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Congleton—an Award Winning Town

Congleton’s vision is to be ‘a great place to live, work and visit.’

In the past 12 months Congleton has received the following accolades:

RHS Gold—North West in Bloom 2013 & Winners

Runner-up Kept Large Town—Cheshire Community Pride 2013

Little Gem Award for Congleton Paddling Pool – 2013

Best Community Website www.congleton-tc.gov.uk -2013

Cardiac Gold Heart Smart Award—2013

Host town for the Queen’s Commonwealth Baton Relay

Coronation Meadow Status—Dane-in- Pasture

Small Town, Big Heart

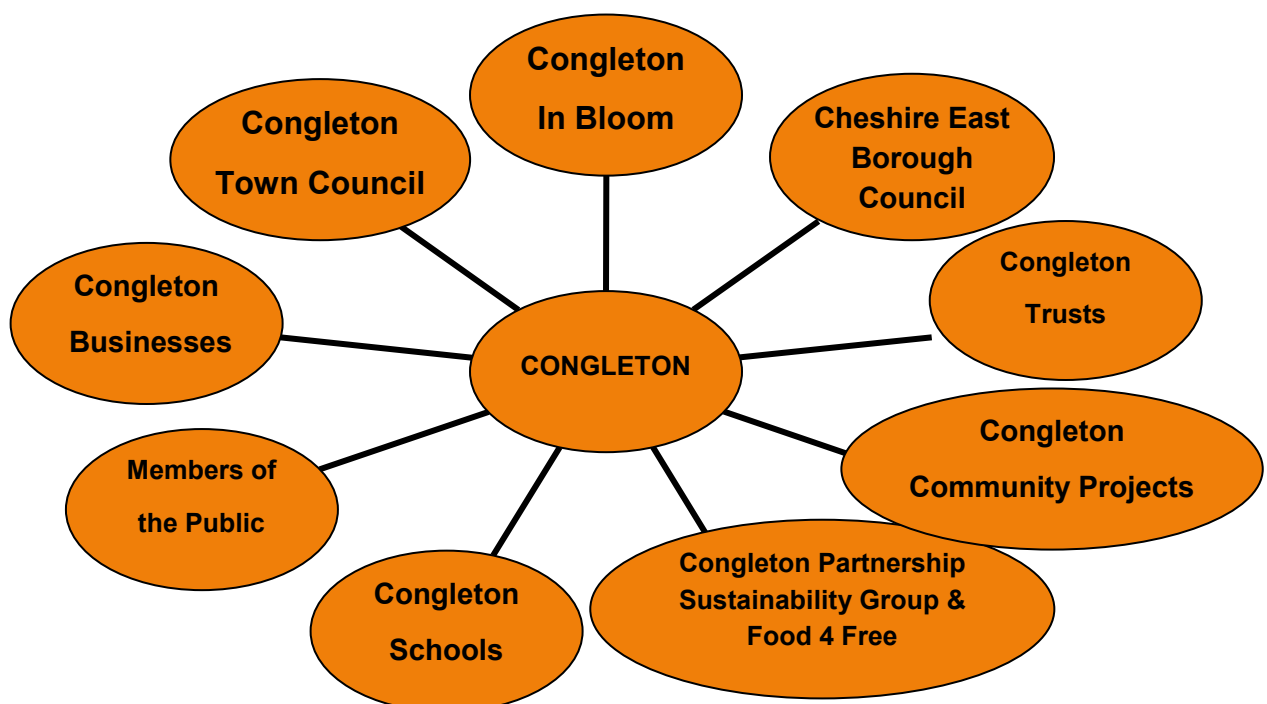
Congleton is a thriving historic market town with a population of just over 26,500 people living in 12,000 households. Congleton is in Cheshire East, on the borders of the Peak District and Staffordshire.

The River Dane is a fast flowing river through the town and was the reason why Congleton became an important silk weaving town in the 18th century. Many of the mill buildings are still in existence – but with new purposes. There are attractive man made meres on the edge of town which have been reclaimed from previous quarrying of silica sand and are now leisure facilities.

Congleton is a friendly town with over 150 local groups and voluntary organisations. The Town has close links with the 1st Battalion the Mercian Regiment, (Cheshires) who marched through the town in June 2013. They named Congleton the 'Little Town with the Big Heart'.



In it together!



