubtedly ensure that this momentum deservedly continues.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The extent of floral displays throughout the whole of the village provides significant impact and all work is conducted by volunteers, while the local nursery gives admirable support. These displays range from containerised displays, hanging baskets and feature beds, the most prominent being the Diamond Bed at the centre of the village. The residents of Gloonan House approached the landscaping of the property with enthusiasm while good sustainable planting was witnessed in the landscaping of the residential estate of Millwater Lodge. The two-year-old Best Kept Estate Awards in the local competition encourage co-operation among the householders to improve the appearance of their estates.
- There were a number of tree plantings in locations across the town, which will in time enhance the greenscape. However, care needs to be exercised in the selection of type and species to ensure that they are appropriate to location. Good plantings were observed at the edge of the village school.
- With reduced support from the council, the responsibility for grass maintenance on verges in the village has been adopted by members of the Bloom group and residents; this is being conducted to a high standard of maintenance.
- The creation of the Community Garden and other pocket gardens by the Bloom team has helped secure areas under threat and remove antisocial behaviour.

Areas for development

- While annual bedding and new shrub planting have been used to good effect around the town, the group should strongly consider the inclusion of herbaceous plants which, if chosen correctly, can still provide colour and interest throughout the seasons while acting as important pollinators. This could be beneficial to the success of the bee project as explained by Daniel.
- The planting approach to the border at the rear of Gloonan House should concentrate more on the planting of shrubs selected for their seasonal flowering or coloured foliage, thereby giving year-round interest while lessening the reliance on seasonal bedding (and therefore ongoing funding). The addition of further shrubs and perennial plants at the Community Garden would also provide year-round interest and lessen the reliance on annual bedding which could be utilised to better effect elsewhere. The Arbour at the Community Garden would benefit from climbing plants being trained onto the frame surrounding the bench.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The group has used imagination and design skills in the production of quality photomontage tableaux to give the impression that vacant shops are in fact in use. This has been excellently done and is perhaps the best example of dealing with vacant premises seen by the judges.
- The new Presbyterian Church has been built to be ecologically sound and includes rain drain-off materials in the construction of the car park.
- The town has reflected its agricultural heritage through the placement of vintage agricultural tools at focal points, using local artisans such as for the manufacture of bespoke ironwork arches. This fits well with the policy of the group to source from the local area. The local group practice recycling and use organic mulch and manure on the beds. There is an ethos to recycle all materials for reuse in soft- and hard-landscaping projects with locally sourced materials and suppliers.

Areas for development

- Given the association of persons of significance in the old graveyard it is pleasing to see the restoration work currently under way. This should include record management to enable information to be given to visitors when the old graveyard opens to the public. The graveyard history should be incorporated into the Village Walk and would sit well with the Christian

Heritage trail, which is also currently being developed. The judges were informed of the difficulty of creating an archway over the entrance to the graveyard, and they suggest that the community reflect if the arch is actually necessary.

- The group should look to create further wildlife projects and management schemes of natural habitat that could include the involvement of children and be shown to judges on subsequent visits. Planting of appropriate native plants along the stream by Straid Bridge, which has previously been attempted, should be pursued and habitat management of the area should be practiced.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- A real community ethos exists around everything that is done in the town and it is refreshing to see that striving for commercial regeneration is leading to social cohesion. A local 'street reach' team gives assistance on garden tidy-ups to elderly residents.
- The level of fundraising and financial support achieved is extensive and includes 100% commitment from all businesses within the town, which can be up to £20k and includes a dedicated van, bowser and mowing machinery.
- Radio Ulster and local television give good support and have been present on the day of judging. The community also receives good press coverage.
- A superb new community centre has been built with the support of Ballymena Borough Council and will undoubtedly be a well-used and significant resource for all who live and work in the village. The judges were pleased to learn about the work of all ages within the community who became involved on the patchwork mural depicting the history of the area and which is now proudly on permanent display in the new community hall.

Areas for development

- The involvement of young people needs to be conveyed more. While it is acknowledged that access to schools may be difficult outside term time, it would be beneficial for the judges to be able to meet in person some of the young people to hear direct about their involvement in projects first-hand.

Bath, South West Small City – Gold & Category Winner

Bath has been an entry into the UK Finals from the beginning of Britain in Bloom, and therefore also celebrates 50 years this year. Although Bath has always been known as a floral city, it now embraces the community spirit that is so important to the success of the ongoing campaign. With a chairman who has a passion for his city and the Bloom campaign, and a parks department with years of experience in delivering high-quality horticultural displays, Bath's place in Bloom history is assured.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Bath's floral areas are maintained to the highest standards with attention to detail, imaginative planting and an eye for colour.
- Horticultural practice and procedures are of a high standard.
- The open green spaces and verges are managed with care and thought.
- The judges were delighted to meet many of the community on tour and their gardens. We were particularly impressed with the hospital (Jane Rymer), Chandlers Close (John Richardson) and (Richard Potem) at Weston High Street.

Areas for development

- Build on the new relationship with the WI, as this is a relationship worth developing.
- The judges fully support the idea of bringing schoolchildren to see us in the Botanical Gardens; however, the presentation was not child friendly and this spoilt the effect. More thought needs to be given to this element of the tour if it is going to happen again.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- After seeing the evidence of a day's visitors on the environment of Bath the previous evening, the clean-up team are to be congratulated for all their hard work on a daily basis and dedication.
- The judges enjoyed meeting the recycling team and seeing their van, to view at first-hand how busy they were.
- Several works of art were seen on the tour, but none to compare with the new Xylem in Parade Gardens.
- Primrose Hill Community Woodland is a great asset to Bath and something that can be developed year-on-year; the judges were particularly impressed with the fundraising and how quickly the loan has been paid off.

Areas for development

- After experiencing at first-hand the problem with seagulls, their exclusion from Bath should be made a priority.
- Develop accessibility to the woodland and increase awareness and interpretation.
- While passing Weston War Memorial it was noticed that, although it was planted up, there were weeds in the paving and also a very worn and unloved seat in need of renovation.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The depth of the Bloom campaign left the judges in no doubt that Bath will be in the campaign for many years to come.
- Good links with the local press.
- Good support from businesses in the area that sees that profits and flowers are linked.
- The judges loved meeting the community at Chandlers Court – it is truly an outstanding community.

Areas for development

- Invite other communities around Bath to see Chandlers Court and what can be achieved to improve their own community.
- Develop stronger links with organisations such as the WI and U3A as a way of increasing volunteers and projects.
- Although not on the route, the judges feel the need to mention the railway station – sadly not up to the standard that we saw in the rest of Bath and as a gateway into the city this could be Barry's next project.

Belper, East Midlands Large Town – Silver Gilt

It is clear that successive Bloom campaigns have had an impact on this Derbyshire community on the edge of a world heritage area. All have adopted the Bloom ethos and, over the years, its impact has transformed the environment, supported a sense of pride as well as being a community driven for change and continuous improvement.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Areas such as St John's churchyard, where high standards of horticultural provision and maintenance, coupled with the excellent landscape and treescape, all contribute to serve to provide quality amenity provision for visitors and residents alike.
- Meadow Court residents can be proud of their contribution as an RHS It's Your Neighbourhood area to the town's horticultural provision. Some of the contributions by the business community opposite the war memorial gardens and parts of the gardens itself added to the quality of horticulture throughout the town
- The vibrant garden club and the work and involvement of Kathy Fairweather and Transition Belper all contribute to effective public involvement and provision.

Areas for development

- Reading the reports of previous judges, particularly those regarding Belper River Gardens and its problem with Canada geese, this issue has not been resolved nor addressed. It is strongly recommended that this issue be addressed as these birds have a disastrous impact.
- While the tree stock was generally excellent in some locations regrettably there were too many examples of dead trees on the visit – notably on the Flying Geese traffic island, outside Belper Memorial Gardens and in King Street.
- Horticultural bedding was variable; there were some fine examples. However, impact was often reduced on containers where plants had not fully furnished the containers. Feeding and a review of compost is strongly recommended.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The heritage around Belper was evident throughout the tour and the judges met many enthusiastic and informative people keen to show us the best Belper has to offer. First World War tributes were included in the tour and we especially liked the flowers in jam jars, as you could see the whole town had got involved.
- The park furniture was maintained to a high standard and the sponsorship of litter bins was making a difference.
- The volunteers at the railway station were introducing pollinator-friendly plants to improve the station, and it would be good to revisit as more areas of the platform are added.

Areas for development

- It was interesting and informative to hear about Wyver Lane Nature Reserve; however, on future tours it would be more beneficial to visit the actual site to experience the conservation value.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Belper has a strong track record of inclusive community involvement with the Bloom campaign; extensive evidence of past and some current involvement was given.
- Extensive funds have been raised to the credit of all and the ethos and atmosphere evidenced at the start and conclusion of the tour with the 'Song For Belper' and the tour of St John's Chapel both excellent.

Areas for development

- The areas highlighted under Horticultural and the Environment that have resulted in a falling away of standards can be best addressed by a business plan to engage a wider caucus of the community. It is suggested that specific responsibility is given to individuals and a brief developed, aimed at incremental improvement.
- A review of current tour management is also recommended as poor planning diluted areas due to be focused on as a result of poor quality of route, such as the allotments.

Bracknell, Thames & Chilterns Small City – Silver

We were impressed by the upbeat attitude of everyone that we met. The long-term plans for Bracknell gave a feeling of a huge sense of pride for the future. The community links will prove to be a vital asset once the town centre is fully developed. The judges appreciated the warm reception that took part in South Hill Park and the information delivered. The support of the civic dignitaries who were in attendance should prove to be of great value for the future of your Bloom campaign.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed with the new planting at Hanmans Water Shops: this planting has given new life to the parade of shops.
- The new border at South Hill Park when matured should make a great contribution to the flora of the park.
- The maintenance of Arlington Square Business Park was of a high standard.
- Trees are a very important part of the history of Bracknell and many were impressive.

Areas for development

- The judges were concerned by variable grass cutting frequencies as seen at many locations.
- The planting strategy at Hanmans Water Shops could be replicated at Priestwood shops.
- The school visited was in the middle of construction work at the time, and many of the horticultural projects were in need of upgrading.
- As the town is in the middle of a regeneration programme it was difficult to find locations of high impact, but this should be overcome during the next few years.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were most impressed by the presentation by Claire Pike, and the idea of redeeming points from recycling is very forward thinking.
- Cleanliness throughout the entry was generally of a high standard.
- The judges were most impressed by the number of conservation areas that exist.
- St Michael and St Mary Magdalene churchyard team are doing a very worthwhile job and are to be congratulated.

Areas for development

- The judges feel that there are huge opportunities to further develop the many cycleways, and this could involve the installation of new identification and advisory boards.
- The many ponds could also be further enhanced with the installation of identification boards.
- Once all of the present regeneration work is complete the judges are sure that the whole area will benefit and make Bracknell a very nice place in which to live.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed with the positive partnerships that have been developed with various groups. When joined together there is a real strength that will carry your campaign forward.
- The presentation was very well delivered and gave a clear view of future plans.
- The judges enjoyed meeting the Cubs and Beavers and hope that the packs continue to prosper; the leaders are to be congratulated.
- The plant collection of Alan Radgick was impressive, and visitors should be stimulated by what they see.

Areas for development

- There are so many new areas on the horizon for Bracknell and so many projects that perhaps community champions could be considered as a way to share information.
- The judges wondered if the public would be consulted on what type of horticulture they would find most pleasing.
- Consideration should be given to further developing RHS It's Your Neighbourhood awards.

Bray Village, Thames & Chilterns Small Village – Gold & Category Winner

On a warm and sunny afternoon the Conservation area of Bray looked at its best, with an abundance of permanent and sustainable colour visible throughout, complementing the lovely treescape and high quality of open spaces. Julie Graham and Margaret Pearson guided the tour efficiently, and we met a wide range of the community during the tour, and also at an informal reception afterwards. The engagement in your Bloom campaign of increasing numbers of people, especially children, is most commendable.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Seasonal colour, from a range of Bray in Bloom and individually provided baskets and containers, is very high, and it is notable that subtle, original, imaginative planting schemes are in use, providing a sustained and consistent impact.
- All seasonal plants seen are well grown and maintained; the judges also noted good practice in the management and care of most of the permanent planting, for example on the bund and around the Village Hall.
- Residential gardens in view are excellent, with the beautifully designed and managed front to Jesus Hospital quite stunning. The inner quadrangle at this site is a relaxed and lovely open space of well-maintained borders and well-managed lawns. Hanover Court sheltered housing is a riot of seasonal colour, and lovely front gardens are evident on Bettoney Vere and Ferry Road. The allotments are productive and well managed.
- The two shops and several restaurants in the village all have seasonal and/or permanent displays of high quality on view.
- Green space management is very good, with appropriate and consistent mowing at the Village Green, Jubilee Field and the Village Hall.

Areas for development

- It is pleasing to note continued and appropriate new tree planting in the village, but look carefully at the maintenance of these, with strimmer buffer zones or guards being established.

- The roses at the churchyard are poor and show thin, weak growth. Consideration should be given to a feeding and mulching programme, or perhaps replacement of these with an alternative scheme.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- There are limited opportunities for conservation in the constrained area of the old village, but these are now being exploited effectively in improving and developing the wildlife area at the churchyard, with the addition of an excellent bug hotel with attached magnifying glasses. Stag beetles continue to thrive in the area.
- Rainwater harvesting is in place at strategic points around the village to assist with watering of containers; most permanent planting is well mulched and there is very good leafmould composting taking place at the allotments.
- The long and famous history of the village is evident throughout the tour, and visitors are easily able to discover this as they walk around.
- The walk around the village demonstrated its cleanliness, with no adverse impacts other than two items of litter deposited earlier in the day.

Areas for development

- While most of the furniture seen on the tour is very good, the seats in the churchyard are not in a condition that encourages their use; a cleaning and re-painting programme should be established to improve this situation.
- Natural heritage, in the form of the range and quality of the trees in the village, is excellent and perhaps there is scope to make more of this.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There are increasing numbers of people involved in Bray in Bloom, and the benefits of this expansion are already evident. It is good to note that there is effective engagement with young people, not only in litter picks but also in the Guides' bed, the pre-school allotment and the continued maintenance by Max and Ella of their containers by the Village Hall.
- Signage around the village is excellent, and the new 'Honours Board' is a good addition to this.
- Very good business support is clearly present for your efforts to maintain the village and its ambience.

Areas for development

- The remarkable proportion of residents involved in the campaign is a real strength of the entry; nonetheless, you should continue to expand the levels of engagement to ensure the continued sustainability of Bray in Bloom.

Bridgers Community Group (Howe Bridge), North West Urban Community – Silver

Both judges were delighted to be treated to a tour of this ex-mining community with its fascinating history, which was comprehensively explained to us. The group are making a real difference to brighten up the area and involve others, and as a first-time national entrant are to be congratulated on this achievement. We are confident that your campaign will continue to move forward and noted the wide variety of projects that demonstrate you are not afraid of hard work. Your entrepreneurial approach to funding will continue to pay dividends and sustain your efforts.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The colourful barriers against the miners' cottages make a clear statement of your intent to brighten your community.
- A good choice of plants was used effectively around the bus shelter making this a very pleasant area to wait for a bus.
- The war memorial stood out well, giving it pride of place and demonstrating what a simple, well-designed open space can achieve.
- Colliers Corner was a highlight of your route with its heritage pit wheel, complete with coal, good planting schemes and new trees.

Areas for development

- Look to increase involvement in the gardens competition locally to help ensure you have more high-quality gardens on your route.
- Pay attention to having the right plant in the right place and work with environmental conditions to gain the best effect.
- Perhaps concentrating on key focal points will help you to achieve a consistent high standard across the route (as by the displays at the miners' cottages), this may also assist you with watering.
- Try to encourage local businesses to improve the quality of their displays.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The entire route, even woodlands and other challenging areas, was very clean throughout.
- It was a delight to see imaginative willow sculptures, good village entrance signs and other art features that really stand out on your route.
- You have an exceptionally knowledgeable historian (Richard) and the judges were impressed with his enthusiastic tales of times gone by that added to our tour.
- All of the street furniture was in good condition and the effective use of decking to make planters was impressive.

Areas for development

- The judges noted your efforts to improve habitats and what you plan, however, you need to control invasive species and ensure that you are planting the right wildflowers in the right environment, i.e. spring wildflowers in a woodland and summer annuals out of the heavy shade.
- Try to demonstrate more of what you, as a group, do to encourage others to recycle and minimise the impact on the environment.
- Acknowledging your innovative technical interpretation of your heritage, see what you can do to interpret on the site more fully your history, for those who may not have access to technology.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Your entrepreneurial approach to funding ensures that you have a sustainable campaign; you have been effective it comes to getting money.
- You provided comprehensive evidence of ongoing projects and the judges are confident you will continue to make a real difference to your community.

- The judges met many people on route, all of whom were enthusiastic and knowledgeable – the children particularly so.
- Getting the press involved and spreading your message.

Areas for development

- In any campaign there is always more that can be done; continue the fantastic work with your community but try to get more involvement from the business community wherever you can and develop your plans at the school.

Bridgnorth, Heart of England Town – Silver

Beginning a Bloom judging visit by having a picnic in a cemetery in heavy rain is an unusual approach, but nonetheless gave an opportunity to both gain an insight into Bridgnorth and its future plans, and also to view the lovely cemetery itself. An interesting tour also included using the Cliff Railway to see Upper Town, before concluding in the Castle Gardens where there are fine trees complementing the dramatic castle ruin. The commitment and enthusiasm of the team from the council, led by Anne Wilson, was clear throughout the visit of this historic town.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Hanging baskets and manger-style containers are lovely throughout the town, with a consistent style and impressive growth and quality; those on the drive through the cemetery are quite dramatic in the setting. They also form a colourful addition to the crossing of the River Severn and along Quayside.
- Good allotments were seen at Apley Estates, and there were fine examples of residential gardening evident at the Riverside Caravan Park. The Edible Community Garden in the castle grounds, planted and maintained by the local branch of the WI, is splendid. New landscaping at Quayside is too new to show impact at this stage but has been well mulched.
- Many of the pubs and restaurants along the High Street and in other areas had added colour to their frontages, with the Tudor Rooms, Shakespeare Inn, the Old Castle, Wetherspoons and Baileys being particularly notable.
- Attractive green spaces were seen at Crown Meadow and Severn Park, but particular mention has to go to the exceptional Bridgnorth cemetery with its outstanding setting and treescape.

Areas for development

- The judges were most impressed by the commemorative basket supports on the way into the cemetery, but are not convinced that the new bedding borders add to this scene; in addition, these beds are planted with too great a plant spacing and are failing to thrive. The spacing of bedding plants is also excessive in Castle Park, leading to a reduced impact. You may wish to consider reducing some of the seasonal display by a change to perennial planting; the beds in the cemetery would particularly suit a subtle grass display.
- Rose beds in the Castle Park are poor, with weak, thin growth; this also applies to the roses leading beyond the arch at Lavington Gardens. It would be better to gradually replace these borders rather than underplant with bedding to gap-fill, as is currently the case.
- Hedge trimmer pruning at Lavington Gardens is not appealing, made more so by the failure to clear up the trimmings from the shrubs concerned.
- Weeds are generally well controlled, but the ‘ginnels’ that lead off the street at the top of Cliff Railway are full of weed. The finished level of the new bed beyond Quayside should be amended, as recent rain has already begun to wash away the soil and mulch.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Much of the cemetery is now being managed as natural 'cut and rake' meadow, leading to it becoming an important and species rich habitat (as well as most attractive on the eye).
- Excellent use of recycled green waste is taking place, and when ameliorated with horse manure is forming the main substrate for your new planting areas. You also have an appropriate abstraction licence to draw water from the Severn for watering of the baskets and containers.
- Young people undertaking Citizenship courses at the Youth Centre have created an interesting new garden, including bug hotel and a wide range of artwork and interpretative material.
- There was very little in the way of litter and adverse impacts (other than weeds) to be seen on the main thoroughfares and routes we used.
- Good signage and information is evident throughout the town, in particular in relation to your historic significance; most of the seats are in very good condition and reflect well on your appeal to visitors to the town.

Areas for development

- Try to have a specialist from the Shropshire Wildlife Trust available to meet the judges to describe the cemetery management in detail; you may also wish to prioritise awareness raising of this important site by the introduction of interpretation panels.
- Review the growing media used in the 460+ baskets and containers currently in use; at the moment these are all in straight peat compost, with all the negative environmental connotations that brings.
- The judges were impressed by the health and safety training that staff received (and were clearly demonstrating) to enable you to manage difficult sites; this will be very beneficial when the cliff-top clearance takes place. Perhaps an earlier clearance of the Himalayan Balsam should have occurred rather than allowing seed to set.
- Whilst most of the street furniture is in very good condition, the bridge is in need of re-painting, as is the old, and rather splendid, bus shelter in the High Street.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There is clearly good partnership working in place between the various statutory organisations involved in the town; staff from Bridgnorth and Shropshire County Council link effectively, and the waste contractor (Veolia) is also engaged.
- From the short film viewed it is clear that several schools are carrying out appropriate Eco-School activities.
- Work with the Youth Centre is having positive impacts on both themselves and specific areas of the town.
- Container sponsorship levels are quite good, and it is also pleasing to note that you have a series of relevant 'competitions' for domestic and commercial participation to increase the profile of their visible gardens and green environments.
- Press support on the tour was noted, with photographers present from two local publications.

Areas for development

- This section of the criteria is not yet fully developed in the entry. There are several areas that you may consider in the short to medium term that will yield significant benefits to your community profile:
- Form a Bridgnorth in Bloom group that includes representation from a range of voluntary members and organisations (e.g. the WI, the Wildlife Trust, Guides and Brownies), business

interests (e.g. Riverside Caravan Park), and has members also from one or more of the local schools seen on the film.

- The Secret Gardens is an interesting concept, but much greater impact would be achieved by a focus on residential front gardens and how owners and tenants cared for their visible spaces, which was a weak aspect of much of the route.
- Increase the numbers of contributors to the judging tour itself; only the WI was present on the day from non-statutory bodies. Have some young people present to talk about their work on site in a school, or at the Youth Centre, for example.
- Show more clearly the link between your profile for the town and for the Bloom campaign in all that you do. This should also link to a clear plan for taking Bridgnorth in Bloom forward into the future, with appropriate goals set for specific achievements.
- As an entirely separate matter, try to manage the press call to ensure that the sites where photographs are taken are ones that best illustrate excellence, rather than requiring the judges to be close up to areas that are less good.

Carrickfergus, Ulster Large Town – Silver Gilt

This interesting town in Northern Ireland can be proud of its Bloom campaign. The inclusive community has undertaken major improvements to the seafront as well as the business areas where a clean, safe and exciting new cafe culture has developed. These major improvements are significant and have resulted in effective community development and improved tourism facilities – all of which give a sense of place, identity and quality. Certainly a town to visit!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Marine Gardens was a particular highlight, well laid out and maintained to a high standard. Sustainable planting was a lovely addition and totally appropriate to the location.
- The baskets produced by Kilcreggan were to a high standard and made an impact throughout the town.
- The grass management along the tour was well maintained.
- The judges liked the way funding for tree planting was funded from the recycling money from plastic bags.

Areas for development

- In some of the beds and along the tour there were evidence of weeds that will need to be more effectively managed.
- There were some areas such as Wesley Court that should think about entering the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood campaign.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Excellent interpretation can be seen in many areas of the town, and when coupled with many of the historical artefacts and examples of art in the landscape, all contribute to an improved visitor experience.
- The newly erected timeline clearly explained Carrickfergus' rich heritage.
- The connectivity of the business community was impressive with examples of the coalman and window cleaner involved in transporting the baskets and watering them.

- Carrickfergus is developing its pride of place, especially in the town centre; the work undertaken in the derelict grant scheme was impressive and with more work planned there is potential for the future of the town centre.

Areas for development

- There was quite a lot of graffiti on the tour, which needs to be tackled. Some of the street furniture would benefit from a repainting programme.
- The entry would benefit with more information provided on recycling schemes within the town.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Higher profile given to the Bloom initiative has developed into a significant campaign with the potential to further enhance and transform the town.
- Some of the partnership areas where the council, businesses and the community have worked to complement each other are showing signs of excellence. A great sense of pride, safety and culture has developed.

Areas for development

- There is a tremendous scope for the effective work started in this area. Further engagement of children and young persons could be expanded considerably by the creation of a more permanent approach than the one-year officer post currently in place.
- The Bloom initiatives in Carrickfergus are excellent examples of how Bloom can enable community ownership and development. It was noted that a re-organisation is currently under way. Enlightened members will be aware that many current initiatives under way can only assist the development improvement and maintenance of services.
- The judges strongly recommend the use of RHS It's Your Neighbourhood as a means of further promoting the Bloom initiative.
- Careful tour planning could showcase the town more effectively and serious local media could only benefit the profile of the town.

Chorley, North West Small City – Silver

We were very impressed by the overall effort of this first time entry. The newly formed group will have a new chair very soon and then be in a position to move forward. The judges were encouraged by the number of groups that have become part of Chorley in Bloom and wish them well. The willow figures and wildflowers have been much appreciated by the people of Chorley. With a lifespan of five years, the willow figures will give enjoyment for years to come.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were most impressed by the decoration of the wrought-iron fence at St George's Church; Collette is to be congratulated.
- The barrier baskets are well grown and the wildflower mixes impressive.
- A lot of thought has gone into the planting at the council offices by Chorley & District Garden Society.
- The judges feel that there are some very good skills within this group that could be further utilized.

Areas for development

- The judges feel that consideration could be given to planting up all planters to a similar standard. We felt that some did not have much impact.
- The judges would have liked to have visited the best of your garden competition winners.
- It is suggested that the group visits some of the proven national entries in order to fully understand the level of delivery required as we have no doubt that this entry is committed to moving forward.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed by the overall appearance of Yarrow Valley Conservation area. The willow sculptures were most interesting and gave a feeling of past and recent history.
- The high-quality work carried out at the memorial arch, Cenotaph and sensory garden was appreciated.
- The wildflower mix used at Astley Garden was one of the best that we have had the pleasure to view.

Areas for development

- There were variable standards of street furniture; upgrading is a task that Community Payback may become involved in.
- There were several areas noted while on the tour where weeds were growing through paths and hard-standing areas.
- The judges would have liked to have been given a better understanding of your resource management, which is clearly in place.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed by the dynamic approach used in order to obtain community participation.
- The group working in the walled garden of Astley are carrying out some good quality work.
- The year-round activity programme has begun and will remain a vital part of this entry.
- The development of your new Bloom group should be of great importance during the years ahead. This is a major factor of present campaign requirements.

Areas for development

- The judges feel that the council will have to play a major role in forming the Bloom group and can later relinquish some of the responsibility.
- Publicity material is vital in order to encourage others and move you forward on your Bloom journey. Advice regarding the formation should be sought in order to develop a sustainable group.

City of London, London Champion of Champions – Gold

The square mile is a unique area with a resident population of 10,000 whose numbers are swelled to some 360,000 by city workers during the working week. Its geography has been shaped by historical events, creating areas of once-derelict land into community gardens for people and wildlife to enjoy. The opportunity for planting is limited to small spaces, half of which are smaller than 0.2 hectare. However, some 200 planted areas exist and incorporate a wealth of high-quality plantings and designs. An influx of tourists to the City, as well as the large number of workers, provides some

challenge to the City, which takes great pride in its street scene, and approach to litter and sustainable management. The city is also witnessing some major transport and investment projects involving heavy construction, which are seen as an opportunity to further greening of the City and provision for biodiversity. The approach to community gardening and relationship with Friends' Groups and voluntary organisations has been radical and fast growing, and has proved a real success.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There was an excellent choice of plants and quality of design in so many of the plantings. This ranged from the classic English garden witnessed at Christchurch Greyfriars to the more modern style of garden-thinking adopted in the selection of plants at Temple Gardens, the latter extending the season and successfully coping with the conditions of the warm, dry summer. Oasis grass is being trialled at the heavily used area of St Paul's Cathedral and there is a programme to replace annual bedding with herbaceous planting where appropriate.
- The City Gardens team has influenced the thinking of the extensive new landscape areas of the Barbican, which has involved a radical change of design under the influence of Professor Nigel Dunnett to cope with the unique conditions of the site.
- Thoughtful plant selection has been exercised in the tree planting programme to introduce new cultivars, such as alternative Pyrus to replace the ubiquitous P. calleryana 'Chanticleer' and replacements to Platanus x hispanica and other commonly used cultivars. This makes for an interesting street scene. The tree population target set for 2019 of an increase by 5% has been reached five years early.
- Community projects appear plentiful and include the Golden Lane Allotment where the Golden Lane Baggers have established a wonderful container-grown garden. The creation of a container community allotment at the Barbican is to be applauded, and the judges hope that the land managers can allow this to be expanded.

Areas for development

- The opportunity to view commercial involvement along the route was limited to the Temple and Paternoster Square, therefore an apparent absence of commercial displays on the main highway was disappointing. Consider the inclusion of pubs, restaurants and commercial premises on the route.
- The completion of the rainwater garden at the Barbican and at St Andrews in the east, both extensive landscape projects, are widely anticipated and each will bring multiple benefits for the communities involved.
- Some die-back of shrubs near the Guildhall School of Drama and Arts should be addressed.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Policy and implementation of street cleansing projects including such innovative introductions as solar compactor bins, pop-up toilets, and a regular street-washing programme displayed the City's commitment to environmental quality of the City. The adoption of a simple but effective measure to introduce clear bags to easily identify the contamination of waste was an aid to litter separation and assisted in recycling targets. The number of recycling bins in the streets has now reached 100 and the City of London is a Clean City Awards winner.
- Commitment to sustainability was evident throughout all of the plans of the City of London. Innovative measures have included the development of a Local Sustainability Improvement Plan. Some 21 flowerbeds have been replaced with herbaceous plantings and 100 tonnes of organic mulch has been provided by Buckingham Palace for use on the City's gardens.
- The City was responding to the challenges of the built environment through the introduction of green walls. Roof gardens were being developed to attract, in particular, the house sparrow

and black redstart and a first-ever rooftop survey of birds was undertaken with experts and volunteers under the guidance of green-roof pioneer Dusty Gedge. A number of wildlife projects have been introduced across the City.