Congleton in Bloom

Congleton in Bloom started in 1998 as an offshoot of Community Projects. It has had an excellent track record of achievement:

Winners of North West in Bloom in 2000, 2006 & 2013; Finalists in Britain in Bloom in 2001, 2007 & 2014; Winners of the Mayor of Chester's Cup for volunteering 2004 & 2007: Six times winners of the Cheshire Civic Pride Awards.

A sister group Buglawton in Bloom began in 2003, initiated by Ernie Clarke who continues to lead the group and its many activities. Bromley Farm Neighbourhood group entered the In Bloom competitions in 2012. Jubilee Club at New Life Church, Heath View Care Home and Hilary Avenue Allotments have also entered In Your Neighbourhood awards.

The In Bloom Committee has a core management team of eight which meets in the Town Hall every 6 weeks. It links with many supporting volunteer groups which provide much of the manpower and creative ideas.

Congleton in Bloom 2013-14 Aims and Objectives

To make Congleton an attractive place to live, work, shop and visit

To provide opportunities for the community to become involved.

To make Congleton a clean, green town through anti-litter campaigns, litter picks, removing graffiti, fly posting, improving grot spots and recycling.

To support the retail sector and promote tourism by providing attractive floral displays and green spaces

To raise standards and promote the town by entering competitions such as North West in Bloom and the Cheshire Civic Pride Awards.

To encourage Eco Schools and gain green flag awards, encourage bio diversity, energy conservation and the growing of local food

To involve young people in taking an active role in Congleton in Bloom

How are funds raised and who sponsors the event

Congleton Town Council is a major contributor to In Bloom and provides around £17,500 worth of funding and time.

The William Dean Trust provided around £10,000 to establish school orchards and vegetable plots and provided a loan of £5,000 to establish Congleton Apple Juice project. Trusts contributed about £40,000 towards improvements to paths and cycle ways. They also sponsored Back to Back gardens, bird boxes, floral plaque and along with businesses the new Rowan trees.

Local businesses contribute about £4000 and Shops contributed £3,200 towards hanging baskets. Four Oaks Nurseries who provided the planting are very supportive and provided generous discounts. Local fund raising—bucket collections and donation points in shops raises around £400.



Calendar 2013-14

In Bloom is not a summer activity, but an all year around commitment. Our calendar of events include:

September

Taking down seasonal hanging baskets and planters – re-using what we can by composting down some of the plants which makes nutritious compost for future beds and planters. Some volunteer group reuse the plants for their own buildings. Erected 23 business sponsored banners on Mountbatten Way to add colour when the flowers were removed. Sat 21st held an Edible Day at Capitol Walk Gardens to encourage people to taste and take the herbs.

October

Heard we'd won NW in Bloom and a Britain in Bloom finalist! Runners up in the Community Pride Awards. Took 1.2 tonnes of donated unwanted apples to turn into 800 bottles of Congleton Apple Juice. Held a Seed Swap session at Astbury Mere. Public and Council bulb planting sessions. Put bulbs along Mountbatten Way for first time. Started the planning for the schools Back to Back Gardening. Hedge cutting and town tidy sessions.

November & December

Schools planted up the winter tubs (7 Nov). Community clear-ups (Bromley Farm). Budget setting for 2014-15. Leaf clearing, delivery of Christmas trees, tree replacement planting, planning and ordering of spring and summer bedding for roundabouts and open spaces. Cleared area by West Street bus stop and planted 50 golden roses and 500 daffodils. Bulb planting at town entry points. Planning and funding found for Park play area improvements.

January & February

The Streetscape team transferred from Cheshire East to Congleton Town Council—giving greater opportunity for the town to co-ordinate planting and cleanliness. Design Town Centre summer scheme and order plants – commemorative plaque to celebrate 100 years of the Bandstand. Other displays to recognise In Bloom 50 years and 100 years since WW1. 'Joyous' scheme for Mountbatten Way. Golden theme for town centre and bus station. Attended Finalist meeting in Sunderland—gathered more ideas for 2014! Campaign to reduce dog fouling launched. Heard due to our 'outstanding community spirit' Congleton was the only town in England chosen to host the Queen's Commonwealth Baton! Applied for a Grow Wild grant to and designed a scheme for back of the fairground carpark. Recruitment open evening held in the Town Hall for In Bloom attracting more volunteers.

Streetscape team protect plants from frost and winter damage. Winter maintenance programme includes pruning trees, hedges and shrubs.



Calendar 2013-14

March

Congleton didn't get the 'Grow Wild' grant for Fairground Car park but as there was enthusiasm for the project we enlisted volunteers and cleared much of the area ready for planting. 42 Rowan trees planted in copses at town entries—48 more planned for autumn 2014. Back to Back garden displays submitted. In Bloom stalwart Margaret Williamson led a talk and tour of the Bluebells in the Town Woods



April

Community litter picks including two volunteer days in Congleton Park. Weed management. Extra planning in Capitol Walk gardens. Volunteers add hundred of new plants in the Community Gardens. In Bloom has a stall at the first Artisan Market—ATC help us fund raise. Everyone planting sunflower seeds! Children prepare mosaics to be used at Congleton Railway Station once painted. Fire Cadet and officers join in plant-ups and improve around the station. Summer bedding plants looked after ready for planting out in June.



May

Summer tubs planted by schools, seasonal baskets, troughs, planters and bedding added around the town. More Community litter picks. Removal of spring bedding delayed for Commonwealth Baton. Roundabout Beds rotivated and fertilized ready for bedding to be planted



June

Litter picks, weeding, Thousands enjoy Food and Drink Festival – local produce, low food miles. Town Bears have their half yearly hair cut. New plaque unveiled—celebrating 100 years of the Bandstand. Summer season of mowing, weed spraying, and strimming.

July

Deadheading, weeding, watering, litter picking, Carnival! Enjoying the Green spaces and how well the town looks. NW in Bloom judging on the 22 July and Britain in Bloom on August 6th.



Horticultural Achievement (A)

In 2013-14 the emphasis has been placed on 'GROWING FOR GOLD' with gold standard planting—and a golden theme in the town centre. Sustainable practices have been encouraged. Hardy plants have been chosen to cope with the Town Centre life. Plants that encourage pollinators are used where possible.

Colour, Design, Choice of Plants

In January 2014 the Streetscape services for Congleton transferred from Cheshire East to Congleton Town Council. This has meant that the In Bloom group, which works closely with the Town Council, has been able to have a greater influence on co-ordinating the look for the town. Traditionally the In Bloom team has chosen the colours for Mountbatten Way and the baskets in the Town Centre and Streetscape the Park, Roundabouts, Cenotaph, Town Centre Planters.

The scheme for 2014 has been 'Growing for Gold' - with shades of gold throughout the Town Centre and Bus Station. Mountbatten Way was designed to be a carnival of colour with lots of pollinators. Volunteers have been encouraged to add Sunflowers, Daffodils and Golden roses to continue the gold theme.

Food4Free has introduced blueberry bushes around the town and a multitude of edible and flowering plants at Capitol Walk.

Orchards have been established at all the Congleton Schools and at two community sites - Cheshire heritage variety of trees have been used such as Lord Darcy.

Rowan Trees have been added to the entrances of the town. These add a touch of red to the entrances of the town in the Autumn and through Remembrance Sundays.

The old rose beds in the Park have been removed and replaced with sustainable planting—See Congleton Park.

Horticultural Practice

Watering, deadheading and weeding in public places is largely undertaken by the Streetscape team—backed up by volunteers. Volunteers manage the Community Garden, Capitol Walk Garden, Dutch Wall, Fairground Car Park .

Public areas are planted twice a year—with only 4 weeks a year without plants. Feature plants remain in situ, with the majority of bedding plants either planted-on or used for compost by schools and other groups.

The Town Council works closely with the local Four Oaks nursery about 4 miles away. Plants are grown at the nursery and delivered to the Town Council polytunnels a couple of weeks before being planted out by our gardeners.



Horticultural Achievement (A)

Residents and Community Gardening

Congleton Community Garden A green flower-filled oasis in the Town Centre. Three enthusiastic volunteers have taken over the maintenance resulting in hundreds of new plants and lots of positive comments! A sensory rose garden and 2 jubilee arches were added in 2012. Three new plaswood benches and two water butts were added in 2013. The volunteers spend about 20 hours a week in the garden. Next year the Community Garden will celebrate its 20th anniversary—from an unloved piece of land to an asset for the town.