- Pride is taken in the street scene and street furniture. There is a wide range of art in the city ranging from historical features to classic sculptures and more modern art forms to the colourful and informative benches introduced in association with the National Literacy Trust.

Areas for development

- Heavy tourist use of the environs of St Paul's Cathedral had resulted in some litter and collection of cigarette ends.
- The development of the excellent wildlife resource of Fann Street Gardens by an enthusiastic group of volunteers is now at a phase where a base wildlife survey should be conducted to determine a forward management plan. It is hoped that the City of London's own ecology team may be able to assist or other organisations such as the London Wildlife Trust.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- All plans are currently being reviewed. The New Open Spaces Strategy 2015–20 will form the strategic planning document for the city. There are a number of exciting opportunities for horticultural schemes under way in most cases linked with major construction projects.
- A positive attitude is taken to the establishment of Friends' groups who are seen as a mutual benefit to the work of City Gardens. The creation and development of community groups has occurred in a very short space of time. Genuine partnerships have been forged with community groups not least that with Sarah Hudson, Chair of the Friends of the City Gardens who has raised some £22k since the group was formed. There are currently 90 entries in the City in Bloom competition. A programme of horticultural-themed events has exceeded fifty in the course of the year and includes Garden Squares weekend and the pop-up garden at Barbican Station. A number of walks of City gardens have been created by local historian Sandra Lee and are led by volunteers, and there is an excellent series of audio tours developed for some of the more popular spaces in the city often with the lunchtime business sector in mind.
- The scheme of Time Credits operated by Spice is an excellent scheme to attract and award volunteers, and 873 credits were earned during 2013/14 from those involved in City Garden projects. A strong programme of corporate volunteering exists.
- A strong programme of development of projects with schoolchildren and socially deprived adults has been established. Since 2013 the City has extended the links with volunteer groups, which has grown significantly in just 18 months.

Areas for development

- More use could be made of the portfolio to display illustrative images of areas that the judges were unable to visit, such as roof gardens and schools.
- Continue to support the development of Friends' groups; these have proved excellent partnerships and indicate the way forward. To reinforce the message to your community groups that their efforts are appreciated, invite them to join the judges at the end of subsequent tours.
- The Barbican horticulture allotment group would benefit from some additional planters and the provision of an accessible water source.

Colwyn Bay, Wales

Large Town – Silver Gilt

The judges were impressed with how the Colwyn in Bloom group had involved all sections of the community to provide a joined up approach to the entry. The improvements throughout the entry are clear for all to see. We were particularly impressed with the Parkway Sheltered Housing Gardens where everyone has joined forces under the watchful eye of Mags Richardson to create a vibrant and beautiful place to live. We were also impressed with the new beach development scheme Porth Eirias Project that demonstrates the continual improvements the Colwyn in Bloom group are making. There was a real feeling the volunteers and the community were fully involved in the direction and maintenance of the place they live and quite clearly love.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Community Gardening at Parkway Sheltered Housing was community growing at its best and it was clear to see the buy-in from all the residents and the quality of the plants they were producing were second to none.
- The local parks especially Winn Gardens are well maintained and clearly well used by the local community.
- The sustainable planting at Port Eirias was a particular highlight, with a clever choice of plants that blended the building into the local environment.

Areas for development

- The treescape is excellent although there were a number of dead trees in evidence on the tour.
- There is a need for a stronger theme of planting in the central area. A theme linking sustainable planting to the 300 or so floral baskets would enhance and develop impact of the horticultural features and justify the excellent investment from the business community.
- Maintenance was generally good, however, some weeds were present in the paved areas and on the sustainable plantings near the station as well as St John's Church.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The newly introduced recycling scheme with its stacking system is already improving the town's recycling figure and the commitment from the team, with their literature and roadshows, can only improve things further in the future.
- The conservation in Fairy Glen was to a high standard, with good links to local schools working closely with the local Wildlife Trust.
- The interpretive signage and park furniture was clear and well maintained.
- The water-harvesting schemes that were shown and described were impressive.

Areas for development

- Some of the street furniture would benefit from repainting.
- Colwyn Bay with its associated links with the coast, Snowdonia, castles and wonderful buildings has an opportunity to market itself effectively. There is a sense that the foregoing are 'best-kept secrets'. We feel it's time these areas are fully publicised and celebrated. This will certainly provide inward investment and sustainability to the benefit of all.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Colwyn Bay has an excellent record of community participation, which is in evidence in all age groups. Volunteering is excellent.
- The passion of the community was infectious.
- The Business Plan for Colwyn in Bloom provides direction and shows ambition.
- The social inclusion projects especially at Bryn Nursery and the allotments shows what can be achieved.

Areas for development

- Partnership is the key to developing public services and there is much to be gained from the development of a co-ordinated approach to community service delivery. The combination of paid officer hours coupled with volunteer hours is an effective means of valuing the quality and impact of services. Such an analysis would be worthwhile developing ownership and leadership.

Congleton, North West Large Town – Gold

From the initial welcome, everything fell into place. The excellent initial presentation where the year-round achievements of all involved demonstrated the values Bloom has on community development and sense of place. Teamwork was very much to the fore and showed a very effective journey from the earlier Bloom entries. Clearly much has been learnt and achieved. Particularly impressive was the acknowledgement by the many councillors involved, of the partnerships and values generated by Bloom initiatives.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The celebration of the 50 years of Britain in Bloom by the extensive use of the anniversary golden theme gave impact, continuity and a strong sense of identity.
- The horticultural initiatives in school, the bear theme and the innovative and creative gardens in the polythene house at the end of the tour were excellent examples of introducing children and young persons into horticulture. These initiatives can only result in long-term benefits.

Areas for development

- Sheer volumes of horticultural provision were impressive, but perhaps future consideration could be given to the choice of longer-term plants. Bacopa was used extensively as was alyssum – give thought to reducing these species as you risk potential failure of these plants if long-term impact is to be achieved.
- A second point relates to creating sense of place by restricting colour to a set theme. Where you had done this it was really effective; where it was mixed the effect was potentially diluted.
- Please draw attention of NatWest and traders in the Market Street that their non-participation i.e. empty brackets were noted to the detriment of their company's image.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Astbury Mere Country Park was a delightful start to the tour. With its wide range of habitats and wildflower areas we could see how the park was loved by both visitors and local residents.
- The Congleton Bears throughout the town gave a great sense of place and a marketing opportunity that hasn't gone unmissed.
- The recycling figures for the town at 71 % were high, and highlighted programmes will only see this figure increase.

- The apple juice project is growing year-on-year and is an ideal way to involve community Bloom projects all year round.

Areas for development

- There were some evidence of graffiti especially between the station and the Queens Head pub.
- Some of the street furniture would benefit from a repainting programme.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The 16 Eco-Schools and their involvement was impressive, especially at St Mary's Catholic Primary School where the children were eager to show us around their garden and tell us how they planted and harvested their vegetables.
- The volunteers were out on force throughout the town and you get a sense of a real team spirit. All sections of the community are involved and produced some very high-quality floral displays.
- There is a vision and direction for Congleton that was evident.

Areas for development

- The business community were getting behind the Bloom campaign and we would like to see some of the business not yet involved becoming so in the future.

Cranbrook, South East Small Town – Silver Gilt

This rural community was built on the profits of the cloth trade and the village is dominated by one of the country's finest smock mills. Many areas of the town have been improved to the benefit of the community and the environment. Areas such as the Crane Valley Nature Reserve provide recreational space and wildlife habitat. Additional improvements to the car park will bring further enhancements to the town. Changes to maintenance are being implemented to increase biodiversity and add further interest to the green spaces. The Forge Orchard is home to some old local cultivars of fruit trees. This is used for educational purposes and illustrates the local heritage of the fruit-growing industry.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The innovative style of grass planting on Wilsely Pound Roundabout, designed by Kate Ball, was very effective.
- The achievements of local residents through the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood campaign, at Waterloo Cottages, Bob's Alley and the Forge Orchard, all of which have made significant contribution to areas of the town.
- A good contribution had been made by the commercial sector along the High Street and at premises such as Woodcraft Timber Design. It is obvious that all are great supporters of the Bloom campaign.
- Grass maintenance and the presentation of green open spaces was of high quality as was the horticultural presentation of the churchyard and Cranbrook school. The children and staff at Cranbrook Primary School enthusiastically presented their varied gardens to the judges, which had mixed education with a sense of fun. The museum garden (under voluntary management) was charmingly presented and planted most appropriately to the character of the building.

Areas for development

- A more selective route could have been chosen to better showcase the horticultural achievements of the community. Great strength was evident on the High Street in residential, commercial and community plantings; however, there was some inconsistency between the growth and development of the planters. This High Street would have benefited from visiting on foot. The residential gardens shown as part of the route were rather variable in quality.
- No opportunity was provided to visit the war memorial that featured on the itinerary.
- The prolonged hot spell has undoubtedly been a stress on plants and has led to the soil becoming very dry in places; it was thought that the addition of organic mulch to the soil would be beneficial. Some woody weeds were beginning to take hold in hedges near the Bowls Club.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- A spotlessly clean and well-presented town. It is evident that the residents and traders take exceptional pride in its appearance and adopt responsibility for keeping it that way. An example is the recent painting of lamp posts conducted by members of the Bloom group.
- An excellent heritage tour highlighting some of the key landmarks of the town.
- The efforts of the Parish warden and partnership with the Kent High Weald Partnership. The Forge Orchard had been planted with cultivars of local fruit trees and was being used as an outdoor classroom, teaching children about wildlife as well as edible plants. An excellent education pack had been created. Bird, bat and insect boxes had been erected.
- The bee pollinator planters were an interesting way of spreading the message of the fragility of the bee population; however, to encourage residents to do the same it is recommended that the names of the plants used be shown.

Areas for development

- While it is encouraging that the community is taking such an interest in the natural environment, such as the wildlife bank and Crane Brook, some specialist advice should be sought on management and future planning of these areas. The ecology department of the Tunbridge Wells or local Wildlife Trusts should be in a position to provide this. While there is an evident awareness of wildlife and the environment the focus of future management needs to be considered in an overall conservation plan.
- It is noted that the concrete litter bins are to be replaced; it is suggested that some consideration should be given to the provision of recycling bins in the streetscape. The judges would have liked to learn more about the sustainable practices of the group.
- The fence at the entrance to the primary school would look so much better if painted, preferably in bright colours given the age of the children.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- It was pleasing to see the involvement of young people in a number of projects throughout the town. The students from the High Weald Academy Gardening Club had been successful in creating a First World War poppy meadow.
- A good relationship with the parish council but also income from a good number of sources, especially the garden safari, and a wide range of fundraising events.
- Good publicity was being generated through the local media and use was being made of social media.

Areas for development

- The judges found the evidence provided to them on the day was conducted in a matter of fact manner. While this shows that the work conducted is part of everyday life for the community

and is to be applauded, consideration should be given by the Bloom group to shout more widely about their achievements!

- It was felt that some opportunity was missed during the tour to tell the judges more about the Cranbrook Heritage Trail.

Crawley, South East Small City – Silver Gilt

Even the heavy rain couldn't dampen the enthusiasm and welcome the judges received from the Crawley communities. The judges were pleased to see the imaginative 'Hero's Walk' in the Memorial Gardens where the interpretation boards brought the whole concept to life, remembering the fallen of Crawley. The many groups we met along the tour helped us to realise how strong the Crawley communities are with a special mention to the 'Friends of Worth Park' for their commitment to the extensive restoration of this important historic landscape.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The barrier baskets were of a high standard and situated at strategic points along the judging route.
- Hero's Walk in the Memorial Gardens is interesting and very well executed.
- The walled garden in Tilgate and the surrounding parkland is a huge asset to the people of Crawley.
- It was good to meet the volunteers from Crawley Horticultural Society who have created a prominent feature in the walled garden.
- Tony Massimo's allotment is outstanding once again.

Areas for development

- Try to increase areas of high impact along the route; many areas that we drove through on the tour were devoid of any colour.
- The green spaces and verges along the route were variable in their maintenance with many places having an abundance of roadside weeds.
- It would have been good to have met more businesses that are actively involved in the Bloom campaign.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed with the council's development into solar energy and in the heat exchange project.
- It is good to see that waste and recycling management are high on the council's priorities.
- The flood defences in Tilgate Park have been well thought-out and blend in with the natural park landscape.
- The meadows at Waterlea lived up to their name, and the judges could see the importance for wildlife as well as its practical purpose as a flood alleviation scheme.

Areas for development

- The town centre was very clean but the outlying neighbourhoods let the entry down with several 'grot spots' noticed, particularly around Three Bridges station.
- Although the judges praised the planting at Hero's Walk, a lot of the impact was lost because of the bright blue litter bins in abundance along the path.

- Continue to develop the many recycling initiatives you already have and good luck with the food recycling when it is rolled out.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The 'Let's Face it' campaign has gone from strength to strength and has helped to put Crawley on the map for community involvement.
- The judges enjoyed our visit to Maidenbower Junior School where we met some children and the pigs and where they are making education fun and inspiring for all.
- Crawley has many friends groups; we must mention in particular the Worth Park Friends for special recognition for the work they have undertaken in the park and the enthusiasm they show.

Areas for development

- Much of the presentation went over what was in the portfolio, and this time would have been better spent looking at areas that could not be visited on the tour and seeing some of the many work parties you have throughout the year.
- The Bloom organisation is entirely led by the council, politics is a risky business and if for any reason the wish of the council was not to be involved in the campaign then it would fold. The formation of a Bloom group to work with the council and enter the campaign with the council's support may be a way forward to sustain the good work already in place.

Dalton with Newton, Cumbria Town – Silver

The tour of this historic town, dominated by the lovely St Mary's Church and its grounds, was led throughout by the Mayor, Daniel Greaves, and we were able to meet a number of the volunteers involved in the active Bloom campaign en route. Huge community spirit was in evidence in the splendid RHS It's Your Neighbourhood entry at Wellington Street Residents, where it was clear that all ages were involved in their fun-filled work. There is, throughout, a 'can-do' spirit evident in this entry, and we wish them every success for the future.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The impact of floral towers and planters throughout the main thoroughfares of the town gave a cheerful and welcoming aspect to visitors to Dalton.
- The enthusiasm shown by town residents at Rainbow Row, the allotments, Anchor Court and St Mary's School were fine examples of community involvement. However, the highlight in terms of community gardening was undoubtedly St Mary's Church grounds, kept in immaculate condition by Merryl and Helen in their own time.
- The Clarence House Hotel grounds and containers were spectacular, and beautifully maintained; the large complex included lawns, borders, shrubberies and a chapel.

Areas for development

- Colours and contrasts in the floral features around the town lack some impact, and you may wish to look at alternatives to the current theme to give greater vibrancy to your displays. A review of the feeding regime used in the floral towers should be considered to increase the longevity of the display.

- Consideration should be given to a better quality of mowing in higher profile areas; the WW1 Commemorative Garden is, admittedly, a new feature but the lawned area detracts from your efforts.
- The condition and maintenance of the trees in Market Place (by the Queen Victoria fountain) should be reviewed. The *Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood' trees in Tudor Square, as they mature, should have regular recorded risk assessments carried out.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Bird boxes, bat boxes, bug hotels, etc., have been installed in appropriate (e.g. the school and community gardens) and interesting (e.g. the church grounds) locations and are clearly of benefit.
- Resource management seen included several areas of water harvesting e.g. the station and the school; also much recycling was taking place at Rainbow Row, and refurbished seats at the WW1 Garden.
- Dalton has considerable historical and industrial heritage, with the castle also showing a fine exhibition of local artist George Romney's achievements; the iron-ore mining cart planter on Market Street has been designed by apprentices from BAe Systems to reflect your past. We also appreciated the display of art at the station, again linked to George Romney, and created by a local school.

Areas for development

- Allotment holders at the site visited should be encouraged to consider control options for Japanese knotweed, encroaching along the western boundary.
- Weed presence in hard-surfaced areas of the route is detracting from your efforts and you should consider means by which this can be better managed in future. You should also engage with local businesses to better care for their immediate frontages.
- Market Square and Tudor Square would greatly benefit from some interpretation panels.
- Seats and other street furniture are of variable quality; some of the seats in particular may benefit from further engagement with the Community Payback team to improve their appearance.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The enthusiasm shown throughout the tour to drive community-led change was obvious at all stages of our visit; work with all the schools and with RHS It's Your Neighbourhood groups is highly commendable. The near-complete engagement by Wellington Street Residents Group (Rainbow Row) is splendid to see, and the judges thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of them.
- The educational vision of Deputy Head Hannah Croskery at St Mary's School has and will continue to enlighten children to the benefits of outdoor gardening and related activities, particularly as the Forest School initiative embeds in coming years. The judges were pleased to note that they are developing in the RHS Campaign for School Gardening.
- The Tidy Town Group is well-established and making continuing efforts to maintain a clean environment, in particular the work by Linda Scrogam at the railway station.

Areas for development

- Whilst the level of funding committed by Dalton Town Council is admirable, it is unlikely to provide the necessary resourcing to continue the improvement for which the town strives.

- The Dalton in Bloom committee is a new venture for you, not having its first anniversary until late in 2014. The judges strongly encourage you to develop this group and for them to agree aims and objectives for their sustainable future.
- Residents and visitors arriving at the station (managed by Northern Rail) are greeted by a shelter on the Carlisle-bound platform that also clearly doubles as a urinal. The shelter is also in a very shabby condition. The Bloom group should vigorously engage with Northern Rail to improve this gateway to your historic town. The judges also noted that the open waste-bins on the station platform lack any lids, and thus in the prevailing weather were rapidly filling with water.

Derry City, Ulster Small City – Silver Gilt

The River Foyle is of huge importance to Derry. During recent times the development along the waterfront has transformed the area into a place for family and social gatherings. Although communities still have their own identities, there can be little doubt that working together is an integral part of the drive to move forward. Derry can be justly proud of its achievements, which have made it a city of which to celebrate.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Horticulture has been a key factor in transforming Derry into a nice place in which to live.
- The roundabouts give the entry to the city a sense of identity.
- Green spaces are very well maintained and the wildflower meadows complement the well-kept verges.
- The waterfront planting was generally of a high quality and well executed.
- The judges liked very much the ‘sow and grow’ initiative.

Areas for development

- Help or advice could be given to the playtrail people, as there were some areas in need of attention.
- The judges would have liked to have seen photographs of the fountain allotments when at their best prior to harvesting. This would have given us a better appreciation of the good work that had been carried out.
- The ability to have seen the themed beds at close quarters would have given us a better appreciation of plant quality.
- Although effective, the barrier baskets were a little immature and not fully developed.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Local heritage is of huge importance to this entry and the croft village bears witness to this.
- The cleanliness of the streets is a credit to the staff and department concerned.
- Hard landscaping and street furniture are of a high standard and very well maintained.
- The present recycling measures are proving to be most successful.

Areas for development

- A conservation officer or person could be at hand on another occasion to fully explain the River Foyle as a nature habitat.
- Information boards placed along the waterfront would be of great interest to both visitors and residents alike.

- The painting of bus shelters by children was proving to be most successful and could perhaps be further developed.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There is little doubt that the future of Bloom in Derry is very positive.
- Communities are busy creating special areas that encourage others to become involved, Fountain community allotments being a good example.
- The garden competition awards presentation gave the judges first-hand knowledge of how the community have become involved.
- The schoolchildren that met at the planting boxes were a credit to themselves and everyone involved.
- The judges were very impressed when informed of Rosemount primary school's Eco-School Award.

Areas for development

- The judges would like to have seen more promotional materials displayed.
- It is our view that as the campaign grows, even more people will wish to become involved. Workshops delivered by your professional staff might be well received.
- Had it have been possible the judges would have liked to have seen the Eco-School project at first hand as this would have allowed us to fully understand what has been achieved.

Dufftown, Scotland Large Village – Silver Gilt

All approaches to this large village are attractive. However, on entering the boundary we were impressed by the variety of planting and colour variation. It appears that many support your campaign, and this is complemented by the local distilleries with their wonderful displays. Good local heritage was evident and the whole village was immaculately clean. Good hospitality and a warm Scottish welcome. We left wanting to return.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were most impressed by the number of special artefacts and features used throughout the village that gave a universal dimension to the area.
- The judges saw many good specimen native trees throughout the area; continue with further development.
- In order to propagate and grow plants we applauded the arrangements to relocate the polytunnel.
- The impact of the variety of floral displays, using a wide range of species, including the distilleries was of a high standard.
- Good horticultural practice was evident particularly the tourist attractions.
- There was evidence of good residential gardens and church grounds.
- The support given to the town by local businesses is impressive; a good working relationship seems apparent.
- Green spaces were generally tidy, although we noted there were substantial reductions in service by the local authority.

Areas for development

- The pole planters adjacent to the Still were considered inappropriate for this location and would be better located elsewhere.
- It would have been helpful if time had allowed the judges to have learned more about the horticultural work at the school. While recognising holidays it would have been good to have met some pupils.
- The judges liked the gravel surfacing shown to us in a number of areas and felt this could have been extended to the Memorial Garden Paths at little cost.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The ‘hedgohog houses’ proposal fits well within the Bloom campaign to protect vulnerable species.
- Local environmental quality was faultless – there was no evidence to dispute this fact.
- Generally pride of place was well covered, signage was clear, and the recycled elm seats were a revelation in all aspects.
- Art in the landscape was well covered.

Areas for development

- Local heritage was adequately covered as part of the tour; the church, distilleries and Tower were local gems. It would have been helpful to have visited the Castle, but time did not allow this.
- The judges applauded the conservation works being carried out in certain areas but suggest you seek professional advice about suitable native species, including bulbs that will naturalise in these difficult conditions.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges appreciate that the local authority is drastically cutting services in this area, and noted that the group are not quite sure about how much to undertake at present. We felt sure that as this situation develops it will become more apparent, and hope that many of the existing maintenance tasks can be accommodated by the community.
- The judges were pleased to see the schools involvement and appreciated the excellent press coverage at the conclusion of the tour.
- The judges were aware of community involvement but would have liked a little more information on the role of teenage and younger people in your campaign.
- Your calendar gives excellent detail of your events throughout the year.

Areas for development

- A little more detail about funding and support would have been helpful.
- The presentation gave us a reasonable assessment of what is being achieved. Hence it would have been useful to have received the portfolio in advance.
- The itinerary covered most aspects and was timed well, but you may wish to consider some slight variations in future.

Dunnington, Yorkshire Small Town – Gold & Category Winner

The co-operation and energy demonstrated by a number of groups in Dunnington has resulted in the community engaging in a wide range of projects. This has included a new play area, nature reserve, and the most recent being the addition to the village of a willow cart horse with locally built and

restored cart. The Bloom group carries out many tasks including mowing extensive areas of grass, litter collection, the planting of seasonal displays, and developing new projects. The group also considers environmental issues as part of the wider programme, a good example being the plans for the new cemetery to enhance wildlife. The group is also versatile – in winter, team members become snow wardens to help the community. This demonstrates the role of Dunnington volunteers who also look after the bowling club, cricket club and football pitches.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The special features of the willow ploughman at Church Street, and the horse and restored 1930s village cart reflected the importance of agriculture to the heritage to the village. Both were particularly well executed and appropriately under-planted with perennials providing year-round colour and interest.
- The expertise of Stuart who in the plant choice and quality of plantings was responsible for creating the high-quality colourful displays and plantings of all of the village planters and hanging baskets.
- The very pleasing and tranquil Julia's Garden.
- The additional responsibilities that have been taken on by the Bloom group such as the cutting of all of the grass verges in the village which had been conducted to a very high standard, and more importantly the daunting responsibility for the care and maintenance of the new cemetery.

Areas for development

- The judges learned that new signage had been created to inform the public that Julia's Garden was open to all; given the apparent abundant supply of paving slabs following an earlier appeal perhaps it would be appropriate to create an additional path across the grass and into the garden from the roadside, from where the current pavement ends.
- It will be beneficial for grasses and the vegetation to be cleared from beneath the bases of new hedges to remove competition, at Nicola's Garden and the cemetery especially. The planting of moisture-tolerant trees and shrubs, such as alder, dogwood and willow, could be considered to overcome the problem of waterlogging at the Millennium Garden.
- It is recommended that the annual planting beneath the Route 66 cycle feature be changed to sustainable planting as this has been so successful where used elsewhere in the village.
- Although the expansion of the cemetery may be some years away, forward planning needs to be developed to determine locations for tree and hedge plantings and path layouts.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The excellent Hassacarr Nature Reserve has attracted some 5,000 visitors over its 20 years, regularly welcoming young people, natural history groups and members of the general public. It has just been lifted from Site of Importance for Nature Conservation to Local Nature Reserve status and this is in no small way due to the dedication of volunteer warden Terry Weston, his assistants and the support of the Dunnington Conservation Group.
- A spotlessly clean entry, the Bloom Group has instigated a campaign to educate and assist dog walkers in cleaning up after their pets.
- Plant containers had been treated in novel ways to improve their presentation, such as the sinking of plastic containers inside wooden barrels and the painting of concrete planters, the latter treatment being particularly successful.

Areas for development

- Given the importance of chicory growing to the village, it could be considered that this could form a theme for a future heritage project and perhaps be linked to the growing of vegetables as a community project, as distinct from the allotments.
- Consider further opportunities of resource management, such as the harvesting of rainwater.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The self-maintained sports club.
- There were a large number of community groups in the village all focussing on different aspects of village life. The tasking of individuals to specific roles in the Bloom group has by results proved to be very successful.
- Children appeared to be involved throughout the village and had been appropriately rewarded with a wonderful playground well stocked with adventurous equipment, which had been fundraised by the village through the Community Spaces scheme.
- There was a very active and successful fundraising scheme from a diverse range of sources.
- The presence of a five-year plan.
- Excellent support of the media including the year-long involvement of Radio York, as well as parish magazine and village publications.

Areas for development

- Although a number of features at the school were mentioned in the portfolio, and the judges did get to meet the Rainbows, it would have been advantageous to have visited the school grounds in person.

Durham, Northumbria Large Town – Gold

Durham can be very proud of its wonderful treescape, which is complemented by its excellent parks and amenity areas. In these challenging times, when significant pressures are on local authorities, you have maintained as well as significantly improved your standards. A whole-team approach has raised standards to a well-deserved gold benchmark: congratulations. To quote Andrew Jackson, Durham has never looked better!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The excellent improvements to the station (Perhaps East Coast should take over all stations in the UK).
- Some of the finest standards of amenity maintenance have been achieved by the local authority, university and residents of Durham.
- The excellent treescape and management and maintenance of woodlands, new plantings and the Botanic Gardens in partnership with the community.
- Horticultural enhancements, particularly those in the Market Square, were of a very high standard.

Areas for development

- The excellent Business Improvement District team may wish to consider the slight dispersal of some of the containers in the Market Square to create an impact over a larger area. Some of the planters (in groups of three) were slightly cramped.

- Continue to involve and expand on the Durham City Homes project. On future visits please let the judges visit examples of horticultural improvements.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The woodland management, new planting and British nature plantings were of a high standard.
- Street scene and local heritage were all showcased to great effect.
- The Business Improvement District (BID) scheme had clearly engaged the local businesses to great effect. It is strongly recommended that you enter Northumberland BID scheme with an objective to participate in the RHS Britain Bloom national competition.

Areas for development

- Continue to regularly inspect, monitor and maintain the standards achieved throughout the year and on future tours.
- Consider the creation of a Bloom heritage trail for tourists.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Durham can be proud of its approach to the involvement of people in the Bloom initiative. Significant changes have taken place to the credit of the council, its officers and the business community in generating local involvement, ownership and pride.
- The excellent Hagrid project is a fine example of horticultural achievement for all communities to follow, involving the engagement of children and young people.

Areas for development

- On future Bloom tours try to involve a local school if possible.
- Traditionally, Durham Bloom entries have been very much local-authority based, this but this has significantly changed to an incredible degree. Continue to further develop and involve communities in the manner you have between 2010 and 2014; your success will be guaranteed.

Elswick, North West Village – Gold

Elswick has a long history of entering village competitions, but it only more recently that the village has been involved in Bloom. The village is situated on the coastal Fylde plain, which is a haven for wildlife and is further enhanced by a number of exciting new projects by the Bloom group. It was a well-prepared tour, with lots of supporting evidence of the year-round community work, and presented a very thorough package to the judges. Bloom has been the catalyst for some fantastic improvements and in your words it has made the village an attractive place to live and galvanised the community. Locally the community is now known as the village of flowers, which shows just how far you have come.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed with innovations, in particular the carpet bedding celebrating 50 years of Britain in Bloom, the Elswick bed and the striking 3-D features: the ice-cream cone, shoe and boot were not only different but eye-catching and more importantly fun.

- It was great to see your support for the 50 years of Bloom, growing for gold with pollinators and the sunflower giveaway.
- The judges were impressed with the colourful residential plantings, particularly Ash Road. Throughout the tour the judges got a strong sense of the involvement of both residents and local businesses.
- The new sustainable bed in Grange Road promises to be a great new addition to the village introducing both colour, encouraging wildlife and extending the season of interest.
- The judges congratulate the team on the recent Green Flag for the village hall.