Capitol Walk This area has been transformed by Congleton's Food4Free group. In November 2012 with support from Congleton Town Council and the Probation Service, Food4Free set about removing the old shrubbery. In April/May it was replanted with Bee-Friendly and Edible plants—aiming for a show of colour all year. The group holds a volunteer gardening session on the first Sunday of the month—although many members are there more frequently. In September 2013 the first 'Come and Try' session was held by the garden. Winter Aconites were added. This spring and summer the garden has looked spectacular.



Dutch Wall and Fairground Car Park Volunteer Amanda Martin spends hours each week weeding, deadheading and watering to create a great show in the space around the wall of Fairground Car Park. In 2014 volunteers have tackled the overgrown shrubs and weeds at the back of the Car Park—digging out, removing and replacing with a mini-orchard, RHS 50, herbs, and plants.



Antrobus Street Garden—Reedsmoor Surgery Section 106 funding has been found to improve and open up the Antrobus Street Garden area. In Bloom, Town Council, Congleton Partnership and Cheshire East are working together on this project. Plans have been submitted to remove the large conifer trees. Digging out and replanting is likely to be late 2014/15. This year Sunflowers have been added.

Residential Gardens Many people take a lots of pride in their front gardens and there are many stunning examples around the town. Members of the U3A held an open gardens day in June 2014 to allow others to appreciate their gardens.



Horticultural Achievement (A)

Business Areas and Premises

Mountbatten Way

The plants were supplied by Fouroaks with design by the In Bloom Team. The idea was to create a 'joyous explosion of colour'. But also include many pollinators. There are 100 troughs, 78 half moons and four 3 tier flower tubs. Full details can be seen in the appendix. **Flowers in the troughs** are: Geranium candy cherry, Fuchsia Ernie, Geranium blue wonder, Bidens pirates treasure (yellow), Purple Cleopatra Tri-colour, Felicia variegated (foliage with blue flower), Begonia illumination apricot shades (oranges), Confetti Garden water wonders (Red/blue), Lobelia white star (white). **Flowers in the Half Moons** Geranium fairy berry, Fuchsia Ernie, Begonia illumination apricot shades, Purple Cleopatra Tricolour, Helicrysum gold, Nepeta variegated and Confetti garden water wonders. The flowers were put out in mid May ready for the Baton Relay at the end of May. They are watered, dead-headed and fed by the Town Council Streetscape Team.



Town Centre

Business were offered the chance to buy into a Hanging Basket scheme—they pay for the basket and for its upkeep and the Town Council erects, waters and looks after the baskets. This was introduced in 2013 when 90 baskets were supplied. This year 160 baskets were purchased. The baskets contain Geranium white blanca, Confetti tricolour garden sunshine, Begonia illumination apricot shades (orange shades), Bacopa snowflake (white), Lysimachia outback sunset. In addition we have 40 tubs planted up by the schools children. 50 larger baskets on post, two flower towers and four three-tier displays. Some businesses opted to use their own baskets—but overall a theme has been introduced to the town centre for the first time! 32,416 summer bedding plants and 27,822 winter bedding plants are planted in Congleton annually.



Congleton Business Park—Barn Road

Thousands of bulbs have been added around the Congleton Business Park off Barn Road to create a fabulous display in the spring These were purchased and planted by local businesses. Sustainable planting added by businesses for all year around colour.

Radnor Park Industrial Estate

Smart new signage and a general tidy-up has improved this area in 2014. by businesses for all year around colour.



Horticultural Achievement (A)

Congleton Park

Congleton is proud of its park, created in 1871 and restored in 2005 with HLF aid. The Park is 5 minutes walk from the town centre and although owned by Cheshire East Council, it is maintained by Congleton Town Council and has an active Friends Group. Facilities include a play park, bowling green, bandstand, Jubilee Pavilion, toilets, Town Wood with restored paths, skateboard park, benches and wildflower meadow. In winter 2013 the old rose beds were removed and replaced with sustainable planting. Feature plants have been added to the main beds, which stay constant through summer and winter planting. 22,229 plants are planted out in the park in the summer, and 19,668 in the winter.

Funding has been gained through developer contribution and WREN to build a teenage extension to the main children's play area—opened 18th July. The bandstand is 100 years old this year, and this is reflected and celebrated in the formally planted plaque. Plaque plants include *Alternanthera*, *Ophiopogon planiscapus*. Carpet bedding has been saved from the 2013 Jubilee Plaque.