Areas for development

- This winter, continue with your tree replacement scheme and replace the dead/dying trees. Consider asking for arboricultural advice from Flyde Council particularly on The Avenue.
- The bold bedding schemes along the highway provide a 'wow' and great seasonal interest. The judges realise you are very proud of these and all the hard work Andrew puts into looking after them, but use your time on the tour wisely as it isn't necessary for the judges look at all of them. The lobelia in places was patchy and on the tour you said you were surprised it had lasted that long. Consider visiting other Bloom areas to research alternative cultivars and consider replacing the 'Elswick' in permanent planting.
- Consider renovating the sustainable bed of the community centre as a new project. It had large amounts of *Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora* (monbretia) which is classified as an invasive weed. This was also spotted in areas of the tour.
- Each entry has its own identity and its own ideas. Previous judges have made similar suggestions. As a group ensure you remain open to new ideas, explore them and if necessary enlist expert help. An example of this is sustainable planting. The team has introduced one new bed but the judges were told that only bedding would thrive because of the salt-laden winds. Numerous shrubs and herbaceous perennials would thrive in the conditions and tolerate the conditions far better than bedding. Bedding has a high impact, but perhaps audit all planted areas with a view to introducing more sustainable planting or trialling different types of bedding.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The use of wildflowers and wildlife planting is excellent. The judges were particularly impressed with Elswick Wildflower and Wildlife Meadow. It has the traditional perennial wildflower meadow and annual wildflowers. The annual mix provides an initial 'wow' that residents must love, but the judges were delighted to see so much fauna as we walked through the perennial area. The judges look forward to seeing the project develop further with your plans to create a perfect habitat for hedgehogs and bees.
- Congratulations on all the recycling initiatives. The group has enhanced the standard services working with local businesses and residents. It is impressive to know that 20% of residents composted their garden waste.
- The environmental quality around the village was exceptional.
- It is great to see the signage throughout the tour and interpretation signage as part of all your new projects. However, not only have the team invested in new signage, volunteers have cleaned and fixed all existing signage, too.
- The group has taken inspiration for a number of new projects from Alan Clarke's book, *Windmill Land*, in which Elswick is described as 'a pretty village, all gardens and greenery'.

Areas for development

- The judges are looking forward to seeing the delayed heritage leaflet. Continue to research the local area for heritage agricultural equipment to be used around the village and for further discussion about the heritage on the tour.

- The bus stop in the village was exceptional clean and tidy but a little stark. Consider softening this either with planting or furniture or perhaps a mural designed by local young people.
- The group should continue to look for areas to plant trees around the village.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Community participation is a huge strength in Elswick and the judges are aware this will have taken a great deal of hard work over many years. It is impressive that the group work with 50 volunteers.
- The team must be congratulated on all the partners; Elswick Parish, Lancashire County Council, Wildlife Trust, Environmental Trust, Copp School, WI, United Reform Church, youth club and local businesses.
- Elswick Community Project is another exceptional project involving a number of partners. The project covers many elements of the judging criteria and the judges were particularly impressed that you undertake annual training. This fantastic resource is going to be used for a community apple day in the autumn.

Areas for development

- The whole judging package was very professional and thorough but it helps to keep things positive. Even before the judges arrived they had read in the portfolio 'every year we approach judging week In Britain in Bloom with trepidation as virtually every year disaster strikes' and on being greeted you told us about this year's disaster. Elswick has proved extremely resourceful at overcoming adversity. Groups work on Bloom 12 months of the year, with a big push ready for judging. The road isn't smooth for anyone but it is overcoming the problems that is important.
- The judges recognise that there is a gardening competition but it would be nice to see this expanded further by introducing new categories and encouraging further entries.
- Elswick has achieved a tremendous amount and the whole village should be very proud and celebrate the achievements.
- It would be good to have met more of the volunteers along the route. The Quadrilla Resources representative could have been joined by Friends' groups at the meadow and the orchard, and the orchard or meadow could be considered as an RHS It's Your Neighbourhood entry.
- The judges realise judging falls within the summer holidays but not all the children would be away. It would have been nice to have met some of the young people from the Scouts, youth club, church or local school. It probably wouldn't have been possible to get representatives from each but get them to record their work on a smartphone or short video and use this as part of the presentation.
- The judges must congratulate the team on the amount of money obtained through many grants and the sponsorship by Quadrilla Resources. There are some great opportunities using the orchard as a resource with a WI recipe book to do your own fundraising.
- It was noted in the portfolio that the Twitter site and website needed updating and this was discussed on the tour.

Eston (Middlesbrough), Northumbria Urban Community – Silver Gilt

This former mining town, with the lovely Eston Hills as a backdrop, has been transformed over the last 16 years by the hard work, determination and fighting spirit of the Eston Residents Association. The area has been rejuvenated using colourful displays and sustainable plantings throughout. The area's rich history and heritage has been well documented in the wonderful 'Eston Story' exhibition as a lasting legacy for future generations. It is also pleasing to see the way the local heritage has been

worked into attractive artworks and sculptures throughout your displays. The passion of the people of Eston for their town and its Bloom campaign was amply demonstrated to the judges throughout a very enjoyable tour. Thank you.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The Community Garden – a very colourful, well chosen, innovative range of plants giving high impact in the centre of the town.
- Colourful planters and barrier baskets grouped together to give a really vibrant display and containing a diverse choice of good quality, very well-maintained plant material.
- The attractive and well-maintained grounds of the Congregational Church maintained by the parishioners.
- The good number of residential gardens seen on the tour. In particular the cheerful displays at Birkdale Gardens.
- Old Row, California – the display of colour co-ordinated pots created a very pleasing overall effect.

Areas for development

- Consider, if possible, repositioning some of the existing displays to soften the entrance of the main shopping precinct from the road.
- Avoid the lollipop type of pruning seen on a number of the residential estates that will have removed the flowering potential of the shrubs.
- Continue to develop your existing sustainable planting schemes and ensure the use of plants best suited to the particular site conditions.
- Try to achieve a consistent standard of grass cutting and shrub bed maintenance on the open space areas, which are maintained by the local authority and social housing provider.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Your local heritage is exceptionally well represented and celebrated throughout the town. The sculptures, artwork and signage is the best we have seen.
- The ‘pop-up’ banners chronicling your rich history and telling the ‘Eston Story’ is a terrific educational resource and a lasting legacy for future generations.
- The local authority is to be commended for its recycling schemes and a top quartile recycling rate of 46.7%.
- Your use of peat-reduced compost in the containers and partial reuse of spent compost as a soil conditioner.

Areas for development

- It was pleasing to note the plans for the development of Roseberry Crescent Plantation by Coast & Country and the works already started. Look to develop other opportunities for developing sites to promote conservation and biodiversity. The judges suggest you consider creating wildflower meadows on some of the grassed open space areas managed by Coast & Country and Redcar & Cleveland Council. Perhaps one of the plots on the allotment site could be used to create a wildlife garden including a bug hotel, log piles etc., and involve local children.
- Weed growth was evidenced in several roadside channels and paved areas; ensure all hard surfaces are treated consistently.
- Litter and detritus was seen on several areas, grass verges and roadside channels throughout the tour. A consistent approach to maintenance in this regard is required.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- You have a full programme of year-round involvement supported by a very good range of social activities.
- The long-term future of your campaign is sustainable and secure. The judges noted the many sources of funding and support obtained.
- It was pleasing to note the involvement of all three schools in Eston in your campaign. It was good to be accompanied throughout the judging tour by Laura.
- The support of the Evening Gazette and BBC Radio Tees in promoting your campaign and activities. The judges also noted that you are currently developing a website which, when launched, will also further promote the very good work which you are doing to enhance the town.

Areas for development

- To encourage further residential and community support look at the possibility of developing a local gardens competition, perhaps in partnership with Coast & Country Housing Association.
- Seek to try and engage with more young people outside the school environment as opportunities arise.

Evington (Leicester), East Midlands Urban Community – Silver

The Evington in Bloom group was formed in 2007 and has only been entering Bloom for three years. What you have achieved in such a short space of time, coming through from RHS It's Your Neighbourhood to being a first-time UK finalist is to be commended. As a community you have much to be proud of. Evington has the potential to develop in the years ahead and advance further in Britain in Bloom. Well done!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The attractive, well-managed treescape throughout Evington with good successional planting. Also of note was the Tree Trail in the park with its colourful information leaflet.
- The grounds of Linden School contained some interesting features and are a very good resource for the children, both for learning and play. The enthusiasm of Ingrid, the new Deputy Head Teacher, also deserves recognition.
- The cheery sunflower bed at Goodwood was bright and colourful. It was lovely to meet with all the enthusiastic Beavers and Scouts who have been involved with this project.
- Your initiatives for local food growing – in particular the permaculture garden at Wycliffe Church and the Gujarati gardener's polytunnel on the allotment site.

Areas for development

- You need to ensure a consistent standard of maintenance and quality of plants throughout. Pay particular attention to weeding, deadheading and also look at the feeding regime of some of your planters as some looked particularly starved of nutrients.
- Look to create more impact at certain focal points. Currently your displays and projects are spread over a large area. The judges suggest that you carry out an audit and then concentrate your efforts in certain areas rather than spreading your resources too thinly.
- Seek to engage more business premises in supporting your campaign.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- You have a good range of well-managed sites for conservation and to encourage biodiversity. Of particular note was the pond at the bottom of the arboretum specifically managed for the resident population of great crested newts.
- The recent refurbishment of the War Memorial has created a fitting tribute for the fallen, an attractive public space and a real focal point for the community.
- The range of attractive sculptures in the park and the innovative 'Outdoor Gym' area.
- Your initiatives in relation to resource management were generally good as was the planting of local heritage apple cultivars in the Orchard.

Areas for development

- Weed growth and detritus was evidenced in roadside channels and paved areas in several areas on the judging route.
- Street furniture needs attention in places to ensure that it is all kept in a good state of repair and maintenance.
- The churchyard area at St Denys Church is currently being intensively maintained (large amount of weed spraying and high-frequency grass cutting). The judges suggest that, in partnership with the church and Leicester City Council, you look to managing this more informally in places and consider creating areas for wildflowers. This will create a more natural backdrop to your lovely church.
- All connected with the clearance, restoration and ongoing maintenance of the moated feature with mound (a scheduled ancient monument) at Piggy's Hollow are to be congratulated. The judges noted your plans to provide interpretation on this site, which will greatly enhance public awareness and understanding of the site and its history.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The wide cross section of the local community involved in your campaign is to be applauded.
- The very good partnerships that you have formed with so many community groups, and in particular the close working relationship with Leicester City Council. It was also pleasing to note the support for your campaign of both your local councillor Baljit Singh and your local MP Keith Vaz.
- The good evidence of year-round activity demonstrated throughout the tour and in the supporting information provided to the judges.
- Your 'What's this all about?' leaflet is good in explaining Bloom and how people can get involved – simple, easy to understand and an example for others to follow.

Areas for development

- Seek to raise the profile of your Bloom campaign by having higher profile signs and stickers incorporating your logo on all the floral features, containers and plantings provided by the Bloom group to acknowledge the very good work that you are carrying out and to further promote the local campaign.
- The judges suggest that you make greater use of the portfolio and presentation to give a general overview of your entry and to provide background information particularly in relation to your funding and also your future plans as a group.

Farnham, South East Large Town – Silver Gilt

A golden welcome was waiting for us when we arrived in this busy town celebrating 50 years of Britain in Bloom. It was clear from the start the Farnham Bloom team were committed to the cause and everyone we met along the tour showed a real passion to make Farnham a better to live and work, as it was said in the starting presentation 'its about the people of Farnham'.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There were many themed baskets across the tour making a real impact, flowers were everywhere and the golden theme brought everything together.
- The Bourne Beautification scheme was making a real difference locally, true people power wanting to improve their local environment and really achieving this.
- The maintenance of Gostrey Meadow was a real treat, the Park Keeper tending the beds and everything was maintained to a high standard. The busy park was well used with the electric substation disguised as a potting shed.

Areas for development

- There were weeds on the tour especially around the car park and these should be addressed.
- There were a number of dead trees on the tour especially on the way to Bishops Meadow.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- There were some high-quality conservation sites such as Middlebourne Lane Garden. The judges were impressed with the community volunteers who not only maintained and developed the site were so knowledgeable about the wildlife which inhabits the site.
- Annual Meadow at Bishops Meadow (although newly sown) was providing great colour and attracting pollinators to the community orchard planted alongside.
- The signage at Bourne Crossroads gave a real sense of place and was to a high quality. It would be good to see this scheme developed to other areas of the town.
- Peat-free baskets were proving to be a success by offering plenty of colour.
- The wrapping of the bus shelters was a clever solution to improve their appearance especially as they had a 50 years of Britain in Bloom celebration theme.

Areas for development

- There were cigarette ends along Castle Street, which needs to be tackled as part of the street scene operations.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Post 19 Group was a real treat. The work of this group was inspirational and making real improvements on the group. You could see everyone involved in the project was fully committed.
- Literature and newsletters produced by the town were very impressive. The newsletters kept everyone in the town up to date with all Bloom activities
- The level of sponsorship and business interaction was also very high, ensuring a bright future for Farnham Bloom.

Areas for development

- Although we heard about the schools involvement, planting baskets, etc., it would have been nice to meet some of the children involved.

Filby, Anglia Village – Gold

Set on the edge of the Norfolk Broads, Filby is a serious Bloom campaigner. With nearly 20 years of hard work by many volunteers you would expect high standards and the judges were not disappointed. The floral displays throughout the village were remarkable and the improved area around the Pound proved a focal point. The group should be congratulated on the tremendous work that goes into keeping the high standards across the village. We can see why you get visitors just to look at your floral displays!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed with the quantity and quality of the colourful barrels baskets throughout the village. Having them at different heights worked very well, as did the groupings. The displays outside the shop were stunning and certainly created a ‘wow’ together with the 3-D feature opposite.
- The judges appreciated the new design and planting around the Club Room cottage garden. You had achieved quite a transformation in a very short space of time. We particularly liked the use of pollinator-friendly plants.
- The new beds at the Pound had some stunning displays of seasonal bedding. Your hard work has certainly paid off and you must be delighted with the results. The nicotiana were magnificent and gave real impact.

Areas for development

- The turf area could do with some attention to set off the colourful beds.
- There were one or two containers near the boat that weren’t the high quality of the rest of the containers.
- Continue to consider other species for the bedding displays, particularly for height in some of the other beds.
- Consider using a brick edging at the cottage garden at the Club Room to add to the cottage feel of the garden and keep the gravel on the pathway.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The mosaic Filby signs were a great advert for the village. They made a unique and eye-catching entrance. The sculptured Filby sign at the Club Room was beautiful and must create quite a stir with any new visitors.
- The judges noted the Clay Pit area as a work in progress; it will be interesting to see it develop.
- The boardwalk and viewing platform is a great addition for residents and visitors to view the Broads. The wildlife walk and survey of the village will provide a useful resource.
- Resource management is obviously very important to your village. The recycling area was certainly made a feature by the surrounding floral displays and the judges liked the signage. The judges noted that the baskets were watered from water extracted from the borehole.
- The allotment holders not only had compost bins and water butts but also had formed a partnership with the next-door stables to provide free manure and they had even set up a comfrey press.

- The community orchard is developing nicely and the list of heritage cultivars planted is a great resource.

Areas for development

- A local bee-keeping group could be encouraged to consider a hive at the allotment/orchard to help pollination and which could be used as an educational tool.
- There could be more information discussed about the local heritage, perhaps a heritage leaflet could be considered.
- The judges realise your wild area is a work in progress but look forward to seeing it be developed further.
- The schoolchildren were a delight to meet but didn't seem as knowledgeable as the judges would have expected. Perhaps work with the school and support the children's learning outside the school – not just growing fruit and vegetables but also learning about gardening.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There is great community spirit within the village and the judges noted the excellent communication from the Filby flyer, website, local TV and press releases. Also the team has its own merchandise from Filby beer and T-shirts. There aren't many groups that have their own beer! You also run several events throughout the year adding to the publicity and spreading the word of the Bloom campaign.
- The judges noted the commitment of the nursery staff along with the Bloom volunteers working at school and pre-school. The judges appreciate it is hard to meet children in the school holidays but it is extremely useful for the judges. The nursery children were very enthusiastic.
- The funding application for the village community centre was an enormous undertaking and a great project, it will create many more opportunities to the village and we hope your application is successful.
- The judges congratulate the team on working with a local television company to publicise the village, the Bloom group and the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign

Areas for development

- Develop a floral trail round the village for visitors that describes some of the floral features; this may take in some of the wildlife areas.
- The judges saw some extremely high-quality horticulture throughout the route but the group may wish to consider showing the judges the best areas, ensuring that the judging criteria is covered, but not necessarily showing the full length of the village to allow more time at other areas.

Filey, Yorkshire Coastal Up to 12k – Silver Gilt

The partnership between council and community is what drives Filey in Bloom forward, and the attendance of the Mayor throughout the tour strengthened that position. There is a general up-beat 'we can do it' attitude driving the campaign, which makes it fun for those taking part – and the judges were left in no doubt that it is this attitude that encourages people to get involved. The judges were given a well-rounded comprehensive tour encompassing all aspects of the Bloom criteria and a thoroughly enjoyable day was had by all.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The standard of horticulture is generally very good with the main roundabouts being real focal features. The sustainable beds along Crescent Gardens were well planted and designed with a wide variety of suitable plant material.
- The grass areas particularly in Crescent Gardens were of a high standard: it was good to see that in this dry weather they had not been cut to short and so looked green and lush.
- We saw many good residential gardens on the route and we enjoyed meeting the Thompsons and having a look around their lovely garden.

Areas for development

- Some of the rose beds on the route were suffering from age and a lack of vigour. This will need attention sooner rather than later and suggest that you look carefully at their location and whether they are needed and replant with sustainable planting on those sites you wish to keep.
- Many of the hanging baskets (although colourful) were in need of more volume and trail – perhaps you need to look at your feeding regime.
- The annual beds outside the bus station lacked impact due to their flat appearance this could be remedied in future years by planting groups of taller plants such as cannas.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Filey Dams is a well-maintained site of great importance to the area and we were impressed with the management of the site and the fact that it is solely run by volunteers who are totally dedicated and extremely knowledgeable.
- There is a clever use of art in the landscape in many parts of Filey, which helps to depict the heritage and history of this small coastal community. We were particularly impressed with the new train by the railway station as it is a real labour of love.
- Signage and interpretation is very good as you walk around Filey and this helps to keep the visitors informed.

Areas for development

- Some of the street furniture was in need of refurbishment in Crescent Gardens to bring it in line with the rest.
- We look forward to seeing the new mural in North Cliff Gardens when it is completed as this will make quite a feature to the area.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Community engagement is very high and very enthusiastic which makes Filey a pleasure to visit and judge.
- The visit to Filey infants school was infectious and the commitment shown from Julie Roen to the project was a highlight of the tour.
- It is good to see the gardens competition developing year-on-year.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop your community activities through visiting local fairs and events and by your general presence in and around Filey. Unfortunately with local government cuts more and more emphasis will be placed on the voluntary sector yet Filey in Bloom is in a good situation to help soften this downturn.

Glenarm, Ulster Village – Gold

Although a relatively new group and first-time entry into the national competition, the group has used Bloom to great effect, and as a catalyst to improve the social, physical and economic revitalisation of the area with the help of The Prince's Foundation and Larne Borough Council.

This small, beautiful coastal village is steeped in history and set within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The group has shown how much can be achieved with determination and enthusiasm in three years and how the community has supported, not just the Bloom entry but the improvements the team have created. An outstanding entry that will only go from strength to strength with the solid foundations you have set in place. Congratulations!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were overwhelmed by how much has been achieved in such a short space of time. The scale of the projects and the quantity can only be commended. The group has created a series of highlights throughout the village and the use of the before photographs throughout the visit really enhanced the judges understanding of the challenges faced and progress the team has made.
- The marina (old factory site) is a striking example of one of these projects. The judges were amazed at how much progress had been made just this year. An imaginative use of materials has created a stunning area. The area covers so many elements of the judging criteria. The sweet pea planters were eye-catching, the sustainable planting imaginative, while the coloured pebbles added fun and information. There were some very creative recycling initiatives within the display.
- Glenarm Castle was not just one 'wow' but a series of them that demonstrated the very highest standards of horticulture, design, tradition and innovation. James and his colleague should be very proud of all the great work undertaken there.
- The judges liked the use of wildflowers and were appropriate to the area and this will be further enhanced by extending the area in 2015.
- The team demonstrated how much engagement there was with other residents, businesses and Larne council through both sponsorship and the large number of individual and civic displays throughout. The judges thought the colour theme to link with the Giro 2014 worked very well.

Areas for development

- The judges thought some of the planting combinations and plant choices in the sustainable planting at the Marina were superb and would like to see this style extended into some of the seasonal planting.
- The tour was very comprehensive but the judges would suggest showing some of the projects either through the portfolio or in a presentation. This would enable the group to show off the highlights on the tour.
- The group has vastly improved the entrance to the village with the new timber planters and geranium beds. Further away from the geranium beds, the judges felt some different planting in these narrow beds might be more appropriate such as sustainable planting. The group may also like to consider taller, evergreen planting to screen the weeds behind or tackle the weeds behind and continue your high-quality sustainable planting from the marina.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Is there anything that the group doesn't recycle? Fish, plants, stones, roofing underlay, plastic containers and even a tractor, to name only a few. The team has used a variety of materials to great effect to create unique and fun displays that introduced artwork into the village.
- The judges would like to congratulate the group on the number of new seats that have added to the village. By building them to your own design you have great seats at a fraction of the cost.
- The interpretation boards throughout the village gave visitors information on the history and local fauna. The unique design and colour worked extremely well, subtle but in keeping. They included QR codes to enable the information to reach a greater audience and offer visitors further information.
- The village is steeped in heritage with more than 60 listed buildings, and the tour gave the judges a comprehensive knowledge of the history. Have you considered introducing a history trail or possibly a leaflet? You may also wish to consider a project to record all the local history from the older members of the community.

Areas for development

- The churchyard enhancements were remarkable and the judges appreciate this is only the first stage, with more to follow. A Friends group for the churchyard could help involve more residents and spread the workload. You may wish to consider RHS It's Your Neighbourhood for the churchyard project as this would make a great entry to this scheme.
- As a group there has been a great amount to ensure hard landscaping is clean and tidy. The judges realise the short time the group has been formed but you may wish to consider an audit of all the street furniture and organise a programme of maintenance to keep all the areas smart and attractive.
- The portfolio comprehensively explained biodiversity but even when the judges enquired there was no further information during the tour. Perhaps James could have talked about the BioBlitz held at the castle as part of the castle grounds tour?

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were overwhelmed by the number of projects the group had taken on and would like to congratulate the team. There have been many astonishing improvements to the churchyard, marina, old factory site and limestone tunnel. The work that has gone into the planning and implementation of the projects – many have already been sustained, with further plans for continuation.
- Your approach to fundraising and gaining public awareness is refreshing and has ensured the security of the work for future years. The letter/envelope drop to every house ensured no-one in the village can fail to know what the team do. The group has raised an extraordinary amount of money and have great support from both residents and local businesses. If the group has any further spare time it could offer support to other local Bloom groups who may wish to get involved in the campaign.
- Your public awareness didn't stop there; using the local paper and Facebook ensures your good work spreads beyond your residents.
- The enthusiasm of the group is infectious and what shines through is how much fun you have. This must help greatly with fundraising and is proven by complete strangers visiting the village and making donations.

Areas for development

- The tunnel project is remarkable and the judges were impressed at the further developments that have made already by extending the planting and introducing wildflowers. The judges would suggest introducing some perennial planting – perhaps a border running along the rear of the bed to reduce the cost and time in planting with seasonal bedding. This would save

time and resources in future years, extend the season of interest and there would be an opportunity to introduce height into the planting.

- There are already plans to extend the tunnel project further in 2015 and the judges hope to get an opportunity to see these developments. It would be useful to see an interpretation board that matches your existing boards and explains the importance of this site for the visitors.
- The group explained the work with the pre-school and school, and the judges understand the health and safety issues that reduced the involvement this year. Consideration should be given to involve them in other ways.

Glenrothes, Scotland Champion of Champions – Gold

The basis of the town was formed around 60 years ago when development started on Glenrothes new town. The initial landscaping provides tree-lined entrance roads, which gives the whole town a very green feel, complete with spectacular views to the nearby hills and moors. The objective of 'Take a Pride on Glenrothes', which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, has been to improve the environment, protect biodiversity and reduce landfill waste. With these objectives so much has been achieved; projects such as the floral meadow-sowing on the main road verges have been very good and conducted on an impressive scale. Bloom groups, schools, and subgroups are beginning to tackle issues that have arisen in those neighbourhoods that have been affected by social and financial deprivation. Mention must be made of the impressive collection of public art, some of which is being relocated and restored.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The quality, content and colour of the many roundabouts and extensive plantings at the entrances to the town as well as on roadside verges could not fail to impress. A combination of seasonal and permanent plantings by the shopping centre and bus station made a real impact.
- The arboretum is an educational benefit as well as diversifying an already fine treescape. The well-planted maze is a way of encouraging younger visitors.
- The Balbirnie allotment site was first class in terms of management, quality of plots and educational activities, especially the involvement of children. The ethos behind the site was the promotion of health and well-being through outdoor allotment activities. Fife is seen (on the experience of this allotment, quite rightly) as an exemplar in the country for the running of allotment sites.
- Grass verges included frequency mowing, relaxed cutting regimes and wildflower sowings. These, together with associated woodland management, were extensive and superb. This pair of judges rather liked the strips of wildflowers on the highway verges, appreciating that most car drivers would get the impression that the whole verge was of wildflowers.

Areas for development

- Some rose beds containing hybrid tea and floribunda roses had begun to fail and should be considered for replacement at the earliest opportunity to meet the high standard of presentation witnessed elsewhere along the route.
- The presentation of the bedding at Riverside Park was not to the same high standard as the highway bedding with some die-back of plants and geraniums needing dead-heading. Some weeds were evident in the hosta beds at Balbirnie Park car park.
- The judges would like to have seen a greater number of residential gardens during the tour.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Despite an extensive tour of the city centre, verges and approaches to the parks, the entry was virtually absent of litter.
- The 'Town Art' strategy has meant that art is extensive and appeals to all ages. Entrance signs to the parks were informative and of good quality and design; there was a programme of renewal of finger pointers. The wayfinders in Riverside Park and the hippos in the Scouts' beds showed that young people were being involved.
- The approach to conservation and wildlife habitat management on Glenrothes Golf Course was impressive and ticked all the sustainability boxes. The role of Paul in this was commendable and the judges wish him luck as he awaits the results of the entry into the Gold Environment Awards.
- There were a number of commendable conservation projects under way, each of differing size and scale, from the new pond at Riverside Park to the extensive Lochty Wetlands project and its buzzard pole.
- The QR project which has already seen the labelling of the Rhododendron collection at Balbirnie Park.

Areas for development

- While the need for management of antisocial activity was recognised, and an area of graffiti was noted in the underpass of Riverside Park, it was thought that the provision of some simple seating in the arboretum would be welcomed by some visitors.
- It is thought that for the bat cave, while a commendable scheme, the chances for success could be improved by partially cladding the entrances to the tunnel in order to reduce the impact of direct sunlight and reduce the ambient temperature.
- The judges would like to have understood more about the initiatives for the recycling and reuse of green compost to benefit the city's green spaces and residents.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges applaud the achievements of the small but active group of the Friends of Riverside Park and the young resident fundraising for the Magnus Drive play initiative.
- The judges visited some sites of social and commercial deprivation where effort was being made by the community groups to raise awareness of the issues and to bring about improvement, in sometimes difficult and challenging circumstances. The community associations should be congratulated on starting to address the problems by installing planters, and it was encouraging that even children of a young age were being involved through the Chit Ch@t club.
- The work of FEAT and various projects in which the charity is involved is having a positive effect on the well-being and health benefits for the community. It is very much hoped that the good work is able to continue after March 2015.
- Young people were clearly being involved on community projects throughout Glenrothes in a variety of ways.

Areas for development

- It was evident that some of the community groups trying to bring about change in the out-of-town retail centres need assistance and advice on how to engage with landowners to bring about the necessary change. A gesture of helping with the replacement of dead trees in the forthcoming planting season would undoubtedly give the group great encouragement.

Great Whittington, Northumbria Small Village – Silver Gilt

The village of Great Whittington in Northumbria captivated the judges on a beautiful morning visit. The relaxed setting, combined with an informal tour including the local children, showed many of the charming facets of the village, and its protected village green adds to the ambience of the sensitively cared-for entry.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The subtlety of the planting schemes within the village matches the quietly understated rural ideal. They were entirely appropriate for a working agricultural community in the Northumbrian hinterland. Variation of theme provided extra interest throughout.
- Plants used were healthy and well proportioned, and grown from seed or locally propagated by the village team.
- The mixture of annual and perennial planting throughout was commendable with the garden shown to us by Robbie and Lewis being particularly noteworthy.
- We appreciated the baskets and planting at the Queens Head Restaurant.
- The pollinating bed sponsored by Halls of Heddon was also not only of horticultural merit but also provides significant insect interest.
- The overall appearance of the village was well presented with the pleasing open space of the village green being the principal feature.

Areas for development

- The Gin Gan garden of Mrs Eryl Daniel was lovely; however, it was not sufficiently in view from the roadside and should not play a significant part in future tours.
- Business involvement in the village would be enhanced by further development of the beer garden at the Queens Head, and perhaps by local farmers considering tree planting at farm entrances.
- The concept of a woodland garden with associated flora is commendable but the selection of appropriate species such as wood sorrel, wood anemone and similar native plants will perform better in this location than some of those currently present.
- The high levels of creeping buttercup should be controlled by whatever means possible to allow for further species to be encouraged.
- Tree maintenance should also be considered. The two Malus (crab apple) were not appropriate for the woodland setting (being crowded out by the ash and lime) and as they are poor specimens we would suggest that they be removed when the opportunity arises. Consideration should be given to replacement of these with rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*). This area could also be underplanted with both *Viburnum opulus* and *Ilex aquifolium*.
- Amenity grass management should be reviewed. The one large damaged area was unfortunate and discussion with the local authority is appropriate to try and prevent this happening again. A review of heights of cut should also be considered with the emphasis being to encourage the establishment of native wild flora on the grass verges, both within and on the approaches to the village.
- Endeavour to discourage the parking of cars on grass verges within the village centre.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The prevalence of pollinator-friendly plants, bee-friendly habitats plus the excellent fernery within the woodland area was typical of your rural approach to the promotion of conservation/biodiversity.
- The use of rural skills such as the wall rebuild and the weaving of willow at the forest area was appropriate and adds to habitat creation.
- The propagation of plants from seed, water harvesting, liquid manure production and composting at the Village Hall was commendable.
- Pride of place pervaded every corner with the delight of village residency clearly evident.
- The village was very well presented with no adverse impacts being observed during the entire tour.
- The project to use willow to create sculpture is entirely appropriate to the village's rural setting, with the carved wooden eagle being noted.

Areas for development

- The fernery was such a striking feature and so well conceived that further expansion should be considered to provide additional wildlife habitat both on the same site and indeed in an additional location.
- Tree and grass management, if adopted, would further enhance the quality of your environment.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The spirit of community engagement, particularly with local children, was commendable. The link with Newcastle College students in respect of the Village Hall renovation was also significant and will pay dividends to your community in the future.
- The village newsletter, used as an additional means of communication, was interesting and hope that you will be able to utilise this information system, along with the IT already used, to spread the news regarding Great Whittington in Bloom.

Areas for development

- Your levels of business support were encouraging and the judges hope that these funding streams continue to expand in both monetary donations and payments in kind.
- The existing skills base within the village should be considered and utilised to its full extent to maximise the benefits to your community.
- With such high levels of participation it is important that new and innovative projects, even on a small scale, should be carefully thought through to ensure continued interest in the works you are undertaking.

Halstead, Anglia Town – Gold & Joint Category Winner

The floral and horticultural delights of Halstead had been refreshed by overnight rain and a carefully planned tour, ably led by Joan, Margaret and Julia of the Bloom team, showed the lovely Essex town at its very best. Although these are the visible delights of the town, the real success is the sheer sense of community enjoyment and fun that Halstead in Bloom has engendered and is an object lesson for all. Thank you for a wonderful visit.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The impact of the efforts of Halstead in Bloom is immense, with the River of Gold and Town Bridge displays absolutely superb. High-quality floral displays are seen at every turn, with a consistent theme used throughout of burgundy, silver and two shades of blue to recognise the commemoration of the First World War.
- Horticultural practice is of a very high standard throughout; especial mention must go to the WI bed and the newly created Halstead Road Runners Bed outside the Leisure Centre.
- Adams Court showed particular elements of high-quality horticulture in the retired persons complex, and the work done here led by Colin Bailey is splendid; the same can be said of that done by Barry Pilgrim at the Courtaulds Homes of Rest, where the bank of *Lathyrus latifolius* is remarkable.
- The Public Gardens showed an excellent wildlife garden, with pollinator-friendly planting; also a well-conceived and executed Brownie Bed, with colours to match the uniforms. The waterlily pond is also clean, well maintained and most appealing.
- Nell Amore has lovely individual floral displays and the White House has excellent permanent planting.

Areas for development

- The borders at Trinity Court social housing complex are in need of substantial renovation, with the old, dying or dead shrubs not improved by the addition of some floral bedding around their bases. We are aware that the management trust, Greenfields, are prioritising the area and other similar sites and support this action entirely.
- In the Public Gardens, the rose beds adjacent to the War Memorial are in need of replacement; a rest and change to perennial borders may perhaps be appropriate. Planting densities at the War Memorial bedding should also be closely looked at prior to its next planting season.
- Your allotments are noted in the portfolio and were fleetingly seen from a roadside; perhaps you could consider once again including them on the route.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Biodiversity has been considered in the planting and management of most of the sites throughout the tour. Bees and butterflies were evident in much of the planting seen during the tour.
- The use of river water through the installed timed drip irrigation is very well considered as part of your resource management approach to your floral features, reducing the carbon footprint of your maintenance activities. The experimentation with peat-free compost is entirely to be commended and is producing very worthwhile information.
- The Courtaulds legacy is visible throughout the town, and has been very effectively incorporated into Bloom activities, especially in the Loom display. The River of Gold, along the sides of the old Mill Pond, emphasised the heritage setting.
- Throughout the entire tour, no litter or other adverse impacts were seen. The judges also note how effectively the few vacant shops were managed by use of art displays in the windows.
- The judges appreciated the artwork as part of the River Living project, and also the Flanders Field poem by the Causeway. Much work has also gone into the creation and installation of the glider in the War Memorial area of the Public Gardens.

Areas for development

- The judges feel that the tour should be looked at to see if some of the conservation work referred to in the portfolio could be viewed. Neither Coggeshall Pieces nor the Riverside Walk were included on the route.
- Most of the street furniture was in excellent condition; however, seats near to the memorial on High Street, and also the bollards at Trinity Court, could benefit from painting.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- This is a community-led entry in every respect and the partnership working, where much responsibility has been devolved to Halstead in Bloom by various local authorities and agencies, shows what can be achieved by voluntary effort and commitment.
- The group has a sense of fun, which pervades every aspect of their work, and was very evident to the judges on the day. You have effectively engaged with all ages and groups, from the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides to Ramsey Academy and the various retired persons' areas.
- The contribution of the Rotary Club and the WI are noted in particular, and we may long recall the assault of the Pink Ladies of Halstead WI!
- The level of volunteer hours generated, and the considerable amounts of sponsorship and support (monetary and in-kind) are both exceptional.

Areas for development

- The judges are very impressed with the work that you do, and the goals that you work towards, but feel that you may benefit from a genuine forward plan for the future. You should also consider ways in which more people can be recruited to leadership roles in Halstead in Bloom to ensure that your wonderful efforts will not stagnate at some future point.

Harrogate, Yorkshire Small City – Gold

Harrogate had worldwide coverage this year with the Tour de France. People flocked in their tens of thousands to enjoy the spectacle of the race and will have left with a sense of what Harrogate has to offer. Tourism is Harrogate's main industry and this is recognised by the local council and the Bloom committee with the high standard of horticultural features around the town always looking at their best – which ensures that the tourists will keep arriving for years to come.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Visitors to Harrogate are left in no doubt that this is a floral town. Beds, baskets and the Valley Gardens create an outstanding display.
- Horticultural practice is of the highest standard, with a wide variety of plant material all well grown and displayed.
- The vast open spaces of The Stray are an important part of the heritage of Harrogate and it was good to see them looking so well after the recent crowds.
- The judges were particularly impressed with the re-establishment of the flowerbeds after the Tour de France.

Areas for development

- The judges would like to have seen or been made aware of the competition winners on the route.
- The judges would have liked to meet some of the members of the community in those areas shown as community gardens, such as St Aidan's school and the police rehabilitation centre.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Harrogate has made much of its heritage in the past and now has a new and exciting path to take which will endear the town to a whole new generation.
- The new stained-glass window and the picture-frame bed are exciting new installations.
- The judges were impressed by the enthusiasm and drive of Jenny at the Rossett Acre nature reserve and Sam, the biodiversity officer.

Areas for development

- Develop further the Pinewoods conservation area and its community group and help them to improve access to the area.
- Rossett Acre needs further input for it fully to reach its potential a clearer idea of the management of the different areas and a plan to encourage children to the area would be beneficial.
- Some of the street furniture in the outlying areas was in need of refurbishment.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were very impressed with the new branding of 'Team Harrogate' and 'Garden Harrogate' as these have great potential in the digital and cyber age.
- The selling of cards and bulbs has been very successful and hopefully will continue.
- Funding in general seems to be no problem and Harrogate is set to prosper with the ongoing commitment from the council.

Areas for development

- The community of Harrogate needs to play a more prominent role in the Bloom tour. Driving in and out of possible community areas without meeting anyone is not really what the judges want to see. Bloom is very much about people and community, and this aspect needs to be worked on.
- The timings on the tour could have been adjusted as the judges seemed to spend a long time looking over a locked gate at the allotments.

Henley-on-Thames, Thames & Chilterns Town – Silver Gilt

The floral impact of the effect of the Bloom campaign in Henley cannot be overstated, with the whole route showing colour and vibrancy throughout. The tour, led by Chair of Henley in Bloom Councillor Kellie Hinton and Parks Services Manager Gareth Bartle, concluded with meeting the Bloom committee and volunteers at The Bull on Bell Street, where we were able to view the Brakspear Brewery responsible for the innovative 'Blooming Marvellous' ale produced to celebrate the golden jubilee of Britain in Bloom, as well as raise funds for Henley in Bloom.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The overwhelming proliferation of baskets and containers, both public and private, seen on lamp posts and frontages throughout the town, were of a universally high standard across the tour. The central feature along Station Road, with the Trachycarpus avenue amongst bedding, was particularly notable.
- The Sensory Garden in Mill Meadow was attractive and well maintained, as were the Greencroft Allotments.
- The Gardening Buddies carry out valuable community gardening in several areas of the town and are responsible for the Celebration Beds, with a Keep Britain Tidy logo planted this year to

commemorate the beginning of the Britain in Bloom campaign. Longlands House and the Rectory were fine examples of floral display in containers at the front of the properties, and Little Chelsea was a series of very pretty front gardens.

- La Bodega, the Queen Victoria and The Red Lion on Hart Street were among a number of pubs and hotels that had superb floral displays on the properties. The judges were also pleased to view the new vineyard at Fairmile, expected to be bringing in its first harvest in two to three years, and already a strong supporter of the Henley in Bloom activities.
- Fairmile is a lovely avenue approaching the town; this, and the extensive parks along the riverside, form an important heritage of greenspace for the town.

Areas for development

- The twinning beds in Mill Meadows are beginning to establish but would benefit from greater care; the adjacent 'Rotary' borders are now ready for a refurbishment as they look a little tired.
- The Gardening Buddies are excellent and are having an impact on the town; we were also informed, via the presentation and the portfolio, of the gardening activities at the Gainsborough Estate, and feel that this should be an essential part of the judging tour to demonstrate the wider volunteer involvement in Henley in Bloom. The Britain in Bloom beds at the rear of King's Arms Barn are in need of some care and attention.
- The management of mature trees is excellent, but there is a need to improve the care and attention to newly planted trees, with examples seen in Mill and Marsh Meadows that have clearly been under stress.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Sally Rankin was able to explain some of the extensive work that the Henley Wildlife Group has been undertaking on Marsh Meadows, where the changed mowing regime has allowed the development of a diverse flora and fauna; we also noted that a change to the verge mowing on Greys Hill has begun to increase biodiversity.
- Composting and waste separation on the mobile bins on the Meadows is an original and effective approach to dealing with the local authority green waste that is produced. An impressive approach to minimisation of grass damage is also taken in the Meadows by the use of old tree stumps and trunks for temporary barbecues in the park.
- Heritage is evident throughout in Henley; the Thames is clearly celebrated as a feature of natural and historical importance, with emphasis also on the historic rowing clubs.
- The tour of the very busy town was clean throughout with little evidence of adverse impacts anywhere.
- The recently opened Smart Interactive Playground was already very well used; the judges also noted that the street furniture was largely in very good condition throughout, with a number of green finger-posts having been recently re-painted. Your encouragement of natural play, making use of the mature trees in The Meadows, is an unusual approach and one that is clearly popular with young people. The 'Pinsent and Redgrave' statues and 'garden gates' at the Rowing Museum are recent additions to the public realm.

Areas for development

- We were informed of the wildlife surveying at Trinity Church, and it would have been very useful to visit this site rather than simply driving past. There was also a substantial management plan with regard to the Meadows, but a discussion or summary of this was not provided and would have been appropriate.
- Given the amount of floral containers in use, there should be information provided on what Henley in Bloom is doing to mitigate the resource implications of their provision.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The Wildflower Community board in Falaise Square is an interesting development for communicating and engaging with local people, and is also an excellent use for a temporarily vacant shop window.
- The development of the Blooming Marvellous Ale, by your partner Brakspear's Brewery, is a splendid idea and one that you may well be hoping to repeat; it has been a very important part of your extensive and successful fundraising for Henley in Bloom. The Henley Standard has been a prominent supporter of your Bloom campaign throughout, regularly featuring your work and also being present on occasions during our tour.

Areas for development

- The judges greatly approve of the engagement with Gainsborough Estate, and feel that this was an essential stop on the tour that sadly did not take place; tour timing and content should be carefully reviewed to ensure that you maximise your opportunities to show the judges all aspects of the assessment criteria.
- The Gardening Buddies are increasingly important to your cause but are quite a small group; we hope that you will encourage them to expand in both numbers of volunteers and range of activities in which they are involved.
- More information about the Henley Wildlife Group would have contextualised their involvement in the Bloom campaign.

Hillingdon, London Large City – Silver Gilt

Despite a torrential thunderstorm just before the judging, the team at Hillingdon pulled off an amazing feat, keeping the tour on track in spite of floods and road closures, even managing to collect some wellingtons for the judges. The total commitment of Hillingdon local authority to look after the well-being and education of the residents of the Borough was very apparent – through recycling initiatives, tree planting projects, the commitment to providing high-quality open spaces and supporting community projects. Two projects of particular note are the Eastcote House Gardens renovation and the Rural Activities Garden Centre, both being supported brilliantly and the judges look forward to seeing their future development.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The colourful baskets and barrier planters were distributed at key areas around the entry. We saw high-quality maintenance at the Stockley Business Park along with the various landscape features: pleached limes, miles of well-kept hedges, lakes and water features.
- The varying maintenance regimes used within the entry to suit various sites included differential mowing, scything in Poors Park and the wildflower areas of poppies to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.
- The judges noted the commitment by the local authority to care for the trees in the Borough, from safeguarding trees from new developments to planting trees and supporting the watering by providing 'gator bags' for newly planted trees. Also there is a commitment to plant a number of different cultivars – in particular replant elms within the Borough.
- The judges were impressed by the wide variety of skills, projects and the demonstration gardens at the Rural Activities Garden Centre and the commitment to integrate the centre into the community. The quality and variety of plants grown and supplied to various projects was impressive and the judges liked the emphasis on conservation and caring for the wildlife.

- The authority obviously places a high priority on its parks. This is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of Green Flags attained.

Areas for development

- There are many good examples of trees within the Borough. Perhaps a tree trail/leaflet be devised showing various good examples across the Borough.
- If time allows, could a visit to Heathrow Airport be considered? It is part of Hillingdon and demonstrates a very high level horticulture in a variety of landscape schemes.
- The maintenance at Brakespear Crematorium varied in some areas and the roses would have benefitted from some increased maintenance. There is an opportunity to look at other ways of creating features or series of themed memorial gardens which could bring in similar revenue but reduce some of the maintenance.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed at the commitment to green-waste recycling with the weekly collection from residential properties.
- The management of the grassland at Poors Field including the cattle grazing and scything is creating more diverse habitat areas for the public to enjoy.
- The planned schools programme at Manor Farm will be welcomed to use the extensive historical facilities.
- The feature roundabout highlighting the heritage of the area and wildflowers.
- The restoration at Eastcote House Gardens, recreating features and planting heritage cultivars of apples.

Areas for development

- Depending on time and funding, there is an opportunity to further use the cultivars of apples by considering an Apple Day, which could involve identifying apples brought by the public, offering taster sessions, juicing apples or offering advice on cooking or using apples.
- Consider a nature or tree leaflet for Brakespear Crematorium; there are some good examples of trees within the grounds. Consider working towards the Charter for the Bereaved accreditation.
- There maybe opportunities to add some interpretation panels about the variety of wildlife within Stockley Park and to extend the interpretation at Poors Field with the increase in diversity. You could consider using QR codes to direct the public straight to the Hillingdon website or consider a leaflet that could also be downloadable from the website.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The funding raising at the East Cote House Gardens both through the Heritage Lottery Fund bid and the group's own fundraising was remarkable and will provide much improved facilities for the volunteers and visitors by creating a wonderful attraction and practical area for community use.
- The banners around the entry supporting the Bloom campaign.
- The year-round programme at the Rural Activities Garden Centre was a great resource for the clients and the public producing good-quality plants and fruit and vegetables. The judges were also impressed by the commitment by the local authority to increase the resources at the centre to increase the opening times and the number of staff to open seven days a week.
- The Incredible Edible project by the Youth Council was very useful for the public to see how easily vegetable can be grown in a small space. It will be interesting to follow the development

plans next year. There is scope for the recipe books to be produced more widely through the website and to consider having taster sessions or cook-it sessions to try out the recipes.

Areas for development

- The judges appreciate the timing of the judging is difficult but would have like to see more involvement or evidence of the children either through youth groups or schools.
- The judges would have liked to see more evidence of press coverage either on the day or in the portfolio.
- Continue to promote the Hillingdon in Bloom competition to encourage more entries.
- The team may wish to consider a networking session to bring all the various partners together to help each other in the various projects.
- The judges would have liked to see more evidence of the sponsorship of the roundabouts and the involvement of the business community towards Bloom.

Hillsborough, Ulster Large Village – Gold & Category Winner

The drive into Hillsborough was just amazing: the gateway into the village was a ‘Shop Window’ with high-impact floral displays that just invited you to continue into the shop. The whole experience was one of delight and the contrast between the planting and variation in colour and texture was excellent. The enthusiasm right across the community from the volunteers to the tremendous support from their local council was clear to see. Hillsborough was a pleasure to judge and the support by so many people was a delight.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Many business premises had entered into the spirit of Bloom, particularly the RHS theme ‘Growing for Gold’ this did not go unnoticed by us. Additionally we liked the *Santolina* depiction of the 50th anniversary of Britain in Bloom.
- It was clearly evident that most green spaces seen were of a high standard.
- The specific artefacts in carpet bedding and carnation flowers were quite superb. A credit to those involved in their creation.
- It was good to see an increase in the variety of sustainable planting.
- The impact on us of the floral design, colours and plant choice was superb. Visitors could not fail to be impressed with the riot of colour, and standard of floral decoration.
- The association of sustainable planting with annual plant material was good, and the scale of planting as part of the street scene was excellent.
- The judges commend the involvements of the Horticultural Society in the design of the Hills beds, with well thought-out plant associations.
- The residential areas visited were carefully planted to give sustainability and effect to all concerned.

Areas for development

- Whilst the judges didn’t request information, we were not advised about allotment provision in the village.
- We noted the involvement of Scouts and other young people, but we didn’t receive any detailed information nor the opportunity of meeting any local schoolchildren.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed with the support of local organisations involved with wildlife and conservation.
- The emphasis placed on your local heritage, and the information given to support this aspect.
- Your local environmental quality was excellent, little fault.
- Generally street furniture, signage and art in the landscape (particularly the poppies) was well covered. The judges liked the use of appropriate gravel adjacent to the War Memorial and the trees adjacent to the Arthur, 4th Marquis of Downshire Memorial.

Areas for development

- Although there was evidence of a wildflower meadow at Hillsborough Castle, the judges felt there was an opportunity of introducing this attractive feature in other areas of Hillsborough.
- We were not made aware of any specific recycling initiatives.
- We appreciated the need to promote the area for tourism, and felt there might be an opportunity of providing them with information boards at strategic locations in the village.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The leaflet drop, information processes, and support were to be applauded in your campaign development. They are achieving positive results in the community.
- The press call at the beginning was high appropriate, the presentation and portfolio were informative, and the comfort break at the half-way stage was much appreciated.
- It would appear that at present you have arranged your financial support accordingly to support your initiatives.

Areas for development

- On a future occasion you may need to re-think timings on your itinerary. This is especially important when supporting groups advertise display material. It was felt they could not be given the time they deserved as willing helpers in your campaign.

Hunstanton, Anglia Coastal Up to 12k – Gold & Category Winner

Hunstanton is a bustling seaside resort, encompassing everything you would expect from a traditional British seaside destination, whether that be daytrippers or those with time to linger. The judges were particularly impressed with the overall cleanliness and presentation of the town which is never easy with the daily influx of thousands of visitors. The local council and Bloom members work as one cohesive unit, delivering an entry that encompasses all that Bloom stands for.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The main Esplanade Gardens was not only of a high standard but also of a rich and varied mix of both seasonal bedding and more sustainable planting, and this gave interest and colour the whole length of the gardens. The production of geraniums from cuttings helped to give maturity and height to the seasonal beds.
- A high standard of grass cutting was seen throughout and this helped to highlight the floral displays, particularly along the Esplanade.
- The increased and improved floral displays in the shopping area have brought new life to the shops creating a cafe culture, while the recent improvement at The Spinney has breathed new life into an old area.

Areas for development

- The main car park, next to the railway, is in need of a re-think in relation to its trees; the judges understand the problems of contamination from its previous life but would urge you to investigate the use of tolerant species to give a more uniform cover.
- The floral displays at the Town Hall were a little thin and lacked impact so suggest you look at your feeding programme.
- The area around Boston Square has reached maturity and a programme of development will need to be implemented to maintain its appearance.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The new orchard encompasses many aspects of the Bloom criteria, from biodiversity, heritage and community. We were impressed with the knowledge and enthusiasm of Kate Dunbar who showed us round.
- The judges were impressed by the outstanding cleanliness of Hunstanton.
- All street furniture was of a high standard, with good signage and interpretation throughout.
- Local heritage is clearly important and very well displayed throughout the entry, with the railway and pier beds and the outstanding St Edmund's Garden being particular highlights.

Areas for development

- The judges would like to see the new Pier bed being developed further as this is an important part of Hunstanton's past.
- The judges would liked to have had a better understanding of the process of turning food waste into compost as this is still a relatively new area of recycling and one you could have flagged up.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Community participation is a big part of Hunstanton's entry. We were very impressed by the work of the Civic Society and the many volunteers of the 'adopt a bed scheme', which kept the bed on the Esplanade to a very high standard.
- The commitment of the local council who recognise the importance of high horticultural standards to the economy of the town and who work well with the various volunteer organisations.
- A wide range of sponsors who clearly care about their local community.

Areas for development

- The pictures in the portfolio are not labelled which would have been useful.
- A clearly defined presentation at the start of the tour giving evidence of year-round activities is a must.
- Local businesses should be encouraged to provide funding such as that of the bakers to further enhance the town.

Immingham, East Midlands Town – Silver Gilt

This busy seaport in East Lincolnshire exhibited many varied facets of extensive horticulture and community engagement at all levels. The Bloom group, started in 2010, has worked enthusiastically to create colour impact at every turn as you travel through the town. The maritime heritage is aptly interpreted throughout with significant financial and in-kind support being evident right through the tour.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The floral impact achieved at the town council Civic Centre was most impressive and provides an impact that indicates the town's commitment to floral provision.
- The use of the railway bogey and its planting was striking.
- The provision of baskets at the County Hotel was particularly good.
- The numerous and geographically extensive provision of floral planting was very visible throughout the tour.
- The First World War trench was an inspired piece of local landscape design, provides focus for so many groups and is a clear catalyst to your whole community at present. The research of the local schoolchildren into life in the trenches and the installation of QR codes to the interpretative signage are both innovative and practical.

Areas for development

- Hard surface weed control and the control of grass growth around obstacles was an issue throughout the tour.
- The judges observed numerous floral planters and beds located under mature trees. The group should question the overall impact of these and whether plant performance is compromised by the shade and dry conditions that prevail in such situations.
- While the focus on planting and floral displays was widespread, tree and grass management on many sites was more variable. Consideration should be given to addressing these two significant quality issues which, if rectified, would further enhance the quality of your environment.
- A policy on reinstatement of grass areas and verges after works by public utilities should be considered and implemented as this will go some way to addressing the issue above.
- The majority of hanging basket planters and barrier baskets were very good but the tour did pass baskets that were unplanted or poorly maintained such as those at the entrance to Canon Peter Hall School.
- Verge maintenance on the approach to the cemetery should be considered as it would enhance the aesthetic approach to this important location for your community.
- The provision of wild floral or directly sown annuals should be considered on suitable roadside verges.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The environment works and education being undertaken at Homestead Lake was of great interest. The new nature trail with tree planting and the provision of bird boxes by Chris Cook will provide future habitat on the site.
- The high level of begonia tuber recycling was both impressive and evidently very successful.
- The reuse of materials such as railway sleepers made the entry more sustainable.
- The many uses of different mulch materials was seen in many of the permanently planted beds.
- The extensive floral planting at the Queens Road Recycling Centre made an impact to what can be rather industrial surroundings.

Areas for development

- While valuable conservation works are ongoing at Homestead Lake the group should consider inviting a local wildlife trust to undertake ecological monitoring on the site to enhance that currently taking place. This, in co-operation with the town council who owns the adjacent

parkland, would provide a greater range of habitats to work with and increase the ecological value of the location as a whole.

- It was unfortunate that fly-tipping of bagged waste was observed on Mill Lane leading to the cemetery.
- The maintenance of street furniture was variable with many seats newly painted but other street furniture looking tired.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The high level of both community and business involvement was clearly seen. The presence of all age groups from Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, schoolchildren and war veterans' associations during the tour shows the broad-spectrum approach of your campaign.
- The level of funding was impressive and the signage acknowledging this support was extensive throughout.
- The provision of consistent acknowledgement signage for sponsors was commendable.
- The extensive communication material to both the business community and to residents was impressive and will ensure the profile of your campaign should continue.
- The presence of a clearly defined constitution was commendable and is considered important to ensure clearly defined objectives in the future.

Areas for development

- Consideration should be given to the creation of a short-, medium- and longer-term set of objectives to ensure the group has a defined focus for both its physical energy and its financial resources in the future.

Kippax (Leeds), Yorkshire Urban Community – Silver Gilt

This former mining area close to Leeds has been transformed through its involvement with the Britain in Bloom campaign over the last 10 years. While the mining industry is long gone the traditional community spirit of such an area is very much thriving. The Bloom group has developed some very good partnerships and is engaging with a broad cross section of the community. This has created a very attractive town and you have much to be proud of in your Bloom entry.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There is no doubt upon entering Kippax that this is a Bloom town. You have developed many high-impact areas containing a good balance between seasonal and more sustainable planting.
- The large number of high-quality residential gardens and areas seen throughout the tour.
- The allotments site was superb and in particular the 'Grow Zone' area, providing facilities for those with special educational needs, was inspirational and a credit to all those involved.
- The displays at several of the business premises on the High Street were particularly attractive.
- Your plans to develop the War Memorial Gardens will certainly enhance this area and create a further valuable public space for residents to enjoy. Consider seeking funding and advice from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Areas for development

- The children at North School were very enthusiastic and well supported by teachers and parents. The site has much potential to develop further and we suggest the Bloom group continue to work with and support the school in this regard.
- It was pleasing to note the involvement of both St Mary's Church and the Methodist Church. Work with both to consider the types of plants they are using to ensure they are best suited to their location (i.e. use of shade-tolerant planting).
- Kippax has many attractive areas and features; however, at times the quality of some was not to the highest standard, so perhaps it would be worth concentrating on key focal areas to ensure the high standards achieved with some displays are maintained across the board. Alternatively look to expand your volunteer group to enable all areas to achieve the best standard.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Town Close Hills Meadow – a very biodiverse, well-managed site and a wonderful asset for the community.
- The areas visited were generally clean and tidy. Only a few items of litter were evidenced and no dog fouling, graffiti or fly-tipping was seen.
- The overall standard of street furniture and signage was very good and the artwork on the old toilet block was particularly attractive.
- You have some good features to mark your local heritage i.e. coal tub and dry-stone wall.

Areas for development

- Weed growth was evident in a number of roadside channels in the residential areas and on the paved area adjacent to 'Beauty for You' on the High Street.
- Look to develop further areas for conservation and biodiversity throughout your entry as opportunities arise (for example St Mary's churchyard).
- Seek to interpret your local heritage further in both new and existing projects (for example in your exciting plans for the War Memorial Garden).
- Look into providing further interpretation and information in relation to Town Close Hills Meadow to publicise this excellent resource and how it is managed.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- You are doing a fantastic job promoting and publicising your excellent work. It was pleasing to note the huge number of 'Kippax in Bloom' posters seen throughout the judging route. The local community clearly values all that you are doing to make the town such a pleasant area.
- You are engaging a broad cross section of the community in all that you do in your year-round programme of activities.
- It is pleasing to note the strong partnership working which you have with both Kippax Parish Council and Leeds City Council and we acknowledge the support of your local councillors.
- The poster competition and the display of the entries on the temporary fencing in the churchyard.

Areas for development

- Continue to seek funding from a variety of sources to sustain your campaign.
- Continue with all the good work which you are doing to engage with the local community in your activities and to promote and publicise your local Bloom campaign.

Kirkoswald, Cumbria Village – Silver Gilt

Once a thriving market town, Kirkoswald dates back several centuries. There is a variety of architectural buildings and features from a castle, college, Georgian buildings and cobbled market square. On entering the village you get a sense of the community from nearly every corner, including the community shop window where a colourful display reminds everyone of judging day. Our thanks go to Arthur for his very thorough explanation about the classroom in the woods. The Bloom group has a refreshing approach to the Bloom campaign, self sufficient in many ways with many residents supporting the team and liaising with many partners on bigger projects. The group tap into the many skills available in the village and is supported by many gifts in kind. The village has come such a long way in such a short time and sums up the power of Bloom.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed by the amount of participation and the quality of the gardens, pots and containers within the village. The displays were in keeping, fitted the village very well and many were planted with pollinator-friendly plants.
- The quality and variety on the allotment of all the plots was very high.
- The floral displays by both the public houses and garage were striking and added to the overall effect.