The Town Wood on the northern edge of the park is a Grade A site of Biological Interest and contains many nationally important plants. Rotary sponsor a wild flower meadow on the site of the bonfire. There is a progressive plan to replace the horse chestnut trees - a Jubilee walkway was added in November 2012 made up of 12 lime trees.

Congleton's Five Roundabouts

Congleton is well known and admired for its spectacular roundabouts. Three roundabouts are planted-up by the Town Council Streetscape Team twice a year. The other two are low maintenance (Waggon and Horses which looks spectacular in the early spring with its heathers and Shell Roundabout with its grasses and river design.) The Bears on the roundabout have taken many years to cultivate and are finally 95% privet and only a little ivy.

Cenotaph

This is planted and maintained by the Streetscape Team. In a separate project HLF grants are being sought to create dramatic improvements to this area over the next 3-5 years. 1984 plants were added to the Cenotaph area this year including a range of begonias, millet purple baron, geraniums, impatiens and ageratum.

Green Open Spaces

The Town Council is now responsible for mowing, strimming, pruning and general upkeep of 179,016 m² of open play areas across 11 sites. In addition we maintain 120,732 m² of playing fields including rugby and football pitches.



Environmental Responsibility

Congleton is a Transition Town and a Fairtrade Town. We take our commitment to the environment seriously. Our Primary Schools and Secondary Schools all have elected Eco Councils and 12 have at least one green flag. All 16 schools have orchards and are registered with RHS campaign for school gardening. We have an active Sustainability Group which has won a National Award for from Action for Market Towns for its Apple Juice campaign.



B1. Conservation and Biodiversity

Astbury Mere Country Park and Eco Centre - Astbury Mere is a former silica sand quarry that has been transformed and is now managed by a formidable group of volunteers who formed Astbury Mere Trust. The land covers 14ha of open space—which includes a wildflower meadow, pond, all weather easy access path and Keep Britain Tidy Eco Centre. The majority of tree stock is less than 40 years old. The site has been awarded multiple green flags and is one of the most visited free attractions in the north west. The Trust raises £30,000 a year for the upkeep of the site. Schools from around the area use the educational facilities at the mere. In 2012 Parkrun introduced a weekly timed 5km run at the site. This attracts around 120 runners a week. There is also Nordic walking and buggy runs. Congleton Sustainability Group introduced a Community Orchard within easy walking distance of the Mere in 2012. The Community orchard has 16 apple trees, 2 plums, 1 gage and a cobnut as well as wood carvings. It is strimmed back twice a year.



Congleton Town Wood - the Town Wood is an important biological resource in the heart of Congleton to the north of the Park. It is designated as a Ancient and Semi Natural woodland as well as a County Site of Biological Importance. It is a 1000 year old remnant of riparian woodland. Formal bound gravel paths ensure accessibility through the wood throughout the year and park wardens along with volunteer teams ensure paths are kept clear. This winter a number of trees from the woods were lost in the storms and there are plans for replanting developed as part of the Tree Survey carried out. During the spring there is a superb display of native bluebells and volunteers run walks and talks. Numerous bird species can be observed in the wood and new bird boxes were added this year.



Wildflower Meadow - for the past three years Congleton Rotary has sponsored a wildflower meadow in the park at the site of the annual Rotary Bonfire. This has attracted a lot of attention and interest from local people for the beauty and sheer amount of different flower species in the mix. Naturally it also attracts a lot of pollinators!



Environmental Responsibility

Dane-In-Shaw Pasture is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with grassland of national importance. It is managed by Cheshire East Countryside Rangers with support from local farmers. It has just been designated a Coronation Meadow—an honour awarded to one flagship meadow in every county across the UK as part of the Jubilee celebrations. It is also a 'donor' meadow, which provides seeds for the creation of new meadows at 'recipient' sites in Cheshire.

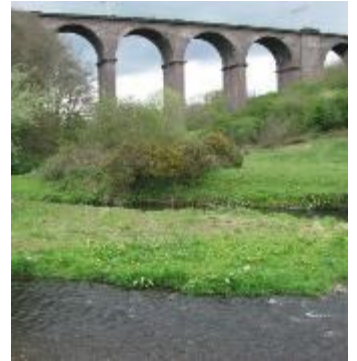
Eco Schools Project Congleton's two high schools and their 14 feeder schools have all signed up to the Eco Schools programme—giving Congleton one of the largest cluster of Eco Schools in the region. 12 schools currently have at least one green flag. All the Congleton schools also hold a Cheshire Wildlife Trust Gold Award for School Gardens—with many featuring bug hotels, wood piles, school ponds and wildflower meadows. Our schools are also part of the Cheshire and Peak District Butterfly conservation 'munching caterpillars' project.

Over the past three years, as part of the Eco Schools project the William Dean Trust and funding from the sale of Congleton Apple Juice has enabled all the schools to plant mini fruit orchards and introduce vegetable patches.

Re-using Summer and Winter Bedding Where ever possible plants used in the summer or winter bedding are recycled. They are either used to make compost, or made available to groups who wish to use them in their neighbourhoods. The ivies and mini cypress trees from the winter tubs are being kept alive in the Polytunnel complex for use next year. Compost in the schools tubs is recycled (top to bottom) and re-used in the school tubs.

Allotments The Town Council built allotments at Hillary Avenue. There are 19 plots including one for disability groups and one for Bromley Farm Trust. It is leased and managed by Hillary Avenue Allotment Association.

Congleton Food 4 Free has been active in Congleton for a few years. It started with planting pear trees in car parks and has progressed to include herbs, blueberries, fruit trees and bushes around the town. The key area is Capitol Walk Garden. This was cleared at the end of 2012, planted in 2013 and through careful maintenance is now a thriving, successful mix of pollinators and edibles in the heart of the town centre.



Environmental Responsibility

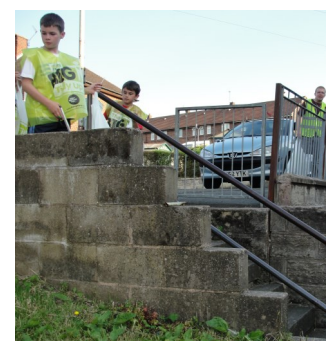
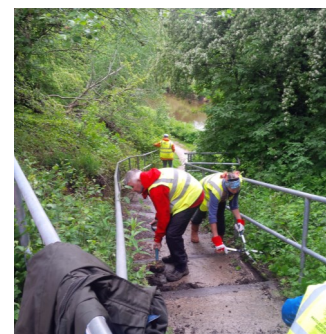
B2. Resource Management Cheshire East manages the waste collection schemes for Congleton. As an authority Cheshire East is in the 7th best unitary in England for recycling of household waste. In Congleton there is a kerb side collection of glass, cans, plastic and paper once a fortnight via the silver bins. Households are also issued with a Brown bin for their green waste which is collected fortnightly. All waste delivered to the Household Recycling Centre in town also needs to be sorted for recycling. The site currently recycles 70 % of waste delivered.

New Life Church in partnership with Mattroe Ltd and Plus Dane Housing group offer a service where they collect unwanted good quality furniture and appliances and redistribute them back into the local community. In addition a number of local charities offer door to door collection of clothes, shoes and reusable household goods.

The In Bloom team work hard to ensure plants from the formal planting are re-used or composted, while compost is re-used whenever possible.

Congleton Household Waste Recycling Tonnages 2013/14 Supplied by Cheshire East Borough Council

Category	Tonnage (t)
Waste to landfill / incineration	735
Green Waste	558
Hardcore	870
WEEE	191
Card	133
Wood / chipboard	544
Scrap Metal	152
Glass	15
Paper	63
Plastic	3.4
Textiles	50
Miscellaneous	10
Recoverable	136
Total Recycled / Reused	2725
Rate of recycling	70%



Environmental Responsibility

B3. Local Heritage

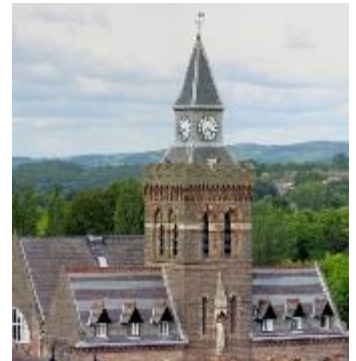
Congleton Town Hall is a Victorian building dating back to 1860s. It was transferred to Congleton Town Council in 2008 . £750,000 has been spent renovating and improving the building.

Cheshire East Council has increased the Conservation Area in Congleton so it includes the protected buildings from Mill Street to Lawton Street. This has created one zone and includes Tudor, Georgian and Victorian Buildings.