Areas for development

- The Artful Garden is very innovative and interesting – perhaps the local primary school would be allowed to visit.
- More options could be offered to the school such as a half plot at the allotment or possibly a raised planter opposite the school.
- Consider tweaking the route so you can select the best of the gardens and most appropriate planting.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The renovation of Millie's Field by Kirkoswald Environmental Group to encourage more species and make it more accessible and informative for the public and residents, including the interpretation board.
- The work to create a swift colony with nesting boxes and the webcam to make it more available to the public.
- A great idea for the two freecycle tables offering plants and vegetables at times of glut.
- Very interesting and educational walls and nectar-rich plants leaflets – these could be made more available through the village shop and website. The walls leaflet could also be expanded to show other suitable walks through the village including picnic spots and where refreshments are available.
- The change of sign to a more in-keeping finger post by the herb bed and noticeboard which are all well maintained.

Areas for development

- The judges noted the planned new fencing and the plans for grazing Millie's Field later in the year.
- Consider creating a butterfly identification chart for the schools or visitors and make it available through the Kirkoswald in Bloom website.
- The judges noted the plans to replace the seat at the sheltered housing site.

- The judges look forward to seeing the heritage interpretation board planned showing the local industry.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The publicity around the village promoting the Bloom campaign including the newsletter, noticeboard, webpage and webcam. Also the publicity stand at Holker Garden Festival.
- The judges noted good liaison between the local councils and the Bloom group.
- It was evident that there were lots of offers of in-kind donations and also many villagers who were 'mystery gardeners' helping to tidy and plant out areas.
- The funding of projects through grants from various organisations and the organisation of the plant auction.

Areas for development

- The group could consider using some of the great photos of the local wildlife as greetings cards as a fundraiser for the group, possibly sold in the village shop and pubs.
- The plans for the community orchard at the allotment. There are various funding opportunities for community orchards or through Awards for All which may be worth exploring.
- The plans for the hedge/fence around the allotment to keep unwanted species away from the crops.

Leeds, Yorkshire Large City – Gold

Leeds is a vibrant and modern city that has met the economic challenges head on. The city has used Bloom and the floral initiative to get the community involved and to support/develop partnerships between businesses, residents and the local authority, in taking forward improvements that could otherwise not have been afforded.

The city provides an umbrella for the 40 Bloom groups and these help to take forward otherwise unaffordable horticultural displays and environmental improvements. The tour provided some special visits such as St George's Crypt, a very inspiring place, Mandela Gardens and the Chelsea Gardens at Roundhay Park. All examples of how the local authority has transformed areas and shows the commitment to regeneration and creating spaces for the public.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The entry has used several themes successfully this year: the red, white and blue baskets and the yellow for the Tour de France. Both added impact and continuity to the city and created a series of 'wows'.
- The judges were delighted to see the St George's Crypt project. They liked the pots with chard, which worked well, and were impressed at the high standard of the planting around the sculpture. The plant associations chosen were executed very well, someone obviously has a keen eye for colours, shape and form.
- The formal squares are a huge asset to the city and the judges congratulate the team on the forward-thinking approach to ensure they can be sustained. Each one demonstrates a different planting style and theme. The judges particularly like the Mandela Garden.
- The judges were very impressed at the number of Bloom groups that you work in partnership with and the support you offer. The groups are a great asset and this progressive approach will ensure Leeds City doesn't have to cut quality in the current economic climate.

- Garforth in Bloom should be very proud of their achievements on the verge outside the Gaping Goose.
- The tour showed the high horticultural achievement that Leeds is famous for, especially after the city's recent successes at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Areas for development

- The entry covered the judging criteria very thoroughly and showed lots of projects, partnerships and community initiatives. However, the judges would suggest that the route is assessed and the best is shown on the tour and other areas are shown by using a different method – remember quality, not quantity.
- At times the tour felt rushed and as judges felt we weren't given the time to fully see some the wonderful work. Examples of this were the schools design-a-bed beds (we saw the around the civic centre but didn't have a chance to look at them properly, they looked to be of high quality and demonstrated the extent of the work with the schools) and Roundhay Park where the judges saw some very high-level horticulture with the ex-Chelsea exhibits but weren't given an opportunity to view the fantastic floral displays (these were only visible at a distance driving past).
- The baskets by the Victoria Quarter were a credit to the authority especially as they were produced in peat-free compost. However, some of the other baskets the judges saw weren't quite as successful. This maybe a timing issue so they were at there best for the Tour de France but consider using baskets with mixed species of plants so aren't reliant on just one species flourishing.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The St John's churchyard project is a fantastic scheme and the judges can appreciate how much work must have gone into it. It has not only tidied an area but also secured the history for future generations. The judges hope you are successful in secure further funding to continue with the plans to introduce pollinator-rich planting.
- The judges saw numerous examples of recycling initiatives and projects to save resources. There is the standard kerbside recycling, which has been extended to include green waste, but many other exciting initiatives including coffee granule recycling with McDonalds and Revive Leeds.
- We were impressed at the vision to work with Leeds University to trial urban pollinator mixes. The judges were delighted to see that although the sites had been modified they had continued again this year and you had introduced a further 10 new sites.
- The judges saw lots of interpretation signage throughout the tour. It demonstrates the commitment to involving the community and partners, and investing into the future so further generations know the history and information about different areas.
- The use of sculpture in the city should be commended. The judges saw it throughout the tour and it adds another dimension to the city.

Areas for development

- Generally for a large city it was tidy but the judges did see graffiti, litter/detritus and cigarette butts on the route. It is difficult for a city to remain tidy due to the large number of people within it, but it may be worth thoroughly checking the route beforehand. There was a considerable amount of dog fouling at Hawthorne Farm.
- The judges appreciate the large numbers of people in the centre of the city but some surfacing looked grubby with numerous marks – perhaps a street-washing machine could be considered.
- Although the judges were kept informed on the tour of the heritage the judges would have like to have seen a copy of the heritage trail and for it more readily available to visitors, together

with the tree walk at Roundhay Park. The tree trail and tree book produced by the Friends group is a fantastic achievement and the group should be congratulated. It is the first time the judges have seen a tree walk developed into a book.

- The judges felt there should be a programme of refurbishment on the street furniture. Would it be possible to work with the probation service on a refurbishment programme or possibly a community group or corporate volunteer days?

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- As a council you are obviously passionate about Bloom and can see the benefits it brings to your city. It is fantastic that the local authority dedicated an uncut budget to support groups, and the judges were extremely impressed at the number of Bloom groups there are across the city and the quality of work they achieve. The judges saw fantastic examples of the work of Garforth, Woodlesford and Barwick.
- The team have been working with sponsors and partners for a number of years and have set a solid foundation for the future.
- There are a number of successful partnerships across the city. The judges saw examples at St George's Crypt, the city centre, St John's churchyard and Nuffield. The Nuffield project for the autumn is a great indicator of where the authority is supporting partners by donating the labour while your partner funds the materials, and this shows great forward thinking: not only will it improve the area it will help eliminate current antisocial behaviour problems associated with the area.

Areas for development

- The community is obviously an extremely important element and throughout the tour the judges met many residents and community groups. However, the judges were disappointed not to be able to talk to everyone we met. When people have made the effort to come and meet us it is very important to us that we are able to give them some time and learn about their work. Consider either meeting slightly fewer people on the route or perhaps have an exhibition where we can meet them.
- The judges were given a huge amount of information both at the presentation and throughout the tour. This was vital to demonstrate meeting the judging criteria. It would have been helpful to have had some of this in a written format, possibly as bullet points. This could form part of your portfolio and then be expanded upon during the tour. It also ensures judges can look up information after the tour if they want to check any details. The judges were given a copy of the tree trail at Roundhay when we asked for it but it would have been helpful to have seen the heritage trail, too.
- The team showed the judges a number of good projects including St John's churchyard, which was fantastic, but it would have been very helpful to have seen what the areas were like before. This could be shown on the route as a photo or in the portfolio.
- The judges are sure there is an extensive year-round programme of events, projects and school initiatives but it wasn't obvious during the tour. Again an overview would be helpful as part of the portfolio and then expanded upon either in the presentation or during the tour.
- For a city of your size the judges would have expected to have met a number of children and young people. The judges realise that this can be difficult in the school holidays but children are an important part of the community. Some of the work done with children could have been shown as a small video that could have been recorded on a phone. The judges liked the design a poster and flowerbed competitions but they were rushed past without much comment.

Limpsfield, South East Large Village – Silver Gilt

It was good to see a different emphasis on the campaign by this large village. You were able to demonstrate that you had returned to your historical village character with careful planting and displays in appropriate places. This was complemented by your admirable Community Orchard Allotments, Eden River Project and by local residents' interest in the campaign. A delight to meet everyone at the end, and we appreciated the hospitality.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Planting and floral effects generally were appropriately placed to complement the attractive architecture and ambience of this attractive village.
- The visit to the Community Orchard was a delight. An excellent feature, well labelled and maintained, and good to see the involvement of local schoolchildren in this facility. You may consider liaising with West Malling on future cultivars and expansion.
- Good to see allotments on our visit; the judges shared concerns about the one-year renewable lease.
- It was obvious that retailers had entered into the spirit of the campaign.
- Good local support from residents who were keeping their estates in immaculate condition. Padbrook Pond was a great feature of interest with its associated public open space and wildlife.
- Green spaces were generally of a very high standard of maintenance.
- The planting beneath the lime trees opposite the church was very appropriate.
- There were some excellent tree specimens in various areas, but we were concerned about the pollarding (an outdated practice) of the aforementioned trees.
- The Cottage Gardens seen were a delight.

Areas for development

- While the judges saw some wildflower provision, you may wish to consider extension in appropriate areas.
- Residential estates were pristine, but perhaps consideration could be given to a less-formal approach to shrub pruning, which reminded us of a typical local authority approach.
- Whilst there was plenty of colour, the standards of baskets and containers were variable in places.
- Some of the sustainable planting on the banks and isolated areas needed thickening up with appropriate species.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Your conservation and biodiversity interests were adequately covered. The Woodland Walk to the Orchard and the improvement works along the River Eden are to be commended. We hope you are able to extend the walkway to Oxted, and link the boardwalk area to the first stream access.
- In the light of further information resource management was covered appropriately.
- Local heritage was of great interest. The musical connections in the churchyard were fascinating, as were the general history of the village and its architecture. It was also good to hear the connection with a former Curator at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
- Local environmental quality was good and there was very little evidence of litter, graffiti, dog fouling or fly-posting.

- Your pride of place management of signage and art and the landscape was good. We applauded the use of vintage-style lamp posts. Seats seen were of good quality, but perhaps more provision would be welcomed.
- Your compost bins adjacent to the disused toilets were good and extensions of this would be a good idea.

Areas for development

- Bearing in mind the Delius connection in the churchyard, have you considered the possibility of background music in this area to celebrate the connection with the village? Thought for the future, but not everyone might be in favour.
- Although sure that the grid on the River Eden Project under the bridge is checked regularly, the judges needed assurances on this aspect to ensure no future problems.
- Careful maintenance will be needed on the River Eden Project to ensure its future success, and availability to all.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The window displays publicising our visit were good.
- Well-structured tour – unrushed, enjoyable and to time. Good to meet Bloom participants during and after the tour.
- Whilst the judges detected considerable interest in the future of the campaign, a little more evidence would have been helpful.
- There appeared to be a good liaison with the local school.
- It was obvious there was good community participation in your village campaign.
- The depiction of the First World War by the mural and board was highly appropriate.
- Whilst not forming part of our judging it was good to see the survival of the village shop and post office.
- The wedding morning ‘The Big Paint’ was a tremendous project and the judges were really impressed with this initiative.
- The history of caterpillars in the village was noteworthy. The judges felt sure you could make more of this aspect in future.

Areas for development

- You should continue with signboard provision to the same standard in some village areas, and publicising your campaign to the wider world.
- We would have liked more information on funding and support, and involvement with all age groups. Some of this information was gleaned from your portfolio.

Linlithgow, Scotland Town – Silver Gilt

The tour of the historic town of Linlithgow showed the judges how proud the residents were of a history dating back to 1138. Situated alongside beautiful Linlithgow Loch, the surrounding Peel, Linlithgow Palace, and St Michael’s Parish Church with its aluminium crown, form a striking silhouette on the skyline. The tour – led by Ron Smith, Tony Oxbrow and Alan Agnew – epitomised the advantage of council and residents working together for the greater good.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- We noted many high quality examples of imaginative bedding displays throughout the tour particularly the Britain in Bloom golden anniversary bed and the Burgh Beautiful bed at Low Port. The snake bedding near St Peter's Church using non-stop begonias in such a striking red was very effective and clearly impressed the local children.
- The fine examples of permanent planting, notably the Katie Wearie bed and the Hopetoun Gardens pollinator bed were prominent.
- Horticultural practice across the different planting types was of a very high standard.
- Among a wide range of residential gardens two were of particular impact: the garden of Eileen Murray at Water Yett and Audrey Simpson at West Port with the immaculate lawn setting off the superb planting. These would be a joy to all residents and visitors alike.
- The levels of commercial sponsorship were noted in the provision of hanging baskets and planters throughout the town.
- Grass verges and open green areas had a high standard of maintenance. The judges particularly noticed the sensitive use of herbicides for grass edging on the approach roads into the town.

Areas for development

- One of the semi-mature *Sorbus aucuparia* in the town centre was in a poor state and may need to be replaced in the near future.
- The judges observed dog urine stains on many grass areas during the tour. A campaign to highlight this issue would be appropriate in an attempt to alleviate the problem.
- Reference was made to the landscaping of the Oracle Software site. It would be appropriate to visit this location as part of a future judging tour, perhaps emphasising another facet of the horticultural aspects of the town.
- The landscaping associated with the Aldi store on Falkirk Road could be improved.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- It was good to see the recent provision of insect habitats at Clarendon House and the Brownies' garden at Longcroft Hall.
- The reuse of both plant material and resources was appreciated, with the concept of young trees being grown on in the nursery of note.
- It would be appropriate to have details to hand of the growing medium used in the many plant containers for discussion.
- Linlithgow's local heritage, and its interpretation throughout the tour, was very strong. Of particular interest was the 'Perambulation of the Marches', the heritage trail plaques in the town and the excellent canal basin.
- The town benefits from an interesting and extensive range of public art such as the railway station tiles and murals, the collection of animal sculptures at Water Yett, the Katie Wearie bronze and the significant historical backdrop of the palace and St Michael's Church.
- The Annet House museum garden is an important interpretative facility. The Rigg maintained there is of significant interest.

Areas for development

- The tour would benefit from more emphasis on natural habitats and conservation, which the judges are sure are there, but should be a specific stop during the visit.
- While the judges were impressed by the general level of cleanliness, graffiti etched on bus shelters on both Springfield Road and Falkirk Road was noticeable.
- Some dog fouling was evident on the tour on the pavement approach to the Westport Hotel.
- There was clearly an issue with fly-posting on the route some of which you have dealt with successfully.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The group is well established and the provision of a permanent community base at Clarendon is of great benefit. The level of active support with 40 plus members of Burgh Beautiful, across schools, Brownies, Guides and the Girls' Brigade, is highly commendable. The judges were pleased to meet children from St Joseph's School, Kirsty from the Girls' Brigade and Rachael from the Brownies, as part of the tour. It was also pleasing to note the contribution of Peter Common at the other end of the age spectrum.
- A significant level of funding from self-generated initiatives was noted.
- The partnership with West Lothian Council is obviously a success and the council's willingness to accept and co-operate with the voluntary sector is a fine example of a community-council partnership.

Areas for development

- The judges support your intentions to install the pavement mosaics as part of your important heritage and look forward to the continual development of the gardens and wild flora at the Vennel Gardens.

London Bridge (Southwark), London Urban Community – Silver

The Team London Bridge Business Improvement District (BID) aims to improve and enhance the business and commercial areas within its geographic boundaries by creating high-quality environments for all to enjoy – including visitors and local residents. Particular points of note are Gibbons Rent, Melior Street Allotment, Whites Grounds Community Garden and Potters Fields. With many new exciting projects planned or in the early stages of development, and engagement with the residential community in several neighbourhoods, London Bridge has much potential to develop in the years ahead and advance further in Britain in Bloom.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Potters Fields, with its attractive Piet Oudolf-designed sustainable planting, sets a very good example for a modern, low-maintenance open space layout.
- King's College Memorial Garden with its symmetrical design featuring hornbeam, yew and box planting; together with silver birch trees all are used to very good effect.
- Fair Street 'green wall' complemented with a colourful display of balcony geraniums with plans to extend this feature further over a greater area. Number of 'Green Roofs' incorporated into new building developments.
- Community gardening being undertaken at Gibbons Rent and the Melior Street Allotment by the St Mungo's team. Also the new community garden at Whites Grounds and the Tyers Estate, which successfully applied for 1,100 plants from Alan Titchmarsh and Kate Gould's 2014 RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden, and has involved local residents in creating a most attractive communal garden area.

Areas for development

- A number of the hanging baskets/floral planters seen on the judging route were suffering from mildew, needed deadheading and some looked particularly starved of nutrients. You need to ensure a consistent standard of maintenance and quality of plants throughout.

- There was no evidential Bloom impact – try to concentrate your horticultural displays in certain strategic points to achieve this. Look to encourage more individual businesses to make horticultural enhancements to their premises.
- The judges noted a number of plants growing in conditions not best suited to their development i.e. lavender and non-stop begonias planted under trees or in too shady a spot. You need to ensure that the right plant is planted in the right place.
- Weeds and leaf litter was seen in a number of beds on the judging route.
- The use of agaves, with their vicious pointed leaves, in Whites Grounds Community Garden could be a safety hazard. They might be better used in a less accessible space.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Given the urban nature of the area you have maximised opportunities for conservation and biodiversity with a whole host of bug hotels, bird boxes, plants to encourage pollinators and green roofs throughout.
- Resource management with some very good examples of water harvesting, use of recycled products, composting where possible, use of peat-reduced composts, and the general organic approach at the Melior Street Allotment.
- No dog fouling or fly-posting was seen on the judging route.

Areas for development

- Weed growth was evidenced in several paved areas and around bollards; ensure all hard surfaces are treated consistently.
- The local heritage of the area needs to be more celebrated throughout the entry and witnessed on the judging tour. Suggest you consider developing a heritage trail to highlight the wonderful history of the area.
- You need to pay attention to detail to all areas of the judging route to ensure that they are of the required standard. For example, weed-suppressing membrane was clearly visible in one shrub bed and litter or graffiti was seen in several locations.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- You have a good number of exciting projects planned or in the early stages of development which will benefit you as an entry in the years ahead.
- Engagement with the residential community at Whites Grounds and the Tyers Estate and the creation of the Community Garden.
- The secure funding which the BID provides to sustain the Bloom campaign.

Areas for development

- A typed itinerary (with boxes for judges' comments) would have been helpful, together with a route map.
- The judges suggest that you produce a more detailed portfolio and make use of the 15-minute opportunity in the presentation to give a general overview of your entry and to provide background information, particularly highlighting your future plans, presenting evidence of year-round activity and to give details of projects with which you have been involved but will not be included on the actual judging route.
- Consider developing a local Bloom competition to further encourage local residents, businesses and other organisations to get involved with your campaign.

- Look to develop a 'Friends of Bloom' group to share the workload and to take the campaign forward, perhaps seeking out a proactive community champion to develop the initiative locally.

Loughborough, East Midlands Small City – Silver Gilt

There are so many changes going on in Loughborough. A new road system going through the city centre, staff changes, and the letting of a new grounds maintenance contract all add up to challenging times. The Bloom board are working hard to carry on as normal and have many ideas in mind for the future. It was clear to the judges that the strong bond that exists between board and council will be the way forward. We feel sure that RHS It's Your Neighbourhood will strengthen your entry further as more groups become involved

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were delighted to visit the garden and adjoining land of Harry Cook. The grounds at Loughborough College were maintained to a high standard. As expected the sports surfaces were in good condition. There were some very interesting beds in Queens Park. The new Japanese garden is showing great promise and the presentation of the baskets at King Street mosque was impressive.

Areas for development

- The judges were a little concerned by the number of flowerbeds that were suffering from lack of water. Some newly planted tree stock was also in need of irrigation. Hanging baskets, although well designed and planted, required more water and feed than they appeared to be receiving. As drought has been a problem on open space grass, consideration should be given to raising the cutting height at such times.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed by the cleanliness of the streets throughout the tour, and found the heritage of your bell industry most interesting. The introduction of the Business Improvement District scheme is, in its own right, enhancing the city centre. We noticed some very interesting artwork during our tour, most of it relating to the area. The arrival of otters at Stonebow Washlands is a great indicator of how successful this site has become.

Areas for development

- In some cases the wooden park benches were in need of renovation. Maybe this is an area of work that the Payback group could consider. It would have been of help to the judges to have had an officer dealing with resource management available to provide us with the present position as this area of work is changing so quickly. We would liked to have been given a better understanding of your dog-fouling policy and other environmental policies relating to your Bloom campaign.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The achievement of your RHS It's Your Neighbourhood entries was most impressive. The results were clear for all to see. The judges were delighted to visit Cobden Street School. The limitation of ground/green space was not allowed to deter the staff and pupils from making a

super effort to work with the environment. Having the editor of the local newspaper as Chair is a real strength and something not encountered before. We were impressed by the number of groups who are all working towards making Loughborough a better place in which to live.

Areas for development

- Maybe consideration could be given to setting up workshops that may provide further skills for your RHS It's Your Neighbourhood entries. It may be advantageous to have Sarah as a board member as she has many skills to bring forward. For further tours please consider timings as it felt rather rushed throughout.

Malvern, Heart of England Large Town – Silver Gilt

Malvern can be proud of its first-time entry into the Britain in Bloom UK Finals. Throughout the tour this beautiful Worcestershire spa town was showcased very well. Excellent trees set in superb landscape complemented with large quantities of flowers enhance this lovely tourist town to both the benefit of the local community and visitors alike.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There were numerous high-standard floral features throughout the town centre all of which combined to create a 'wow' impact for the community.
- Excellent trees are present throughout the town; those of very special significance can be seen in the Priory grounds and the Priory Park.
- Private houses all had beautiful permanent plantings and there were numerous examples of high-quality garden management and maintenance which significantly impacted on the street scene.
- Partnerships between the local councils, local businesses and the community all demonstrated strong civic pride, local ownership and long-term commitment to the Malvern Bloom campaign.
- High-standard green spaces abound throughout Malvern.

Areas for development

- Rosebank Gardens fell short of the very high standards evidenced throughout the tour. Regrettably, while the project is work in progress the exclusion of parts of the park from the route is recommended. On future tours it would be good to hear how the Bloom group intends planting the gardens and how the group intends addressing the upgrading of the infrastructure. Grass lawn management was poor.
- Some consideration should be given to the introduction of more sustainable planting in a number of areas, so as to reduce dependency on shorter-term annual bedding plants.
- It is recognised that the staff teams engaged in the Bloom campaign are enthusiastic, committed and proud of their contribution. We look forward to their development of the parks in the innovative and creative ways they described.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The achievements and events programme of the Malvern Hills Conservators.
- The excellent standard of the conservation areas, the common and Malvern Hills, the work with the bees as well as school art linkages.

- High standards of environmental management in evidence throughout the tour and little or no evidence of neither litter nor dog fouling. However, some cigarette detritus was noted.

Areas for development

- It will be good to see the plans to improve the painting and condition of the lamp posts which need the implementing of a repainting programme.
- A programme needs to be developed whereby a number of hard surface areas in Rosebank Gardens are resurfaced or improved.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- It is recognised that strong civic pride coupled with extensive volunteering and partnerships all serve to maintain and promote Malvern to a high standard.
- Support and fundraising is clearly in evidence throughout the town.
- The Bloom group can be proud of the continued campaign which has developed Malvern to its current levels.

Areas for development

- Regrettably the tour management and planning, while highlighting many areas of excellence, failed to highlight the 'wow' plantings in the centre of the town to the degree necessary to ensure consistency (an opportunity missed).
- Tour planning was excellent until the arrival at Rosebank Gardens, where it fell apart to the detriment of the tour and numerous examples of poor areas were evidenced.
- It is recommended that an offer is taken up for one or both of the judges from 2014 to revisit Malvern to support and assist the community in route planning and presentation.

Market Bosworth, East Midlands Large Village – Gold

Market Bosworth has a proud history and the visit on a lovely sunny morning gave the Bloom group the opportunity to show off their delights. The floral impact in the market square and the adjacent shops, including the hotel, were a pleasure to see. The support from the Fire Station, school restaurants and businesses, including individuals, was fantastic and made such a contribution in the street scene for all to see. The Story of the War Horse, the Leicestershire Regiment and the display were commendable to commemorate a 100 years since the start of the First World War.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Green spaces seen were generally well maintained in accordance with the appropriate schedules.
- The outstanding floral displays complement the many historical and attractive buildings throughout the village. Careful consideration has been given to colour co-ordination and choice of plants creating colour, texture and high quality of all displays. The general positioning of floral elements to create impact appeared to have been given considerable thought.
- The judges noted good horticultural practice generally, and were impressed with the number of horticulturally interested persons from a range of organisations.
- Residential and community gardens shown were of a high standard and complemented the street scene.
- Most business premises appeared to be entering into the spirit of the campaign.

Areas for development

- The judges felt that the arboretum in the Country Park appeared neglected. There seemed to be no direct theme to the collection. A management plan may be required and a comprehensive tree survey needs to be undertaken to establish future treatment and species therein. Labelling would also be of benefit.
- The allotments in the village were noted, but unfortunately time did not permit a visit.
- The judges would like to have seen future proposals for wildflower areas in some locations, albeit we were pleased to see more emphasis on sustainable planting.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges noted the good initiatives outlined in the portfolio, which assisted with the resource management criteria.
- The conservation and biodiversity policy in the Country Park is to be commended. The enthusiasm of Ros Smith was heart-warming.
- The judges recognised the important heritage aspects in the village.
- Local environmental quality was excellent, an extremely tidy village of which to be proud.
- Generally pride of place was of an acceptable standard, but the judges did note one or two minor exceptions.

Areas for development

- The work undertaken to propagate the orchid collection was admirable, and the judges hope this will be extended to other species, especially Helleborines.
- The judges recognise that byelaws are a management tool; however, we felt that they are only in place to protect visitors' enjoyment and suggest a more customer-focused approach might be appropriate.
- The judges noted the excellent eco-friendly toilet facility in the Country Park. However, we were less impressed with the galvanised bike rack outside. A more suitably designed facility for bikes may be appropriate.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were satisfied that you appeared to meet the objectives of development and continuity.
- Young people appeared to be involved in your campaign. However, the First World War bed created by the Grammar School was outstanding, and fully appropriate to recognise and commemorate the 100-year anniversary.
- The variance of local people at the final reception demonstrated the wide range of interest in the village.
- The portfolio demonstrates adequately the year-round involvement of your Bloom group.
- The judges would commend the excellent portfolio, and the information contained therein, which assisted our deliberations.

Areas for development

- Funding appeared to be in place for the near future, but the judges were concerned about possible shortfalls, and reserve funding.

Moorsholm, Northumbria Village – Gold & Joint Category Winner

Situated on the edge of the North York Moors and 300 metres above sea level, Moorsholm provides complex issues for any horticultural displays. But the group has certainly risen to the challenge not only by producing some fantastic displays but also by making them appropriate. The group has only been formed a few years but has come a long way in transforming the village and getting the whole community on board, with full support from the local authority. Several large projects have been tackled to follow the judging criteria to enhance the local environment and preserve the heritage. What comes across when entering the village is the full commitment of the villagers with a well-organised tour to show the community off at its best. But the most apparent aspect is the sense of fun that comes across including Roy and Al's display at the sports pavilion. The judges thoroughly enjoyed their visit and congratulate the team on a wonderful Bloom entry.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges enjoyed the attractive and appropriate perennial planting in the village, which helps to attract a greater biodiversity. It was great to see the continuity throughout the village.
- The quality of the maintenance at the new sports field at the recreation ground was excellent. The judges liked the raised beds, complete with scarecrows, the raised planters and the sunflowers at rear of the sports pavilion. This could have been a very sterile area and you have created a little haven.
- The judges were impressed at the laid hedge and how quickly it had thickened and regenerated. Using and sharing traditional skills ensures they aren't lost and has the potential to engage a greater audience.
- Incorporation of the various RHS themes in the displays was noted by the judges. These included the poppies, golden theme and sunflowers. The sunflowers along the entrance path to the allotments were a lovely idea and we sensed a little friendly rivalry on whose was going to grow the tallest.
- The garden behind the community hall was fantastic, a hidden haven. There were some fantastic planting combinations and exciting plant choices.
- The top-quality residential gardens throughout the village.

Areas for development

- The judges noted the plans to open the village gardens for the National Garden Scheme next year, which will promote the village and raise some funds. It may also offer ideas to other local Bloom groups. Perhaps these could be developed into a garden trail as well.
- The garden behind the sports pavilion was a great asset to the village. It would be nice to see the extended to the front. The judges realise its primary use is as a sports facility but it is a little stark and other groups have introduced natural planting around the perimeters to soften this.
- Encourage the pub to continue to support the campaign.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The desire to keep the local heritage alive by using old agricultural implements and preserving the trods and water troughs. Also passing on of hedge-laying skills, preserving the heritage hedges and creating a walks leaflet.

- The judges were delighted to meet Doris the sweeper queen for leading the way on keeping the streets clean and tidy. Doris does an excellent job and it is great to see the inclusion of the young and young at heart.
- The judges were impressed at the introduction of different habitats in the churchyards. They were in keeping to their environment, encourage greater biodiversity and, once again, fun.
- The clear interpretation signs around the village and the distinctive woodpecker sculpture.

Areas for development

- Further survey work on various species every five years would build up a picture of the local species and add some information to the Moorsholm in Bloom website, or create a leaflet for visitors.
- Consider a consistent style to the street furniture used through the village and a maintenance schedule of the street furniture.
- Perhaps add more agricultural equipment to the village displays to emphasis the agricultural tradition.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed by the DVD presentation at the start of the tour, which could be used as a promotional tool for Bloom. We enjoyed being able to meet so many of the villagers on judging day.
- The group communicate the Bloom campaign well throughout the surrounding area through Twitter, newsletters and calendar.
- The year-round programme of work parties and projects was very evident and the amount of regular volunteers supporting the campaign.

Areas for development

- Although it is during school holidays, it might be useful to meet some young people to discuss the projects in which they have been involved.

Norton in Hales, Heart of England Village – Gold & Joint Category Winner

Set within a conservation area, this traditional picturesque English village has a green, church, school and community pub, and it is obvious there is a strong community spirit.

A very comprehensive presentation and portfolio started the tour and this continued throughout the visit. The judges were amazed at the sheer enthusiasm of everyone and the extent to which residents got involved throughout the year. The village had used the RHS theme, 'growing for gold with pollinators' through the village and it created a series of 'wows'. However, it is evident that the village also has high regard for the local natural environment as well. The whole village should be congratulated on their very well deserved Gold medal!

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were extremely impressed at how the village had interpreted the RHS 2014 theme 'growing for gold with pollinators' and having grown all the plants and sharing greenhouses, this shows what can be achieved. The displays created a series of 'wows' throughout the village and the hot colours worked extremely well. It was great to see sustainable planting as part of this and the judges liked the fact that each display was ever so slightly different.

- Whilst being high impact the displays were appropriate to the village. Throughout the tour the judges met lots of residents and committee members and saw numerous beautiful gardens.
- The frontage to the school was impressive and if it wasn't for the sign the judges would never have known it was a school. It was valuable for the judges to meet the children and see their individual sunflowers. The villagers have truly embraced the sunflower theme with a remarkable number taking part, which also added to the seasonal displays.
- The recreation ground is of a high quality and is very well maintained. It needs to be fit for purpose, but the inclusion of the field maple hedge, wildflower area and seasonal plantings were great additions.

Areas for development

- The community ensured all the planting flourished with regular watering and deadheading and the quality of the plants and level of maintenance was a credit to everyone involved. However, you may wish to consider using a suitable mulch to reduce the amount of watering and reduce weed growth.
- The judges are aware that you are considering renovating the church bed and it would be great to see to the same high standard here as in the other plantings.
- Could the community take on the planting at the village pub? The displays didn't match the quality seen elsewhere in the village.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The water butts initiative (30 new 190 litre water butts) was a very functional community project and has enabled a large percentage of residents to save and recycle water. Its use at the bus stop will help greatly with watering. It is fantastic to have the resource of the bore hole should they ever run dry.
- As a group you have great community composting scheme, recycling grass cuttings, compost and manure, using shared areas in communal areas and residents gardens. The scheme works very well as the results are reused in planting schemes. Recycling has been taken a stage further at a new development within the village by recycling a hedge and using the bark chippings and replanting the snowdrops.
- Parton's Pool is a great resource for the village. From the initial project the area has continually been developed, including the maintenance regime with the inclusion of the interpretation board, bug hotel, beehive and forthcoming extension.
- The whole village was immaculate and the judges would like to congratulate all the residents who must work very hard to keep it this way. There was no evidence of litter, graffiti or dog fouling.

Areas for development

- There must be a well-organised routine to ensure all the planting is regularly watered, with a large number of the community being involved. However, it might be beneficial to look into some water conservation methods such as mulching, water-retention gel, planters with reservoirs and drought-resistant planting. The judges acknowledge that a percentage of the planting was sustainable but a great deal of time seemed to have been spent on this activity.
- There has been a great deal of research undertaken on the history of the village. The judges realise this is on the website but there is an opportunity to develop it a little further into a walk that visitors could use.
- Although many of the schoolchildren do not live in the village, the school is an integral part of the community and the group do lots to engage with them – including having William involved in the beekeeping. It would be great if Patron's Pool could be a resource the school could safely use regularly with pond dipping, looking at the inhabitants of the bug hotel and

observing the beehive. There may be the opportunity for a leaflet on the species found at the pond and this could be added to the website.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- It is great to see the RHS themes and developed to suit your entry. En route the judges saw examples of incredible edibles, wild about gardens and growing for gold with pollinators. The judges also saw that free seeds and bulbs from the RHS promotions were used, too; wildflowers, poppies, edibles, crocuses and sunflowers – all part of the RHS community gardening seed giveaways. Many groups try to follow the themes but it was lovely to see them executed so well and you had continued with them to great effect.
- The village organised a village sunflower competition. The judges were extremely impressed that more than 30 % of the residents entered.
- As a group the team are an integral part of the community and work in partnership with many other village groups and initiatives. It is great to see the year-round programme of events organised, from general maintenance to the many new projects.
- The whole Bloom campaign is about the village working together to create a better environment. It was great to see how much of the community were involved and that you had included many different age groups, especially the children. This was one of the few tours where the judges met children and they had a variety of involvement.
- Local residents can't help but know about the group and what events are coming up with all the communication that you achieve. The group use a variety of resources that include the Messenger, A-boards, local press, flyers, website and Facebook site. A Twitter account might be a useful addition.

Areas for development

- The group seem to raise all the money that is needed but if more is needed the judges believe that there are the right initiatives and people involved to succeed.

Norwich, Anglia City – Silver Gilt

Norwich in Bloom continues to work tirelessly to promote the Anglia region through the Britain in Bloom campaign, and is successfully engaging with all sections of the community in developing a greater sense of pride within the city. This is no better demonstrated than by the group involving children from 25 schools in the area and encouraged to take part in the Norwich in Bloom campaign 2014. This bears testament to the hard work of the group and their dedication is no doubt leaving a lasting legacy.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The overall standard of the barrier planters and baskets and innovative colour scheme was exceptional.
- The growing and planting being done by the students from City College, working with the group's volunteers in various sites including the Assembly house and the many churches around the city centre, was commendable.
- The standard of horticulture at Plantation Gardens was much improved with effective use of seasonal and perennial plants appropriately planted to enhance the visitor experience.
- The floral displays at the Adam and Eve public house by Rita McCluskey added greatly to the area.

- The horticulture achievement demonstrated at Cavell Primary and Nursery School was outstanding, with rotational vegetable beds, fruit cage, orchard and wildflower areas.
- The planters at Norwich castle were of a high quality and added greatly to the appearance of this ancient building.

Areas for development

- The areas of seasonal bedding – with the exception of those done by the City College and the volunteers – were sparsely planted with very little diversity of species and interest.
- The areas now turned over to perennial planting showed little imagination in species choice, and again were sparsely planted. Perhaps a root-and-branch review of the horticultural areas would be a way of identifying areas where greater impact would benefit – less can be more.
- There were considerable areas of grass verge left uncut, perhaps this could be addressed by the relevant authorities.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The biodiversity and wildflower areas at Cavell Primary and Nursery School were exceptional, well thought-out and give students the opportunity to study and play in a nature environment.
- The hard landscaping around the new library alongside the historic city centre blends old and new perfectly and shows very effective planning and design.
- The wildlife corridor developed by the Eaton Rise Residents volunteers, in planting and maintaining the historic hedge adjacent to Ipswich Road, is now establishing and will add considerably to the biodiversity of the area.

Areas for development

- There was considerable variation in the quality and standard of maintenance of the street furniture, consider putting a maintenance schedule together.
- There were considerable areas of detritus including large amounts of cigarette ends and accumulated litter in several places on the route.
- It is recognised there has been a general improvement in the previous amounts of fly-posting and graffiti visible throughout the city – continue to be vigilant in tackling this issue to ensure it does not begin to detract from the heritage and natural beauty of the area.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The visit to Cavell Primary and Nursery school was brilliant: the children were well-informed and enthusiastic and the whole place was a joy to look round. It was felt that as much emphasis had been placed on the school garden outside as had been on the classrooms, making the school garden a true outdoor classroom.
- The support and funding was very well explained and the list of supporters and sponsors is most impressive.
- The work with HMP Norwich and City College are invaluable in providing logistical support to the city.
- It was generally felt the Norwich in Bloom group were engaging and reaching most areas of the community.

Areas for development

- It would be useful to add a little more about future projects, both in the portfolio and on the day.

- Perhaps the presentation could be made more effective by showing some spring highlights, so demonstrating year-round working.
- The portfolio (although very comprehensive) is a little wordy; perhaps look at rationalising some of the sections to be more concise.

Oldham, North West City – Gold & Category Winner

Oldham has got to be the entry others aspire to: what an achievement to pull the whole community together under the 'Bloom and Grow' banner. No stone has been left unturned in striving to achieve horticultural excellence in a sustainable manner through effective community participation. A superb example of what can be achieved in these challenging economic times by working with all partners. The investment by the local authority in attracting visitors and new businesses to the area is to be commended, however the underlying factor that shines out is the unbelievable community participation, a very worthy category and gold medal-winning entry.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The overall quality of the horticultural displays throughout the entry, including the colour scheme, choice of plant species and their appropriate and effective use was outstanding, particularly on the 'Golden Thread'.
- The many small communities being supported by the horticultural team, including Lydgate, Dob Cross and Delph and the excellent horticulture demonstrated by the community throughout the entry was superb.
- The allotment site at Heyside showing a fantastic range of crops, all well grown by dedicated and enthusiastic gardeners and now incorporating beehives.
- The town centre planters and central precinct display showcasing the work of the council gardeners was superb.
- The very large numbers of participants in the gardens competition was quite remarkable for an entry of this size, as was the quality of the gardens.
- The overall standard of maintenance of verges and open spaces around the tour route was exemplary.
- The work being done at Dr Kershaw's Hospice by the dedicated band of volunteers made this area more colourful and welcoming for patients and visitors.

Areas for development

- Although there is considerable financial support by the many businesses in the town it would have been advantageous to see examples of individual effort.
- It was noted that most if not all of the plant material was home grown by the council, and it is hoped this situation continues through any future funding issues as the quality achieved would be very hard to beat.
- The fruit tree initiative at Pearly Band, although very good, needs further support including planting more suitably sized trees with a greater chance of establishment.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The total lack of litter and detritus seen on the tour together with obvious and very effective enforcement seen on the day was an example to others.
- The overall quality of the street furniture, including the introduction of the new green and gold colour scheme.

- The war memorial was very well presented, together with the effective use of vacant premises.
- The potential development of the old town hall shows promise of regeneration in a strategic part of the town centre.
- The giant woollen balls used in the city centre displays helping to promote the links to Dr Kershaw's Hospice.

Areas for development

- The areas relating to conservation and biodiversity were weak, and although the Brown Hill visitor centre was very good, it would have been prudent to extend the tour over into the nature area it serves.
- The wildflower meadow planting is obviously proving difficult. Consider reducing the size of the areas and develop a more comprehensive management regime. It may be worth asking Dr Nigel Dunnett from Sheffield University for some advice or contact other authorities to seek their views on sowing dates and species choice.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- For an entry this size the community involvement was outstanding. It was obvious everyone the judges met was fully behind the campaign and there was lots of evidence of community 'buy in' to Oldham in Bloom.
- The funding and support of everyone from the business sector through to the voluntary sector was exemplary.
- The children's 'design a banner', photo competition and use of social media in developing the campaign offer a very modern twist to a 50-year-old national campaign.
- The production and presentation of the introductory DVD was of very high quality, probably the best the judges have ever seen and highlighted the areas Oldham in Bloom are working in, away from the tour route.
- The press coverage both recorded and on the day including constantly plotting the tour on Twitter was amazing.

Areas for development

- The judges would have liked to have seen a little more evidence of scheduled events that take place year-round.
- At this level it may be difficult to maintain the momentum for campaign within the community, we would suggest developing a long-term strategic plan for the campaign.
- The community fruit-planting initiative although new was a little weak; perhaps greater efforts could be made to ensure the momentum is not lost. It will be interesting to see how this progresses over the coming years.

Perth, Scotland Large Town – Gold

A well-rehearsed tour presented this proud Scottish community to great effort. The judges were shown beautiful horticultural features and dedicated community working in partnership with the local authority. One of the many highlights was seeing the developing heather collection, with a lone piper playing on the hillside a truly memorable Scottish experience.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- St Matthew's Church garden was a credit to the ECO congregation with a balanced approach to permanent and seasonal bedding.
- The floral features on the traffic islands and verges had high impact and were well maintained. These features add interest and a sense of place for Perth.
- The recreation of the heather collection was to a very high standard. This will only get better in years to come and the judges can't wait to visit it again soon.

Areas for development

- The baskets and beddings displays were a little under developed, although this was to ensure they were at their peak later in the month for the Ryder Cup being hosted by Perth.
- The dolphin beds at the leisure centre, although weed free, could have had more impact by a more dense planting programme.
- You may think of a way to include interpretation at the heather beds to enhance this visitor attraction.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges were shown good examples of public art throughout the tour. The thistles at St John's Street were a fine of how appropriate design can significantly improve the local environment.
- Friarton recycling centre was a highlight with innovative ways to improve Perth's recycling figures.
- The litter control and sweeping regime, especially in the centre, was working particularly well with no visible signs of litter on the tour, and this coupled with the dog fouling campaign 'drop them in it' is having a positive effect on Perth's street scene.

Areas for development

- Some examples of graffiti were seen on the tour.
- Weed control in the soft landscape was well managed but there were some weeds in the pavement and growing on buildings and walls, which should be addressed.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There was evidence of growing community participation throughout Perth. This should be encouraged.
- The inclusion of pupils from Kinnoull Primary School was welcomed and it was pleasing to hear their excitement of the proposed development outside their school. The judges look forward to visiting this in the future.
- The community involvement around the railway station should be applauded as it gives such a welcome to anyone visiting Perth and shows what can be achieved when people come together.

Areas for development

- Although we did meet with the Cubs, it would be good to include examples of how the Bloom group engage with other youth organisations.
- The Bloom group is changing to reflect the community and becoming less reliant on the local authority; this should be encouraged and expanded for future entries.

Pitlochry, Scotland Small Town – Gold

The fortunes of this small Scottish town changed forever with the arrival of the railway, and with a stunning backdrop of woodland and beautiful mountains it is now an important tourist town. Important industry includes two local distilleries while traditional country pastimes and activities also draw visitors to the town. The community is rightly proud of its Victorian heritage, which is celebrated in plantings and architectural features throughout the town.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The Explorer's Garden recognising Scottish plant-hunters and the plants that they collected from around the world is a first-class educational facility as well as being a well-presented visitor attraction under the expert stewardship of Julia. Buildings, sculptures and other features in the garden are unique, such as the compost toilet of quality design sympathetic to the landscape. The garden has an impressive number of volunteers.
- Were a visitor to arrive by train or by car they would be left in no doubt no from the floral displays, art in the landscape, and presentation of historic artefacts and buildings that this is a town consumed by Bloom and rich in heritage. This has been achieved through the efforts of the Bloom group and the major contribution made by a large number of individual businesses, especially accommodation owners and restaurants.
- It was good to see that the residents of Aldour RHS It's Your Neighbourhood were conducting their campaign with a sense of fun while at the same time delivering it so successfully. The Secret Garden scheme showed that individual residents were clearly taking a pride in their gardens.
- The churchyard at Moulin was well-maintained and set against the floral displays of the Moulin hotel.

Areas for development

- At a time when Perth and Kinross council are reducing service it would seem advisable to conduct a review of resources available to the Bloom group in order to determine the implications of adopting further areas of maintenance and responsibility.
- There is some attention to detail that could be concentrated on; the Ryder bed could perhaps have been more densely planted, and recent grass clippings had been left in the edges of the begonia beds to the rear of the War Memorial. The garden would also benefit from edging of the paths and replacement of the lost tree. Some of the areas of grass in the village can afford to be less closely mown than they are at present.
- The need for management of the grass banks along Perth Road has been realised and a programme of yellow rattle introduction had already started. The bank next to the railway line contained some woody weeds, which will require more invasive management.
- Continue to monitor the new plant supplier.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The litter support team is very active and conducts monthly litter picks, with residents adopting local roads. The Rural Path Clearing Group has received grant funding from the council and taken statutory responsibility for this area. There is a commitment to recycling in the village.
- The judges applaud the approach to art in the town from the metalwork figures signifying heritage aspects of the town, sequoia cones, to features such as the whisky barrel train, the

restored MacFarlane 7 fountain, and willow golfer installed this year. Some nice architectural elements were also present such as tree under-lighting, walling detail and benches at Petit Jardin. The town's heritage is proudly reflected in virtually every aspect of the Bloom group's activity

- The community has to be commended for its persistence for 15 years of lobbying for the restoration of the railway station buildings and painting of the footbridge, and for their securing of Heritage Lottery Fund money for the restoration.
- The Town's Heritage Map has been reintroduced to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the railway with 15 new Heritage Trail signs erected around the town. Volunteers run the Moulin Kirk Heritage Centre.

Areas for development

- Due to the domination of grasses and perennial weeds in the Wildlife Garden, the original intent has been temporarily lost. The control of invasive species does need to be tackled and it is suggested that vegetation should be sprayed off in the autumn to prepare for a spring re-sowing of wildflower seed. A management plan needs to be written and implemented to ensure that growth does not get out of control.
- In the landscaping proposals to extend from the station platform to the standing stones of Armoury Park, please look at replacing the rather functional style fencing around the steam engine to introduce some artistic design to convey the impression that it is something to be visited and admired. It may be possible to have this as a project for the school to continue the work already engaged in at the station.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Pitlochry in Bloom and the rail company have set up a Community Rail Partnership which is seen as an exemplar to advise other stations on regeneration projects using the experience gained at Pitlochry.
- Pitlochry is the first volunteer group ever to get European funding, which has been in the region of £90k. Congratulations on the ability to raise funds for revenue and capital projects. The group is very successful in its annual fundraising events and in securing sponsorship from business and other bodies.
- The group is clear with its forward plans, which include the Heritage woods in the centre of the town and the development of a community project for a health trail in conjunction with healthcare professionals.

Areas for development

- It would have been good to meet some of the young people involved in village projects in order that they could show us at first-hand some of the projects in which they had been actively engaged.

Port Marine & Village Quarter (Portishead), South West Urban Community – Gold & Category Winner

Portishead has been transformed from its heavy industrial past with high-quality and well-designed developments including great open spaces making it a delightful place to live.

The judges were impressed from start to finish, and what a finish and celebration of all you have done! A band, a choir, and all those volunteers and supporters. The volunteers pulled out all of the stops and your route comprehensively demonstrated evidence across all of the criteria making you worthy winners of the category with a Gold medal to boot.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Your route demonstrated innovative, very high-quality floral displays throughout making a real impact and statement that you love where you live and welcome visitors.
- There was a very good balance of sustainable planting and floral displays demonstrating that this combination has great effect with right plants in the right place.
- A good level of local business support from a thriving and vibrant high street.
- The new developments are exceptionally well laid out, with inviting open spaces, good screening and a variety of design that encourages outdoor living.
- The judges saw many good residential gardens even where there was limited space.

Areas for development

- Encourage more neighbourhoods to enter the campaign in this category, particularly in the new developments.
- Try to encourage a consistent standard of grass cutting when volunteers had demonstrated what can be achieved.
- The judges enjoyed seeing the centrally located raised beds containing a variety of produce. However, if possible include allotments on the tour to demonstrate the wider aspects sites of this nature have.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve is a wonderful resource and well managed. The judges enjoyed talking to Helen, who was very knowledgeable and told us all about your toad diversionary measures.
- Barry 'the Womble's' approach to recycling was great, retrieving all sorts from all over and making use of the things that he finds.
- Your route was extremely clean throughout even in the more challenging locations such as your well managed woodlands.
- You have exceptional examples of art in the landscape that are very well located and interpreted.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop the wildflower area opposite the lido, looking to introduce more species that are local to your area as appropriate and improve interpretation.
- Try to develop the school garden more, particularly with raised beds to avoid the worst effects of flooding and look to the potential of the whole site, which is quite extensive, particularly in terms of habitats and sustainability.
- Try to develop a comprehensive heritage trail to improve on your current one and celebrate your fascinating history.
- On future tours, try to provide more evidence of how you recycle and encourage others to, and this could be addressed with an allotment site (if you have one).

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- It is clear that the whole community knows about your Bloom campaign and so many obviously support it. The community picnic has left us with a wonderful impression of your community and how they value the work you do.
- You demonstrated a very comprehensive list on ongoing and future projects that assure us your campaign will continue.

- Your partnerships with the council, Sainsbury's, Transition Portishead and others greatly help to sustain your campaign.
- Your open gardens event is a great fundraiser and improves your profile not just in Portishead but further afield, this is combined with modern and effective methods of getting your message across.
- Your flags initiative, that has engaged some 100 children, not only greatly improves your high street but also further gets your message across and encourages future 'Bloomers'.

Areas for development

- In any campaign there is always more that can be done, however, you have achieved a gold standard in this section and our only suggestions are that you continue to do the fantastic work with your community and just try to develop your plans at the school maximising the potential of this site and how you engage children and parents there.

St Andrews, Scotland Coastal Over 12k – Silver Gilt

A delight to visit the home of golf. However, it became immediately apparent from the colourful and varied planting displays that there is much more to offer. Our well-structured tour introduced us to your considerable conservation work, and your proud heritage. It was good to see the breadth of volunteers involved, and the steps being taken to secure the future of the Botanic Gardens. Great Scottish hospitality, and our thanks for making us so welcome.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The impact of colourful displays was visible on our visit, with special features and other floral attributes and innovative features evident.
- The transition of wildflower planting leading to a more formal planting environment was particularly successful.
- The judges appreciated the high impact of the 50-year anniversary carpet bed planted in the traditional method.
- The method of plant production by the group, which makes savings, is to be applauded. We noted the reciprocal arrangement for help in the Botanic Gardens.
- There were many good examples of residential gardens, and support from businesses in certain areas.
- The quality of green space maintenance by the University, the Golf Course Trust and other agencies was of a high standard.

Areas for development

- The RHS sunflower planting with 6,000 marigold plants highlighted hard work and commitment, but we considered it lost impact due to the choice of French marigolds; an African marigold selection may have given a better display.
- The Harbour Area, although popular with the public, lacked certain emphasis and missed an opportunity. The commemorative seat was surrounded by inappropriate vegetation, the boat (although a good feature) was in our opinion wrongly situated. The flower balls along the road felt inappropriate with little impact.
- There appeared to be an inconsistency in the quality of many of the hanging baskets on commercial premises not supported by the group.
- It was disappointing to hear that there was little allotment provision within the town, with a substantial waiting list. We would hope that in future the local authority would use its powers to provide more provision.

- The judges did see many good residential gardens, but we did not have the opportunity to stop, and observe them in more detail, and meet the residents concerned.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The Dunes Project was a revelation; all that is being achieved to safeguard these areas is exceptional, with the input of so many organisations. Success was clear to see.
- Recycling initiatives were good, and well above national averages.
- The eco-friendly Morris Building design and the Sedum Roof and other features provided a good facility.
- The galvanised bespoke planters were highly appropriate artistic features, giving highlights in certain areas. Long-term, you may consider painting them black and gold.
- The judges saw no evidence of litter, graffiti, fly-tipping or dog fouling.
- The small museum visited was a delight, and Andrew's enthusiasm and commitment to provide a local history record was to be commended. The judges thoroughly enjoyed our visit, and his work to commemorate the First World War was highly appropriate, with a most emotional and attractive display. The judges also liked the future proposals for shop fronts.
- The no-spray zone on the golf course was appreciated.

Areas for development

- The judges were conscious that St Andrews has a rich and varied heritage. We considered this could have been expanded further.
- The judges noted that St Andrew was badly located, and that it was to be relocated. The Baden Powell Memorial lettering needs attention, but it was good to hear of the proposals to reinstate the water to the fountain.
- The Dunes Conservation Project would benefit from the removal of ragwort.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Your work in reinstating the Bloom campaign is rewarding, and there appeared to be a good long-term future for your efforts.
- Working with schools and the Botanic Gardens in line with the local curriculum is highly appropriate. It was good to hear that there is a future for the Botanic Gardens. While there are many problems to resolve in challenging times we considered that James' enthusiasm would win through, and this would secure the future of this facility.
- The Student Transition Project was interesting. It would be good to see a larger involvement by other student groups. We liked the tricycle to convey tools.
- There appeared to be many avenues being investigated for funding, but we would have liked more detail.
- The photographic display, presentation and video were most informative.

Areas for development

- It might have proved beneficial to have had a press interview to further your efforts.
- The itinerary was very varied and informative, but we did miss certain elements, and perhaps on a future occasion you might consider less time on some aspects.
- Composting was excellent but there was no indication until you reached the site that it was freely available to the general public. Perhaps a sign before the long drive to the site may be appropriate.

St Peter Port, Guernsey

Coastal Over 12k – Gold & Category Winner

Whether you are entering the town by boat or road, the floral welcome is there for all to see, the commitment and enthusiasm of the Bloom team is to be applauded. The whole ethos for St Peter Port is to improve the environment for everyone, including the many visitors that come on cruise ships. Many people participate to achieve these goals and this has certainly brought the community together. The group has worked hard to liaise with many and establishing partnerships. The tour was well organised and executed, and showed a good selection of the criteria. The start in Patrick's garden was a perfect beginning to the tour.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Green spaces seen were generally maintained to a high standard.
- The judges adored Patrick's garden, the visitor experience and also the enjoyment that local schoolchildren have in visiting and having lessons. The monies raised for charity in the Open Gardens Scheme are to be commended.
- There is no doubt that local businesses are benefiting from the floral displays of big impact. The judges noted that your method of continuity funding is most impressive, a pity this could not be extended to other towns and cities in the campaign.
- The impact of the floral features is outstanding, Colour abounds and there are many special features that arouse further interest. There is little to fault here, and the future momentum is here for all to see. The Bloom committee recognise the importance of tourist visitor impressions on visiting the town.
- It was encouraging to see good horticultural practice and the efforts being made to educate via the Apprentice Scheme and the training it provided to Guernsey and other islands.
- The residential and community gardens seen were of a high standard, and complemented the overall appearance and ambience of the town.
- The visit to Candie Gardens returned us to traditional parks standards, with a variety of horticultural interests including the bedding, bog garden and glasshouses.
- The restored gardens at Cornet Castle were a delight to see. It was good to meet the various groups involved.
- Nigel's enthusiasm for the floral campaign in the town is to be applauded. You are all good ambassadors.

Areas for development

- There was an opportunity missed by introducing inappropriate plants into the traditional herbaceous border in Candice Gardens. The narrow turf strip could be removed to allow greater development of this feature.
- The judges appreciate the purpose of the celosia bed but visitors may not understand the concept of its use.
- Many of the beds seen were of a high horticultural standard but there were isolated areas where a better choice of material could have been used.
- The trees adjacent to the war memorial required some careful selective thinning to expose the soldier beneath.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges did see some conservation initiatives, particularly the climate changes affecting marine life outlined so successfully by Richard with excellent photographs.

- Resource management was reasonably covered, but perhaps the judges could have been given more information without us questioning the situation.
- There was a very good portrayal of local heritage; the history given by Dennis was particularly enlightening.
- Local environmental quality was good, but there were isolated areas of cigarette ends, and a small amount of blown litter.
- Street furniture, signage, and the hard landscaping were of a high standard. Nigel identified exciting proposals with the introduction of French plants linked with the First World War.

Areas for development

- The judges would like to have viewed more examples of conservation initiatives on the tour, in addition to those seen.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The future seemed assured and there was plenty of support for ongoing projects. The identification of problems and how to overcome them seemed paramount for how this organisation works.
- There appeared to be good community involvement in the development of the campaign.
- The presentation on the wide screen was good and very informative.
- Funding and support does not appear to be a big issue.
- Your mission statement is very positive and identifies your future commitment and for the campaign.

Areas for development

- The full itinerary was extremely informative and comprehensive. However, the judges did feel a little rushed on occasion and felt this might need a small re-think in future.
- At the conclusion of the tour, due to the time constraints and media pressure, the judges were unable to do full justice to the displays providing evidence by your supporters. It was, however, good to see media support.

Sedgefield, Northumbria Small Town – Gold

Situated between the industrial Tees Valley and some major conurbations, the historic settlement of Sedgefield describes itself as a small town with the heart of a village. In a predominantly rural area, the town celebrates its agricultural heritage and on the outskirts are situated the well-known racecourse and Hardwick Hall and Country Park. The town has a number of retail businesses and licensed premises giving it a busy feel, and plays host to a number of annual events including the centuries' old Shrove Tuesday Ball Game. The Bloom group in 2014 developed their activity on two major themes, 'Growing for Gold' and the commemoration of the outbreak of the First World War.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The use of Begonia semperflorens and Ophiopogon to create the effect of poppies in the 700 bed was creative and a fitting tribute to the anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War.
- Both residential and commercial contribution to the campaign was impressive and in particular the public houses and hotel featured prominently in providing floral displays which enhanced the centre of the town.

- The main focus of floral display was on the ‘village’ green. The use of abutilons in the planted barrels here was particularly effective. Where appropriately placed the floral displays, such as the Bloom Beacon, made a good statement.
- The quality of the grass verges, open spaces and village green together with the tree cover were of high quality.
- At Crispin Court the introduction of sustainable planting has made a positive effect.

Areas for development

- At Rectory Row and Vicar’s Dash when the opportunity occurs to insert further perennials or shrubs appropriate to the location and growing space available. The agricultural implements could be enhanced by the growing of vegetables or crops as an alternative to flowers. While we appreciate why the pig feeder has been grouped with agricultural implements, the nature of the planting does not seem to fit and would be better located elsewhere in the town.
- Despite establishment problems of the wildflower meadow at Wykes Close the group has persisted which is to be applauded, but should give consideration to methods of control of invasive grasses.
- It is with regret that contractors working on behalf of Durham Council had misapplied herbicide around tree bases and seating bench at the Turnpike.
- It was considered that some plantings had become very busy and would be more appropriate if the annual plants were omitted, and that overall the group could strive for further sustainable planting.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- There was a commendable portrayal of the heritage of the town through the use of agricultural machinery and implements, with statuary features both modern and traditional placed in the landscape. New plaques had recently been installed as part of the good heritage trail and finger posts and information boards were attractively presented.
- A spotlessly clean entry, evidently as a result of the successful efforts of the Clean and Green team and the ‘Pride in Your Premises’ campaign.
- The group is to be congratulated on a factual innovative and humorous presentation delivered by Norma at the commencement of the tour.
- There is an evident ethos of recycling in the town on a theme of repair and reuse, including stones from the cemetery! New compost bins have been installed for the composting of green material.

Areas for development

- An opportunity to convey the scale of conservation and biodiversity practised was missed, as while Hardwick Park contains significant areas of wildlife value unfortunately – despite a brief visit to the park – the conservation element was not shown and only partly described to the judges.
- The judges were encouraged to note that the cobbles at the village green, made reference to on a previous judging visit, were to be re-laid imminently.
- Opportunity could be given for the harvesting rainwater through water butts placed in the vicinity of some of the feature displays.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- While there already exists a relationship between the Bloom group, the town council and Durham Council, with the withdrawal of certain services there needs to be dialogue between

all parties to develop a forward strategy and allocation of responsibility to ensure that resources are used efficiently, and to the maximum benefit of the community.

- A wide range of activities and social events take place in the town fostering community cohesion and resulting also in a successful fundraising campaign.
- A comprehensive calendar of activities was presented in the portfolio, evidencing that this really was an year-round campaign.
- The tributes paid to the centenary of the outbreak of First World War were portrayed in a fitting and sensitive manner.

Areas for development

- Given the evident involvement of children in various projects around the town, especially the Incredible Edible initiative, it would have pleasing if the judges could have met some of those involved to learn first-hand about their activities.
- It is understood that the group is striving to encourage younger persons into the Bloom group and they are wished well with their efforts.

Shevington & District, North West Town – Gold & Joint Category Winner

The tour of your town was a joyful experience throughout, and the obvious pleasure that all the volunteers – and residents – we met during the visit was heartfelt. Not only is it clear that Shevington in Bloom is transforming spaces, but also that it is enhancing lives of the people who live in your community. Your partnership working with local authorities, and engagement with visitors and voluntary organisations is exemplary. Congratulations on what you have already achieved, and we are sure that further action will continue into the future.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The impact of the Memorial Garden in Shevington Park is outstanding, being clean, fresh, full of excellent horticulture, and having within it the splendid new Sensory Garden developed in conjunction with a school and a local blind person.
- The consistently excellent standard of horticulture seen throughout the tour, including a high level of attention to fine detail, was remarkable.
- The imaginative use of containers seen – including the ‘woven baskets’ and Queen’s Baton, both made by a local blacksmith – was striking; all were full of plants in perfect condition. Senecio cineraria ‘Silver Dust’ in the Baton was particularly notable, and the floral towers were the fullest that the judges have seen for some years.
- It is clear that commercial support is considered by the business sector to be at its most valued when applied where it is most relevant, rather than immediately located by the business itself – exhibiting true support for the whole community.
- The standards of green-space management show very high levels of commitment and practice to Shevington in Bloom by both the Parish and Borough councils alike.

Areas for development

- Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of annual bedding at the base of semi-mature trees.
- Whilst the use of wildflower mixes is commendable, it would perhaps be more appropriate to use direct-sown annual mixes to give both greater and longer impact.
- Tree damage caused by poor mowing and strimming was evident, particularly in the green space at the corner of Randall Avenue. You should also try to discourage car parking on verges by Shevington Park.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The provision and maintenance of street furniture was some of the best that we have seen; the judges were especially pleased by the way in which a coat of matt black paint has transformed old concrete planters into suitable modern containers; seats have been refurbished rather than discarded; provision at seating of an adjacent dry space for a pushchair or wheelchair was most commendable and also very unusual to see.
- The judges were also impressed by your consistent reuse and replanting of 'old' plant material to minimise costs and resource demands.
- The effective, cost-efficient new landscaping at the Parish Council car park, with the use of slabs between grasses and fragrant herbs, solved a major area of heavy foot traffic damage, showing a thought process that is refreshing.
- The widespread interpretative panels, including QR codes, demonstrate the community's pride in its history and heritage, and their strong desire to communicate it to others.

Areas for development

- Your portfolio and introductory presentation shows that you have important and diverse natural heritage within your boundaries, including a SSSI at Houghton Lane. The judges also noted that you have been planting widely to increase pollinators, and adding habitats (bird and insect) at appropriate places. We do, however, recommend that a natural site should always be included on the judging route.
- A very clean judging route shows that your local campaigns to maintain environmental standards are succeeding; nonetheless the judges do recommend a continued focus on this as there were minor examples of both graffiti and litter seen on the route.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There is little doubt that the leadership of the Bloom group has a determination to succeed and this is evident throughout the town. This infectious enthusiasm was commented on by council officers and elected members and was cited as playing an important part in community life; we also noted that the volunteer team members were enthused by the same leadership qualities observed.
- You have a visionary, intuitive and diverse approach to communicating your 'Bloom Community' message across groups and age-ranges with which you engage, achieving support at levels rarely seen by the judges.

Areas for development

- You have progressed to the standards seen at an outstanding rate; we would now recommend that you take stock of where you are and consider further developments – for example, new work at Gathurst Station – very carefully before proceeding to prevent dilution of your current achievements. New plans should ensure that you are able to sustain the required levels of commitment and enthusiasm of your willing volunteer team.

Shrewsbury, Heart of England Champion of Champions – Gold & Category Winner

This attractive historical town known locally and appropriately as the 'Town of Flowers' nestles in a gentle sweep of the River Severn. Home to the modern grandfather of popular gardening Percy Thrower, the town's horticultural roots are not forgotten and it still hosts an important horticultural show in the annual calendar. The quality and importance of horticulture are witnessed in many ways,

through the floral displays throughout the town, though the establishment of an important and influential horticultural society, to major investment in training and in its nursery facilities, to the splendid displays of the Dingle. The effects make for a quality environment for residents, businesses and visitors to the town.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- An exceptionally high standard of display and cultivation was present throughout the town displays, the castle and library grounds, and in the renowned Dingle which reflected the expertise and high-level horticultural practice of the gardening staff. All plants were grown at the new nursery site in which the council has invested financially to ensure the continued high standards are met. In the town centre the selection of plant colours in the hanging baskets and containers was appropriately chosen to match the architecture and materials of the historic buildings. Encouraged by the 'Team Shrewsbury' campaign, businesses, cafes, and eating establishments all seemed to participate in the floral displays greatly adding to the welcoming appearance of the town.
- The extensive grounds and sports pitches of Shrewsbury School were maintained to a very high standard. The estate operates a green-waste composter.
- The sheltered housing accommodation of Edgefield Green owed its success to the Gardening Club, which fostered a community spirit to brighten the estate with floral display. The themed display in the communal garden to commemorate the outbreak of First World War was skilfully presented.

Areas for development

- The out-of-town industrial park (although widely landscaped) would benefit from improvement through a programme of weeding.
- Consider not using annual bedding on roundabouts where perennial displays are already present. It would be helpful to see some form of development plan for the green space and tree management.
- Some of the cannas used as dot plants in containers were underperforming and it is suggested that an alternative choice of plants such as perilla may make a suitable replacement.
- While the judges were shown some excellent examples of community gardens, a greater representation from individual residential premises would have been helpful.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The outstanding work on wildlife management by the volunteers of the first-class Bowbrook Allotment Community Site, which included the creation of themed wildlife gardens for the education of children and a series of nature trails. The volunteers have developed a close relationship with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and have visitors from far and wide to visit and view their achievements.
- The street theatre was a hugely entertaining and accessible way of portraying local history and heritage to the public and visitors to the town, one subject being former resident of the town, Charles Darwin. One hopes that Percy Thrower can be included in the repertoire. The new town museum is an excellent resource that was well used on the day of the visit, and has successfully showcased the skilful restoration of the music hall. A 'Blooming good walk', 'Where to find Spring Flowers in Shrewsbury' and the 'Pocket Parks of Shrewsbury' were indicative of the numerous leaflets and trails which have been produced to guide visitors around the town.
- The newly transferred countryside service will no doubt develop in a way that will enable the judges to understand in more detail the conservation policy and practice of the town council.

- The significantly important Flax Mill Maltings as the first iron-framed buildings in the world.
- An intense regime of street litter collection and maintenance of street furniture was paying dividends given the presentation of the town. The arrangement with Ringway was evidently effective.

Areas for development

- Only a short space of time was allocated for the judges to meet with the Countryside officer and it was appreciated that the individual had recently changed roles. However, it was felt that this was one area where more information could have been shared with the judges about the management and adoption of conservation practice and habitat management in the town.
- While Shrewsbury has an excellent rate of recycling, it was not immediately clear what policy Bloom has in respect of the use of materials and natural resources.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The Bowbrook Allotment Community (BAC) site was a real gem and an exemplar of community education projects. As well as accommodating some 85 organic allotment plots, an impressive number of nature trails and individual gardens had been created to educate young people about native plants, conservation and edible growing. The group has been particularly successful in fundraising and have produced an excellent mission statement. The BAC volunteers who have contributed 2,000 hours should be congratulated for their efforts.
- The judges were shown some good community projects during the course of the tour; the scheme at Severn Hospice to open allotments to the community in return for 25% of the produce was novel.
- A successful programme of fundraising included strong commitment from the business community, and roundabout sponsorship was particularly successful.

Areas for development

- Opportunities exist with the proposed significant development of new housing and the new university to include quality landscaping and horticultural features within the schemes. One hopes also that opportunity is made of the Shrewsbury Business Improvement District to further engender partnership working.
- Given the excellent partnership that has been created between the town council, the Bloom group, and local schools, it was perhaps disappointing that the judges met with no young people during the tour to learn at first-hand about the activities and projects in which they had been involved.

Sidmouth, South West Coastal Over 12k – Silver Gilt

A first visit for us to judge this attractive seaside town. The efforts made to introduce colour and a variety of different subjects are to be applauded and these are welcoming for everyone. The Folk Festival gave another dimension, and added to the enthusiasm of all the volunteers in your group. Thank you for your hospitality. We left with fond memories.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There were many colourful displays throughout, with a wide range of plants used, with specific themes. Baskets and troughs and other floral containers were generally of a high standard. It

was good to see the use of floral artefacts in many areas, which told stories and related to the local scene.

- Horticultural practice was of a good standard generally, but particularly as practised by the two main hotels visited with their colourful and varied bedding displays and baskets, plus other planted areas.
- Residential gardens, allotments and car parks were well represented, along with local pubs that appeared to be entering into the spirit of the campaign.
- It was pleasing to see so many business areas and premises partaking. It was obvious that your group had persuaded many to take part in floral decoration.
- The judges applauded the information given on spring planting of bulbs; it was also helpful to visit the allotments as part of the tour.
- Connaught Gardens gave mixed impressions, and we will comment further on this statement. The judges did admire the excellent association of coleus, lobelia and African marigolds in the long linear beds.
- The judges appreciated the difficulties encountered on the tour as a result of the Folk Festival. However, it did highlight how important the green spaces were for public use and enjoyment.
- The judges were impressed by the number of volunteers actively taking responsibility for areas within the town, particularly the area in front of the toilet block.

Areas for development

- The judges liked the various floral artefacts used in the campaign, but felt that the floral fish would have been more appropriately located, perhaps nearer the sea on the esplanade.
- The border adjacent to the Croquet Lawn needed some old shrubs removing, and new subjects planted. More thought needs to be given to selection. The judges did however note from the 'Before and After' photographs what had been achieved. The tamarisk pruning needs to be carefully undertaken.
- The judges had differing opinions of Connaught Gardens, which could be the jewel in the crown with its amazing views. Planting was very mixed, and we considered the wildflowers would have been better elsewhere. The school beds need better definition and illustration. This is an item we may wish to expand on at the surgery.
- The town centre gardens were good and well used. Anne's Garden was a unique feature and well placed. However, the Owl and the Pussy Cat needed better depiction to explain its relevance.
- The Health Centre bed needs the strip of grass removing, and some new plant material to give greater effect. A tree planted at the side of the building had a beautiful, expensive plaque with the name on who planted it, but not the name of the tree – a lovely Judas tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*) unusual and worth naming.
- While the judges saw many attractive gardens we also noted a number of untidy ones in Winslade Road, which might have been better avoided on the tour.
- The sustainable beds at the Woodbrush Road junction needed attention; the more informal shapes of the other two would have given more effect.
- The standard of floral baskets and containers was mixed in some areas, particularly pubs, and the Yacht Club. However, floral effects in the York Street area were superb.
- The East Street bed which the Society had adopted was innovative, but lacked impact. The judges suggest it needs reassessing.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Pride of place was well covered. You appeared to be managing this aspect well.

- Your local environmental quality was good particularly the use of the Big Belly, barbecue and recycling bins. Considering the amount of people, areas were remarkably clear of litter. No dog fouling was seen, or graffiti.
- Local heritage was evident throughout, but more could have been done to sell this important element. The Jurassic Coast Interpretation Centre was a great addition to the town.
- The biodiversity project on the beach was a great initiative, and so was the concept of the Sidcomers.

Areas for development

- Wildflower planting seen was good but thought needs to be given to extension in appropriate areas.
- There was a considerable amount of detritus around the recycling area.
- While your conservation elements were demonstrated the judges did feel attention needed to be given to the Golden Meadow planting.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Your itinerary covered all aspects very well; perhaps it needs to be a little less intense, with less travelling in parts and less repetition in others. It might have been helpful to have had an accompanying person to help with timekeeping, and keep us within bounds.
- You demonstrated well your commitment for the future, and also the match funding which gave you financial security.
- Good to have a press call at the end, and it gives your campaign and our visit a boost. It was also good to meet the group informally over a buffet lunch.
- Excellent taxi driver: steady and well informed on the route.

Areas for development

- The judges didn't visit a school or have much contact or information on youth groups. We recognise the holidays present problems, but this would have been helpful.
- Future venues for presentation need to be cooler and less crowded. It is also difficult to assimilate all those present, and it might have been better to meet some on the tour, perhaps at an interim break in the proceedings.
- The portfolio was very informative, but perhaps needed more illustration and less word content to aid better understanding.

Sunderland, Northumbria Large City – Gold & Category Winner

Sunderland is a city in transformation. Well-known for its heavy industry of coal mining, shipbuilding and glass making, the city has diversified in the recent years and developed new industries. The local authority is at the forefront at this development, creating new features and landscapes as well as maintaining well-loved parks and open spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. The tour was well planned and showed the judges highlights of Richard Avenue School, Bishopwearmouth Nursery, Mowbray and Barnes parks and several new landscaping schemes. Although local authorities are undergoing financial restrictions, Sunderland is looking for ways to still provide quality parks and open spaces and should be congratulated on a well-deserved result.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The judges were impressed by the high quality of the floral displays in the parks and open spaces, particularly in Barnes Park and Mowbray Park. They liked the Poppy Beds in this commemorative year.
- The change in planting style in permanent landscaping on St Mary's Boulevard and the plans for the associated square and other areas around the city by the in-house architecture team are proving innovative and striking. It does to show how perennial planting can be used to create 'wows'. There are some great planting associations and those involved should be congratulated.
- The design and planting of the Sunnside Gardens provides a useful space for city workers.
- The judges appreciate the commitment by the local authority to investing in apprenticeships and transferring horticultural skills. Also the support at Bishopwearmouth Nursery, an excellent project with variety of skills to be learnt and can only go from strength to strength with the amount of corporate events and publicity they are now receiving.
- Richard Avenue Primary School proved to be an excellent grounding for the young people using the grounds to explain recycling, conservation, growing your own and pollination. It has rightly won awards of its own and will continue to educate the next generation. The judges appreciated the children showing them round the school and giving up their time for the judging.
- There was a good selection of quality residential gardens on the route and the Primrose Allotments was a showcase for quality fruit and vegetables suitably rewarded by the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood certificate.
- The judges recognise the contribution of the local businesses through the Business Improvement District team and the landscaping around the University, including the carpet bedding. Doxford Business Park was well maintained and the displays on the Roker Hotel were excellent.

Areas for development

- Consider changing some of the flowerbeds in Barley Mow Park to sustainable perennial planting which will still give colour and texture.
- Maybe the plant choice in the baskets could be reconsidered and more trailing plants included in the mix. Perhaps moving some of the positions of the baskets and putting two layers of baskets on the same lamp post to create more impact.
- The judges recognise the opportunities for redevelopment at the Sensory Garden in Barley Mow Park and are looking forward to seeing this project develop further for 2015. It would be good to see the roses relocated and more appropriate planting for the blind group.
- The newly landscaped areas in Barnes Park would benefit from some replanting in the gaps. It has had a great deal of investment and is a fantastic park but needs some extra time and investment to aid the establish of the planting. Consider using a mulch to help and working with the Friends group. It was quite weedy around one piece of sculpture.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The quality of Herrington Country Park was fantastic. The judges thought the differential mowing to create other wildlife habitats was excellent, and liked the unusual benches that fitted into the park well, the sculpture, the creation of different habitats and the overall quality.
- The judges were impressed by all the recycling and composting at Richard Avenue Primary School, along with the solar panels and wind turbine. The wildlife garden with bug hotel and bird boxes was a useful addition.
- The judges recognise the quality of the chainsaw sculptures at Thompson Park and the way the local scenes had been included in the design. Sculpture was seen throughout the tour and is obviously very important to your city. It was great to see the investment you have made.

- Primrose allotments was an excellent site and an ideas factory for recycling. The judges were impressed with the inventiveness shown and the inclusion of helping other allotment holders.

Areas for development

- Consider producing a tree leaflet or more information on a website about the trees at Backhouse Park. There are some fantastic specimens and it would be great to share the information. It may be something that a Friends group would like to take forward with your support.
- Consider raising the profile of the heritage element by creating trails round the city making them available on websites and possibly using QR codes so the public can download them straight away.
- The judges would have liked to see a copy of the heritage leaflet. We were given a very comprehensive presentation and tour. Consider inviting your recycling officer to be present on judging day, this will enable the judges to obtain a greater understanding of both the local authority and community initiatives.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges recognise the commitment of the local authority towards the Bloom campaign, the local shows, the community projects within the city and the school visits to the nursery. It is fantastic to see your commitment and the achievements you have made.
- The new sustainable planting schemes offer further opportunities in subsequent years to lift and divide species that can be used in other schemes. This not only creates great schemes initially but enables further enhancements elsewhere in the future.
- The judges were impressed at your publicity for RHS Britain in Bloom's 50th anniversary through specially designed banners and posters. They were seen throughout the tour and ensured visitors and residents were aware of your success.

Areas for development

- It might have been useful to add some images to the presentation and give an overview of the city, its heritage and industry.
- It was fantastic to meet so many groups. It is important to the judges if they are meeting people to have time to talk to them. At times we felt a little rushed.

Tamworth, Heart of England Small City – Silver Gilt

As a first-time entry, Tamworth has delivered a very creditable effort. The resources available for floral decoration were very well managed, highlighting several key locations. The castle grounds were planted in a traditional style using red, white and blue colours that are not always easy to work with. This very special year has been celebrated in many ways but the refurbished war memorial was a poignant reminder of those lost.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Overall the castle grounds were well maintained and enjoyed by a huge number of people.
- The two flower roundabouts were very effective as were the barrier baskets placed along the bridges.
- The judges appreciated the Alms Homes and Bright Crescent areas as two very nice places in which to live.

- The view from the top of the castle gave us a good understanding of the open space and tree cover of Tamworth

Areas for development

- Venture Business Centre was very tidy but we felt that the shrub pruning was rather severe. The 3-D plantings were proving to be very difficult to maintain. As this type of work is of great interest to the public consider the planting and watering carefully in future years.
- For future tours try to avoid repeating driving along the same roads as we felt valuable time was lost.
- The judges would have liked to have observed the floral roundabouts at close quarters in order to have had a better appreciation of the plant quality.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The Queen's Award volunteers were outstanding when telling the story of local heritage of a time gone by.
- The ongoing work being carried out at Armington Green conservation area will provide the areas with a wonderful resource.
- The judges were most impressed by the campaign to eliminate dog fouling.
- The street furniture was in very good condition.
- The painting programme involving community payback is working very well.

Areas for development

- The judges would have like a little more information on resource management, however the water extraction permit is a real problem solver.
- For future tours ensure that the roads and paths just off the main route are of the same clean standard.
- Clearly the geese in the castle grounds (especially by the river) are causing a problem. Some form of low fencing may help to solve the problem.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The judges were left in little doubt of the determination to develop your campaign further. Sponsorship in both cash and in kind is a real strength.
- The press coverage both past and present was evidence of the support that you have from within your town.
- The publicity material provided was most impressive.
- Having additional copies of the portfolio for use in further promotion should be most productive.

Areas for development

- Maybe it would have been better to meet your various groups at the end rather than in the middle of the tour as this tends to break the flow.
- It was such a pity that representatives from Rowlett Academy were not able to attend and deliver their story.
- The judges would have liked more information regarding the horticultural work of volunteers.
- The judges were made aware of bulb planting but information regarding other types of planting would have been most useful.

Tenby, Wales

Coastal Up to 12k – Silver Gilt

It is clear that this entry revolves around the demands of tourism. Hanging baskets were seen in abundance. The judges were very impressed with the new system of cemetery maintenance and the presentation by Geraint Jones was very good. Even in these difficult financial times we were left in no doubt that further upgrading in designated areas will continue. There is a huge sense of pride in living in Tenby, which is galvanized by Jane Lane, the current mayor.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- All 14 public houses provide floral displays in the form of baskets and containers.
- Guest house displays are also widespread and this captures the seaside holiday feeling that is so important to Tenby.
- Bedding displays and containers are situated at appropriate locations and create a ribbon of colour around the town.
- The new flowerbeds built into the very steep cliff face are a very popular location.

Areas for development

- The judges considered that almost all of the wildflower meadow locations provided high impact. However, in some locations the NPK rating may have been a little high. Once this is resolved even better results will be achieved.
- The garden area at Bridge Street is under huge pressure from pigeons – as well as causing plant damage there may also be environmental issues. Careful consideration should be given to finding a way forward, maybe the use of grass and agapanthus may solve the problem while also providing movement in this windy location.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The new sympathetic maintenance regime at Tenby St Mary's old cemetery will provide a wonderful habitat for wildlife, already 109 different species have been recorded.
- Street cleaning was of a high standard and the introduction of gull-proof bags should be of great value in reducing the food supply for these problematic birds.
- The re-installed Dyster memorial drinking fountain was most appropriate.

Areas for development

- On previous tours the judges were informed about the heritage of Tenby, so consider reintroducing this element as it was most interesting.
- With so many visitors to Tenby good street furniture is essential. The newly introduced benches are very good and a model for the future.
- There was some fly-posting noticed on the day which was possibly the work of an opportunist the day before our visit.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There is little doubt of the strength of the campaign; the judges were impressed by the way funding is obtained for projects in these very challenging times.
- Business support is growing and feel sure that this will be the basis for future improvements.
- This entry is very skilled at obtaining press coverage, and these contacts are invaluable.

Areas for development

- The judges feel that there is an opportunity to introduce RHS It's Your Neighbourhood – St Augustin's place is ideal for this level of involvement. This could reduce the workload of tour committee while broadening the base of your campaign.
- The community are so important and we feel that there are local areas that could be managed by others – Gilroy Phillips Gardens being a good example.
- It would have been nice to have met your volunteers at the presentation or at the end of the tour.

Thornbury, South West Town – Silver Gilt

This busy town is greatly enhanced by the levels of community effort engendered through its long-established Bloom campaign. The tour ended at the Chantry Community Centre, where several dozen of the members of the Bloom and its associate groups were present to celebrate their work in the past year. It is clear that Thornbury in Bloom is moving with the times, working well with the local authorities that are involved and having increasing roles in taking the lead in some of the relevant activities.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- Floral features abound, particularly in the combination of residential and shop/pub frontages and sponsored baskets along High and Castle Streets.
- Groves End roundabout was dramatically colourful and well considered for a very prominent point; also very effective was the permanent planting at the Castle feature at Groves End road.
- The community garden was lovely, being well-planted and maintained by a dedicated team. The judges also appreciated the sustainable and temporary mixed planting at Rock Street Gardens. Daggs Allotments, run by the Thornbury Allotment Association, was productive and attractive. The Prayer Garden at the Catholic Church was perfectly designed for its reflective purpose, with subdued colour schemes and plants with biblical associations.
- The Anchor Inn and the Knot of Rope were two of the pubs with notably attractive gardens or displays.

Areas for development

- The lack of green spaces seen on the tour is something that should be addressed on future route planning, as it was almost completely absent from today. Your portfolio highlights the presence of important open spaces and we do hope that these become one of the features to be viewed in future.
- An expansion of the business section of the tour would be desirable, taking in more than just the pubs and retail frontages on the High Street.
- The tour passed some untidy residential frontages on Streamleaze Court and Midland Way, and we would encourage you to engage with these communities to take greater care of the visible areas.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Wildflowers on the verges in Groves End Road are being encouraged by appropriate mowing; we also noted a number of bug hotels and bird boxes present in the Community Garden

amongst other places. There are some lovely examples of mature trees and treescape in the town that also highlight the biodiversity that is present.

- Resource management, in terms of composting at the Community Compost site and rainwater harvesting at the allotments, New Sibland School and the Community Garden are all excellent; the judges also were most impressed by the unusual wood salvage activity taking place at the composting site.
- Your heritage was demonstrated in the use of the salmon putcher baskets, potato ploughs, cider press, the pump and the castle features.
- The tour was clean throughout, with no litter, dog fouling or fly-posting.
- Art in the landscape was evident in the Community Garden, with attractive gates, mosaic and mural.

Areas for development

- Natural conservation was indicated as being important within your portfolio, but was then ignored on the tour itself; in particular the large and significant Filnore Woods should, if possible, be included within the route.
- The floral impact of around 200 hanging containers and additional floral containers is high, but you appear not to be considering the environmental impact of the use of peat-based compost in them; please look into low-peat or peat-free alternatives to reduce this in future.
- Try to enhance the appearance of more of the high-visibility areas, e.g. the roundabouts, with more prominent art in the landscape features. This would be a good use of some or all of the sweet chestnut soon to be felled.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Phenomenal levels of fundraising are taking place, and the money raised is being used very carefully and appropriately to enhance the town.
- There is very strong evidence of community support and of excellent joined-up work between the various tiers of local authority and the Bloom group.
- The link with the final-year IT students at UWE to develop and enhance your presence in social media is very creditable.

Areas for development

- The Tree Strategy Group is extremely important to the green future of the town, but at the moment is lacking a clear plan for where and what it intends to do next with the considerable funds and goodwill raised.
- A list of objectives to maintain group focus for the future would benefit all aspects of Thornbury in Bloom.

Town Close Ward (Norwich), Anglia Urban Community – Silver Gilt

Town Close Ward has a distinct, welcoming community feel and our tour was well organised by committed volunteers with the judges meeting many others just as committed as we went. With many highlights, of particular note were the grounds of Marsh PLC, residential areas, Town Close School and the work at City College. The community are actively involved with lots to do all the year round making your campaign a focus to bring people together. This is well funded and supported and we have seen the great difference you are all making.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The grounds at Marsh PLC were well designed and maintained creating a park-like environment for employees and visitors and demonstrating community care.
- The judges saw a great range of residential gardens with high quality demonstrated particularly at The Cedars and Melbourne Cottages; what lovely places to live.
- It was very encouraging to see your use of wildlife-friendly seed mixes on verges and the roundabout – both colourful and sustainable.
- The judges were impressed with the involvement of the students at City College growing so many plants, including a good range of perennials used around our route.
- You have a wonderful resource in your treescape that is being well managed.

Areas for development

- Try to pay close attention to the detail in your choice of plants to ensure you get the right plant in the right place, be bold and remove and replace where appropriate.
- Careful maintenance and watering will improve both the quality and impact of your floral displays.
- Mulch your recently planted beds to reduce watering requirements and weeding and thus improve quality.
- The judges were pleased to hear about the plans for Jenny Lind Park and feel that as these develop it will create a real focal point for your route and campaign, look to combine floral displays with permanent planting to gain maximum effect.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The route was extremely clean throughout and the move by Norwich City Council to ‘area-based’ management is paying dividends in this area.
- Town Close School is a fantastic environment for children to develop a love for nature with many good examples of conservation and biodiversity from habitats to standing deadwood, a green roof and composting.
- Overall the route demonstrated many examples of good resource management and sustainability such as composting, water harvesting and encouraging habitats.

Areas for development

- The potential with the Lakenham Project was great to see. However, to realise its real potential you will need to control invasive species such as bindweed, completely understand what is on site and develop appropriate management regimes.
- Try to develop more interpretation and a heritage tour to celebrate your history.
- The judges appreciate you have a lot of projects and hope that you will incorporate good signage and interpretation as they develop. Encourage also lower cost art features like the ‘butterfly’ we saw at City College; it was lovely.
- Ensure that judges are fully aware of your street furniture maintenance programmes and that these are effectively implemented in public spaces.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- There is an impressive number of groups involved and well co-ordinated in your campaign.
- The judges noted your innovative approach to improving the environment and engaging the community with the ‘Our Neighbourhood Agreement’.
- You have a very strong level and range of support from several sources giving you a sustainable campaign and we are confident you will continue to make a real difference.

- You provided us with lots of information about year-round activities and how you engage all parts of the community.

Areas for development

- In any campaign there is always more that can be done. However, you have achieved a gold standard in this section and our only suggestions are that you continue to do the fantastic work with your community and try to develop Twitter and/or Facebook as this is a great way to engage with younger potential supporters and volunteers.

Tresco, South West Small Village – Gold

The internationally renowned island of Tresco (in Cornish Enys Skaw, meaning island of elder trees) is a horticultural gem set within the Isles of Scilly archipelago. After only a short period it has graduated from the regional to the national Bloom campaign, but despite this has been able to demonstrate so much that is both integral to their own principles as well as to those of Britain in Bloom. A wonderful, relaxed and informal island tour, ending at the unique Abbey Gardens, showed the community at its best.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The ethos and styling of the Abbey Gardens has been transferred seamlessly into the other commercial and residential areas of the island community, in particular the redevelopment of the site of the old hotel complex, where the newly landscaped grounds and communal gardens at Old Grimsby are spectacular.
- The internationally renowned, curated Abbey Gardens are a spectacular example of Mediterranean-style gardening at its very best, representing plants from different world zones in a naturalistic (rather than contrived) setting.
- There are attractive domestic gardens in view as one tours the roads and byways of the island.
- The island is, in effect, a tourism business in its entirety, and all of the horticulture on view sustains that aspect of their work.
- Shelter-belt management and bracken control is integral to the success of green-space management on the island; despite the ravages of a severe winter these are being cared for very effectively, with continued replanting programmes under way.

Areas for development

- The horticulture on view is quite exceptional, but for the majority of visitors its educational value will be reduced by the absence of adequate labelling; we would recommend that efforts are made to improve this situation by the expansion of the limited information currently present.
- The staff accommodation area at Old Grimsby could be better presented to passers-by, given that it is still a visible part of the island scene.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The red squirrel translocation programme has been a resounding success since its introduction less than two years ago, proving popular with residents and visitors alike. This is one of many spectacular natural aspects to the wildlife management practised on the island, where the Swarovski bird hide by the lake is also a notable feature.

- Resource management at Tresco is a model of sustainability that is being taken up by the other islands; all waste is sorted, glass waste is crushed and incorporated into concrete where required, no wood is wasted (some being used for coastal erosion control at Old Grimsby, and also when planked up used as cladding for new-build properties at various sites), minimal watering takes place through sensitive and appropriate plant selection.
- Pride of place is evident in every islander that is met, from those tending their own gardens to the boatmen, drivers and pilots that operate the island transport systems.
- No adverse impacts on the environment were seen anywhere on the tour, even though visitor numbers were high at this main holiday season.
- The interpretation centre at the Abbey Gardens is exemplary, giving details of history, geography, geology and botany in a colourful and accessible manner.

Areas for development

- Visitors arriving at Carn Near would benefit from some interpretation about the island, and also perhaps some shelter whilst waiting to depart if the weather is inclement.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- It is clear that everyone who works and lives at Tresco appreciates the value of the garden environment; this is also evident in the school and the exchange visits that students make to and from the garden.
- The Dorrien-Smith family have continued to support the extensive public access to both the gardens and the island, and all evidence suggests that a sustainable model for this to continue is in place.

Areas for development

- An excellent tour of the island was presented to the judges by Mike Nelhams, local councillor and Curator of the Abbey Gardens. It would in future be most beneficial if others could also contribute to the tour, for example by a visit to the island school to meet young people or staff, a member of the RSPB team about whom we heard or other appropriate people in addition to Mike.
- While it is clear that a community spirit abounds on the island, it would be very helpful if, in future, there is more evidence of the ethos of a Bloom campaign seen as part of the visit to Tresco.

Truro, South West Large Town – Gold & Category Winner

A very warm Cornish welcome was laid on and continued throughout the tour. The tour showed this county town off to great effect. The judges were shown beautiful vibrant floral features, well-maintained parks and a community spirit that was infectious. Truro should be proud of their entry that is clearly benefiting all those who live, work and visit this Cornish town.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There was an abundance of high-quality baskets throughout the centre of the town. These were themed and well maintained.

- The parks visited were both well used and maintained to very high standards. Victoria Park was the highlight where we were shown highly manicured beds and lawns; the treescape was also impressive with many specimen trees maintained by a small, dedicated team.
- The community garden at the library was a haven for wildlife with a mix of pollinator-friendly plants and vegetables was a highlight, not only for the maintenance but the enthusiasm of the volunteers who maintained it.
- The innovative bed by the Nursery, designed by Godfrey Mortimore, with slug-free lettuce carpet bedding celebrating 50 years of Britain in Bloom, was particularly enjoyed by the judges and the dance class students that helped plant and maintain it.

Areas for development

- Some of the hanging baskets although still providing an excellent display were not as good as the baskets with reservoirs, indicating there could be a watering and feeding issue that should be addressed.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The walk through Daubuz Moors showed sympatric management of this natural treasure. A peaceful area of Truro which is regularly used by walkers, schools and local children to great effect. It would benefit from a few more interpretive panels or leaflets to ensure visitors get to fully appreciate this natural site
- A lovely sunny day had brought many visitors to the town but there was no litter or graffiti on the tour. This is to the credit of the staff involved and the army of community volunteers who supplement the regular rounds.
- Recycling is improving and the introduction of the new 'gull-free' containers will improve this further over the next few years.
- There was good evidence of the heritage of the city from the magnificent cathedral to the history of Lemon Quay.

Areas for development

- There was evidence of some street furniture being painted and would recommend this programme should continue to cover all street furniture.
- There were a few incidents of graffiti on the tour which need to be dealt with.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The excellent DVD presentation was very effective to show year-round activities and the range of people involved in the campaign.
- The enthusiasm and importance of Bloom was evident in everyone we met on the tour. All sections of the community were involved and portrayed a true team spirit.
- The work of the Business Improvement District was impressive with many of the town centre shops involved in the floral window-dressing scheme.
- The Flower Show on the Quay was a delight with many Cornish horticultural establishments exhibiting alongside many Bloom groups and set the scene for the excellent community ethos that exists around horticulture.

Areas for development

- The entry into social media has only just started but is an area which needs to be developed.

Upper Hopton, Yorkshire Village – Silver Gilt

Upper Hopton is a semi-rural village nestling in the foothills of the Pennines with farming, wool and mining as its original main industries, but more recently greater diversity has been introduced into the village. The judges were greeted with a thorough presentation showing photos of the transformation of the village and a very well prepared, comprehensive tour of Upper Hopton continued. The judges were delighted to meet so many members of the community and to see the many community projects including the distinctive displays for the recent Tour de France. The team should be proud of the improvements they have made to the village. The community spirit is the key and it shines through. Keep up the great work.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The begonia baskets at Upper Hopton Club were a credit to the local resident who grew them. They certainly created a 'wow' as did his own hanging baskets on display at his home. The judges liked the wool liners.
- The judges saw a great balance of annual and sustainable planting. The choice of planting was very appropriate to the village and its setting. The judges particularly like the planting at Hopton Avenue, the new barrel planters and the spiral planting display.
- The planting around Croft House is very good. A good mix of season and sustainable, and some exciting combinations. The judges particularly liked the two spirals beds planted with a mix of sustainable and annual planting. These were extremely effective.
- The judges were taken to two very different but extremely striking private gardens. Both exhibit the highest levels of horticulture, plant quality and planting schemes.
- The new landlords at the Travellers Rest should be congratulated on what they have achieved in a small amount of time. The new planting will only go from strength to strength.

Areas for development

- The judges felt it was very appropriate to plant the red geraniums on the war graves. If funding allows perhaps these could be replaced with a red shrub rose in the autumn. The begonias along the path edge add a 'wow' as you enter and were well tended but some permanent planting to mark the path edge could be used to be more in keeping with the rest of the churchyard. Alternatively there are other permanent planted areas where it would be useful to do some further work.
- The judges saw some exceptional horticulture throughout the route but also saw some that wasn't as strong. Consider showing the judges the best, while ensuring that the judging criteria is covered.
- The rose bed outside Croft House could perhaps do with some replanting in places to create the 'wow' that the other planting in the area created.
- The judges appreciated the new tree planting but the species choice and planting distances will mean the trees will grow into one another. For subsequent planting consider either using species that won't grow as large or spacing the trees further apart.
- The recreation ground is a great resource and it is good to see the community enhancing the planting but the planting at the upper end seemed a little ad-hoc. Perhaps this shrubbery could be made a project for winter/spring of 2014/15. Identify the shrubs that are to be retained, consider moving some into a more suitable position and plan the plants needed to infill the gaps and provide ground cover.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The judges must congratulate you on the composting area. It is one of best they have seen and is in keeping to the area.
- The judges liked the heritage trail with the map and photographs at Croft House. The improvement work around Croft House including the fencing and surfacing creates better access for all the visitors.
- Towns, cities and villages across the UK marked this very special year, the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. The judges felt the displays, research and exhibition were absolutely remarkable. The exhibit was very personal to the village – and to individually research all the soldiers was a huge commitment in time and resources, for which the team should be congratulated. This has ensured that your heroes aren't forgotten and uncovered additional information about soldiers of whom you weren't aware. Visitors were able to learn not only about the soldiers, their families and where they lived, but also see artefacts, medals and examples of posters issued by the government. It was an excellent exhibition.
- The judges would like to congratulate the team on the village sign project. He judges appreciate just how much work will have gone into it but all that hard work has certainly paid off, and particularly like the use of traditional materials that complement the sign.

Areas for development

- The village was clean and tidy and a credit to everyone involved. The judges particularly liked the phone box and bus stop, and suggest an audit of the street furniture and programme of maintenance put in place.
- The judges liked the heritage trail with the map and photographs at Croft House. It would be lovely to see this developed further into a trail around the village for residents and visitors. It could possibly include some of the important information that was discovered as part of the First World War exhibit. Would there be an opportunity to further research the headstones in the Old Chapel graveyard?
- The judges realise the First World War exhibit was to mark the anniversary but it was so thorough and important that it would be nice that it could be retained for future generations, considered if it could be made into a booklet and further exhibited locally.
- The tour was very thorough and met all the judging criteria. The wildlife bed in the park was good; consider adding an interpretation board. The judges would like to have found out more about your conservation and diversity.
- The community mural at Upper Hopton Hall is fantastic, fun and factual! Perhaps the idea could be taken into some of the other public areas, for example the park, and involve schoolchildren?

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Croft House and Upper Hopton Club are two fantastic resources and cover so much of the judging criteria with horticultural displays, street furniture, reusing materials and minimising the use of natural resources. They are just two of the many projects the group has undertaken. Others include; the unique telephone box, new barrels, rose bed, First World War graves and tree planting. The judges appreciate how much work goes into each project and their success is a credit to you all.
- The photo competition is a fantastic idea and great to see the winners' photographs made into a calendar that is then used to raise valuable funds. The Garden Trail is also a very valuable fundraising opportunity and chance for the village come together and showcase the wonderful gardens.
- The judges were very impressed that the team had a Bloom tool shed. Everything was very well laid out and the judges particularly liked the whiteboard with a list of jobs to do, which means volunteers can turn up and know where to head.

- As a group you are extremely good at letting everyone know what you are doing and what is going on. The judges saw lots of examples of signage letting residents know you were in the UK finals, when the judging date was and your previous successes. The First World War exhibit and Bloom signage are another two very good examples. You used a mix of signage and styles; this can sometimes look disjointed but you had chosen well and the signs were eye-catching.
- It was good to see the support of the RHS campaigns: incredible edibles, sunflowers and pollinators.

Areas for development

- It was great to meet so many members of the community of differing ages. The judges realise it is the school holidays, but it would have been helpful to have met some young people. It may be useful to record their work throughout the year and show the judges this as part of the initial presentation.
- The judges acknowledge the idea of a community orchard and appreciate it is early days but look forward to seeing this project develop.
- Would the Hopton Club consider entering the RHS Its Your Neighbourhood competition through Yorkshire in Bloom?

Usk, Wales Large Village – Gold

Despite the rain, the friendly welcome and the floral impact in the centre of the village were a pleasure to see. It was a great way to start the tour from that central hub of the village. The tour was pleasurable and so diverse, with so many committed and dedicated people and children who were proud of the work they had done – but more particularly the pleasure it gave to visitors and residents alike.

It is clear that Usk is a self-motivated Bloom team led by Tony Kear that has done everything to meet the criteria of the RHS. The enthusiasm of its members is infectious and their commitment to detail, and dedication to support the campaign is clear for all to see. The confidence of children from the primary school and above all their understanding of the purpose of the competition with their ability to recognise plants and their uses was a credit to the whole school.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The allotments were the best seen on our tour this year.
- The impact of the colourful floral displays was evident from start to finish on the tour. The colour themes had been carefully considered and worked well.
- Good horticultural practice was apparent with new planting and the quality of plants sustained throughout the village.
- Community and residential gardens seen were very good, and the variation of horticultural work undertaken at the school was excellent. Marion's garden was superb.
- Business areas and premises had entered into the campaign spirit, and their displays complemented others. The Chip Shop was particularly noteworthy.
- Green spaces and verges were all maintained to a high standard.

Areas for development

- The judges did note an overhanging tree on the footpath, and a lodged branch in the birch tree by the Sessions House.
- Sustainable planting has increased, but you should give further consideration to more permanent planting in some areas, or associate more with floral displays.

- Provided more areas could be found more annual wildflower collections in strategic locations would be of benefit. A little more information on the churchyard conservation and its grass management policy could have been helpful.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Conservation and biodiversity was adequately covered with our visits, perhaps more interpretation of these areas would be helpful.
- Resource management and recycling was adequately covered.
- Local heritage appeared significant with the excellent Museum and Sessions House, your efforts to secure repairs to Priory Gate, and other buildings were most impressive.
- Local environmental quality was generally good, though we did encounter one example of dog fouling.
- Price of place was generally good, signage and street furniture were all of a good standard.

Areas for development

- The judges appreciated the wildflower collection in Jane's Meadow but it has little impact at this time of year. It may need the introduction of further appropriate species.
- A visit to the castle would have been helpful if time had allowed.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Adequate information was given on the ongoing development and sustainability of the campaign.
- There appeared to be excellent communication with various groups of all ages, particularly the new garden development and the sheltered housing.
- Your portfolio was one of the best received by us and timed appropriately at the half-way stage.
- Funding and support were well covered. Your auction is a gem, involving all to raise funds in the local pub.

Areas for development

- The itinerary was well structured, but may need a few tweaks to perhaps cover a few more items, although this is only a minor criticism.

Westminster, London City – Silver Gilt

In one of London's leading boroughs, the Westminster in Bloom team – led by a unique partnership between the Borough Council and the grounds maintenance contractor – is going from strength to strength. The sheer number of visitors to the many parks and open spaces is extremely challenging and yet staff on the ground endeavour to keep the area as clean as possible. The positive engagement with the community through a series of initiatives is starting to pay off and the pride of the staff can only be an example for others to follow.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The range and quality of the plant material used in the horticultural displays, both seasonal and sustainable, was exceptional, including choice of species and innovative plant combinations.
- The overall quality of the hanging baskets supplied by the council was of a very high standard throughout Westminster, as was the standard of floral enhancement on the many private businesses, shops, pubs, hotels and restaurants.
- The redevelopment of Ebury Square is a fine example of public/private investment in creating a new, highly desirable open space benefiting both residents and visitors.
- The overall variety and maintenance of the many street trees in often confined spaces was outstanding, with imaginative use of unusual cultivars adding interest and diversity. The use of water bags to help establish new planting was of particular note especially as the topping up of these was being adopted by the local residents.
- The experimental use of combined summer- and spring-flowering planting in Rembrandt Gardens to provide winter and summer colour with minimal replanting was innovative.
- The use of raised allotment beds by City West Homes is a great way of engaging with residents especially in areas of high-density housing.

Areas for development

- The programme of wholesale replacement shrub planting in the various squares and open spaces is a highly effective way of providing cost-effective refurbishment, continuation of this policy can only further enhance the entry.
- On future tours it would be useful to either visit a school or meet with younger members of the community to assess how they are being encouraged to become engaged in their environment.
- The reintroduction of the gardens competition would be a great way of encouraging the many private and commercial establishments. Could this be developed in partnership with City West Homes?
- As noted in previous reports, careful consideration should be given to reducing the tree cover at the herb garden at Embankment Gardens to increase light levels and develop better growing conditions.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The programme of de-cluttering the streetscene through refurbishment of selected streets is to be commended.
- The obvious and effective co-operation of the parks and cleansing staff employed by the contractor was a model way to run open space management.
- Considering the exceptionally high levels of foot traffic through the many open spaces, there was a very high standard of cleanliness, and this was further enhanced by the new surfacing seen at various sites.
- The maintenance of the street furniture in Embankment Gardens was exceptional.
- The use of onsite composting and the partnership working with the Royal Parks in providing surplus compost was a great way of getting organic matter back into the cultivated areas.

Areas for development

- It was generally felt that elements relating to local heritage of the area could have been explained more fully.
- A visit to St John's Wood may have contributed to the judges gaining a greater understanding of the efforts being made to encourage conservation and biodiversity.

- Although the maintenance of street furniture at Embankment Gardens was good, other areas were variable. Greater emphasis could be placed on this element in any new contract or service level agreement.
- There was a distinct difference in the level of littering and graffiti between the north of the Borough and the south, the latter being exceptional and the north seeing a higher level of abuse. Could this be addressed?

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The newly established North Bank Business Improvement District (BID) offers a great way of further engaging with the business community to improve the area, it was also good to see the use of staff from various businesses being involved in the maintenance of the squares and open spaces.
- The development of 'Friends of' groups is to be commended, it will also be very interesting to see how the new Community Council develops around the Queen's Park area.
- It was very notable just how much pride and ownership the contractor's staff had in looking after 'their' parks, very commendable.
- The effective partnership between the council and the community at Queen's Park, which has led to the successful funding of the new play equipment is the way forward in replacing worn out equipment and infrastructure.

Areas for development

- It will be interesting to see how the BID develops and how it can contribute to the wider aims of Westminster in Bloom.
- On future tours greater use could be made of the opportunity to engage with the media to help promote the good work being done, both by the council and the contractor.
- The initial presentation is a good way of showing the judges areas of work which will not be seen on the judging tour, greater use of this could be made to 'sell' Westminster as a year-round, inclusive entry.

Whitehead, Ulster Small Town – Silver Gilt

Dating back to the 1600s this small town in Carrickfergus grew around its port, but the coming of the railway shaped the community as it is today by allowing easy travel from Belfast – making the town into a seaside resort. There are excellent views over Belfast Lough and the Irish Sea. An evident community spirit has been fostered and is well supported by the strong relationship with and support from Carrickfergus Borough Council. There is a very strong emphasis on biodiversity, health and well-being, and the Brighter Whitehead Group works actively in fostering cohesion across all sections of the town.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The One World Garden, feature beds and borders adjacent the recreation ground were well presented and made an impact to all who entered the town.
- A representative selection of residential gardens was viewed across the tour. The work of the Windsor Residents Association should be especially highlighted for the community vegetable garden, which has been created in hostile conditions under the leadership of Anne, Sandi and Arthur.

- Almost all of the commercial premises viewed had made a contribution to the appearance of the town through their own individual floral displays.
- Members of the group are to be congratulated that they grow all their own plants, at the Whitehead Community nursery.

Areas for development

- It was noticeable that the public grass areas looked after by Ulster Garden Village had not been maintained to the same standard as elsewhere in the town.
- Some of the hanging baskets on display had not reached their full potential of growth; the mangers in particular need further fostering.
- The group has a large area to cover and it is recommended that efforts are concentrated in key areas of focus, only expanding outwards as resources allow. Consider the allocation of certain beds and areas to individuals. It is suggested for instance that a team is dedicated to all of the plantings at the railway station. It is suggested that the potted fruit bushes seen at various locations during the tour would be better off in the ground.
- Given the educational element of the One World Garden in that plants were set out according to country of origin, it is suggested that visitors to the garden would appreciate knowing also the names of the plants. Consider the introduction of plant labelling.
- Perennial plantings would be better suited to the gravel surrounds of the boat and railway features in place of the containers which would be more appropriate hung up.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- The wildflower meadow at Beach Road Nature Reserve was still looking colourful despite recent wet weather. The judges learned first-hand from local residents how welcome this planting had been and of the benefit to insects.
- A very strong emphasis on biodiversity and wildlife. The 63-acre Diamond Jubilee Wood and community garden were important resources for wildlife and education. The evident success of the Biodiversity Summer School which, even in very unpleasant weather, brought out a number of enthusiastic children accompanied by their parents and guardians and was appreciated by the judges. Conservation volunteers played an active throughout the year with their comprehensive programmes of activity.
- The notice boards at Beach Road sanctuary and car park showing the history of the town with black and white photographs were highly informative. This location formed part of the Health and Well-being walk of the town.
- A strong emphasis on sustainable practice, including the adoption of peat-free growing media and waste minimisation. The fact that peat has not been used since 2000 is a credit to all involved. An impressive tree-planting programme.
- The environmental work of the Whitehead Wobbles!

Areas for development

- Some graffiti was noted on the play equipment at the Windsor open space and there was some untidiness nearby in Windsor Mews in the form of dead pavement weeds following herbicide application. Beach Road Nature Reserve was suffering from a localised presence of Japanese knotweed and mare's tail.
- The paths adjacent the recreation area would benefit from edging and weeding. There was weed present in a number of areas of hard landscaping.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- The success of the Whitehead Regeneration Group in partnership with Carrickfergus Borough Council and in securing funding for a number of projects throughout the town.
- An excellent village 10-year Masterplan has been produced, proving a vision and direction for the way ahead and is already paying dividends evidenced by support gained from numerous grant-funding bodies.
- The importance placed on health and well-being in much of the planned activity and guided walks across the town. A wide range of projects undertaken by children across the town including the School's Growing Clubs.
- An impressive range of grant-funding projects such as the 'Edible Landscape' project and the benefiting from the government's 'Turning Plastic Bags into Apples' levy on plastic bags.
- The Brighter Whitehead Group grows all plant material in its own polytunnel, and the team has its own vehicle. Community projects such as each household having a tree to plant and competitions based on Bloom, in which 1,592 individuals took part last year.

Areas for development

- It is suggested that the rail company should be approached for support to maintain the station plantings. For some of the larger projects consider if there is any scope of bringing in either corporate volunteers or the setting up one or two task-force days where individuals who are not part of the Bloom group are invited to get involved for just a few hours a year.
- Learning about the many projects involving children in the town, it was a shame that the judges were unable to meet any of the young people in person to learn first-hand about the projects in which they have been involved.

Wisbech, Anglia Large Town – Silver Gilt

The judges received a warm welcome from everyone they met on the tour. It was very clear that everyone is passionate and committed to make Wisbech a better place to live and work. We particularly liked the resourcefulness of the group and how they found solutions to any problems they encountered. The gardens at the National Trust property were a real highlight of the tour.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- The excellent collective impact of horticultural features particularly the hanging baskets which were themed as were the barrier plantings.
- The excellent quality of horticultural design and management in the National Trust garden at Peckover House.
- The very good design and management of the Elgoods Brewery Garden and the excellent trees.

Areas for development

- The surfinia towers are stressed and would have benefitted from feeding.
- Considerable effort has been taken to introduce sustainable planting in St Peter's churchyard which, when mature, will have year-round impact but more needs to be done in Wisbech Park and en route (it is accepted that this is in hand).
- Variable standards of bedding were in evidence, dot plants were often isolated and grass management was also variable. This was highly noticeable in Wisbech Park to the detriment of the visual impact.
- Careful route planning and preparation is necessary to ensure the town is effectively showcased.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- Local pride and heritage was evident from the start with an excellent tour of Octavia Hill's birthplace and garden.
- The water collection and watering regime was imaginative and effective. The judges were impressed with the way the Bloom group works with local businesses to harvest the water from their roofs and store it in old containers.
- The work started at the cemetery is being carried out sympathetically for the local wildlife and is enhancing the natural habitat.

Areas for development

- Although murals on the vacant shop buildings was a clever idea, we felt these needed to be refreshed as some had dates 2008/2009.
- There were a considerable amount of weeds on the tour both in the pavement and on buildings which should be addressed.
- Although the street cleansing was generally good there were areas where gum looks to be a problem.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- Clear evidence of ongoing community development and sustainability was noted.
- It was good to see the improvements of the schools in the campaign and there is a real opportunity to be realised from further developing a school to adult continuum aimed at ensuring the future development of Wisbech in Bloom.
- An example of excellence was the developing partnerships with Delamore, a significant local business. This should be further encouraged as it is a brilliant example of businesses working with the community to promote both horticulture and Bloom.
- There was a positive acceptance from all politicians and service providers of the values and gains to be achieved by community partnerships.

Areas for development

- Promote youth involvement by linking the primary schools to the secondary schools now that horticulture is returning to the school curriculum.
- There is a real opportunity to celebrate the strong growing ethos of the fens with the many new communities that are developing in the area. Schemes involving European labour as well as the disadvantaged could enhance and further develop volunteering in the area to the advantage of the campaign.
- It is recommended that you develop a community business plan to maintain existing initiatives, develop a range of new initiatives which will encourage the involvement of younger participants so as to ensure long-term support and further community involvement of Wisbech in Bloom.

Woolton (Liverpool), North West Champion of Champions – Gold

This urban village whose roots lie in the quarrying industry is situated within the city of Liverpool but its unique and distinct identity has been retained over the years through the dedication of its residents. It is evident that budgetary cuts in the service provided by the City Council have, in a very short space of time, put additional responsibility onto the shoulders of members of the Bloom group.

They must be congratulated for continuing to respond to the pressures and challenges in the way they do to improve the community in which they live, for its residents and visitors.

Horticultural Achievement

Areas of achievement

- There was a range of variety among the plantings with a number of themed beds including the RHS golden anniversary bed, the pollinator bed, horse and cart bed, bee border, vegetable tables, and above all the emotive re-creation of a lone soldier of First World War sitting among poppies, which was a poignant and fitting tribute to the commemoration of the outbreak of the war. The adoption of responsibilities to key individuals for each of the beds was clearly successful. The concentration of floral displays was grouped at key areas of the village to maximum effect.
- There was good support from residential properties evidenced in individual gardens of differing styles from terrace gardens to the communal efforts of the residents of Reynolds Court.
- There was a very high standard of maintenance of trees and grass verges along the dual carriageway.
- That the community look after flowerbeds that the council were going to remove due to budgetary constraints is highly commendable.

Areas for development

- Funding cuts have affected the ability to maintain Reynolds Park to the standard it deserves. It is only down to the dedication and hard work of the Friends group that some degree of quality and interest remains. However, some attention to detail is required on grass presentation and weed control in the Walled Garden, the heuchera and begonia beds and in the topiary garden. These are areas of high maintenance and it may need a long, hard look at what is actually achievable with limited resources. Due to the workload on the community group it is suggested that rather than taking on more areas of responsibility, such as the creation of new plantings on the Kings Drive dual carriageway, effort should perhaps be concentrated on the existing areas of horticultural activity, such as in Reynolds Park, to safeguard them from decline.

Environmental Responsibility

Areas of achievement

- There was an absence of graffiti and litter, which in a city setting is commendable. The community group had taken responsibility of painting railings, bins, bollards and lamp posts wherever possible. Pride in the village was evident through the work undertaken in this manner. It was encouraging to see that younger people were involved in the design of interpretation material at Lodes Pond.
- The effective use of Woolton in Bloom and RHS posters on the vacant Salisbury Lodge effectively managed a 'grot spot' while at the same time advertising the Bloom campaign.
- An excellent Park Heritage trail has been produced by the Friends of Reynolds Park.

Areas for development

- It is suggested that the Friends group seek further advice on the management regime of the wildflower meadow in Reynolds Park. It is suggested that the adoption of spot spraying is avoided and that treatment of a larger area by herbicide or intense strimming should be undertaken followed by a new broadcast of wildflower seed. Further opportunities could be explored for the ongoing involvement of corporate volunteers.
- While pollinator beds and wildflower meadows were visited during the tour, more evidence is needed of the ongoing long-term conservation programmes in place across the entry. It is

acknowledged that due to constraints of time the judges were not able to talk to the volunteers at Lodes Pond or to view their work in detail. Further evidence also needs to be conveyed during the judging tour of the sustainable practices undertaken by the Bloom group.

- A problem of dog fouling was evident at Reynolds Park.
- The former tram shelter and public toilets, effectively used as the 'garden shed', was an attractive historical feature in its own right. It is suggested that a wonderful opportunity exists to interpret a piece of Liverpool's history through a display of historic photographs of the city's trams on the boarded-up windows could inform the younger generation of this bit of heritage.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

The judges appreciate the tremendous input of the community in all of the environmental undertaken across the village and that the involvement embraces all ages of the community. They were especially pleased to be able to meet some of the young gardeners at St James's Church involved in the potato project and the Brownies at their Centenary bed. One cannot underestimate the huge involvement of the Friends group in all aspects of the running of Reynolds Park. They have secured grant funding for a programme of community events, interpretation initiatives and restoration projects, and undertake maintenance, gardening, wildflower management, and even take responsibly for gate locking. Their enthusiasm is commendable.

- All members of the group had been given areas of responsibility that had proved effective and gave local ownership of specific projects.
- It was most encouraging to note that the community are able to celebrate their achievements and successes throughout the year in a wide range of events.
- A good programme of fundraising is in place to ensure the ongoing work of the Bloom group, the Open Garden scheme being particularly successful.

Areas for development

- It was apparent that without the effort and commitment of the Friends group in Reynolds Park the lack of council funding and involvement was beginning to show signs of adverse effect. A meeting between the city council and the Friends group is needed to determine a forward plan of action to protect the park from decline. It would have been appreciated if an officer from the city council could have been available to welcome/meet the judges to the city at some point during the day.
- The judges were fascinated to see the grave of the original Eleanor Rigby and even more so to observe the attention the gravestone receives from organised tours, all of which result in additional work being needed to upkeep the churchyard. To assist and fund the work in the churchyard by the dedicated volunteers it is suggested that an opportunity exists to place a voluntary donation box at this location.