A group has been set up to look into gaining funds to improve and enhance the war memorial—built in 1922. The Town Council has registered the land to secure the opportunity for funding bids.

The Bath House project continues - volunteers are busy adding a physic garden using plants used in industry and medicine.

Congleton Bandstand is 100 years old this year. A celebration concert was held in June 2014 and is it being recognised in the formal plaque in the park.



Local Environmental Quality

Congleton Town Council and Congleton Partnership strive to make Congleton a great place for residents, workers and visitors. Cllr Glen Williams has become the 'Tidy Town Champion' and organises regular community litter picks as well as co-ordinating work with partner groups to tackle areas in need of improvement

Measures are being taken to improve air quality in the town. Two areas—West Road and Rood Hill had poor readings and a special paint is used to absorb chemicals caused by vehicles. £45m of Government funding has been committed to a link road around Congleton, work should start in 2015—2017.

Two Town Handymen provide a rapid response service to improve the town—whether removing fly tipping, clearing footpaths, dealing with overflowing bins or removing graffiti



Energy Audit Volunteers have produced an Environmental Audit of the Town Hall and an Energy Reduction Plan for the Town. This has been approved by the Town Council. A number of volunteers have been involved in a SLIC carbon reduction scheme. The finding will be used to help others.

Watch Your Watts Local people were encouraged to fill in a simple Watch Your Watts weekly sheet to encourage a reduction of energy use around the home.

Cycle Routes—new signage, promotional materials and in places new paths have been funded to make it easier and more pleasant for local people to cycle around the town. Construction started on a new route linking the Town Centre and Railway Station in April 2014.



Community Participation

Congleton is known as the 'Little Town with a Big Heart'. The town has over 150 local groups and organisations and a full year programme of events throughout the year. Creating a sense of place and an atmosphere of inclusion is important for the town. The In Bloom group relies on the experience, expertise and manpower of a wide range of groups and individuals all working towards a common aim of making the town a great place to live, work and visit. Congleton Partnership reported over 1300 volunteer hours given by its members in the first six months of 2014

c1. Development and Continuity

Congleton In Bloom and Food4Free are about all year round colour, plants and community pride. The group regularly asks the public to report Grot Spots and areas they would like to see improved. This is done through Community Newsletters, Town Centre Activity days, Open Evening and via the Facebook pages.

The number of Local Authority employees working on the public realm has decreased over the past three years making it all the more important to plan wisely and work with partners where possible—such as Plus Dane Housing, The Prince's Trust, Probation Service and Duke of Edinburgh Schemes.

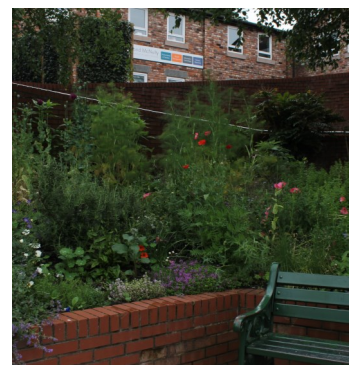
Congleton has a Public Realm Strategy aimed at creating greater pride in town, use of sustainable materials, street furniture and lighting that is sympathetic to the town. For example benches are being replaced with plaswood benches. The Town has developed a Town Strategy to gain buy in for the future development of the town.

Congleton Partnership and Congleton Town Council are working with Scarborough Developments to ensure the new £12 million town centre development reflects local heritage and is suitable for community events.

The Town Council has taken over the management of the Polytunnels at Congelton Park and are working with In Bloom and other parties to enable more community use of the facility. For the 6 weeks twice a year the site will be used to store bedding plants for across the area and this needs to be factored in.

Congleton Food4Free

In 2012 this group started with blueberry bushes and tubs. In 2013 the group transformed the area by Capitol Walk to create a Bee Friendly and largely edible garden. In 2014 efforts have been consolidated into improving the Capitol Walk garden and assisting with the new planting at the back of the Fairground Car Park.



Community Participation

C2. Communication and Education

In conjunction with the Town Council and Congleton in Bloom children from the local primary schools come to the Polytunnel in the park to learn about plants and create the 40 schools tubs used to decorate the town centre. This year both winter and summer tubs were planted, while pre-school children planted seeds in April.

Congleton has one of the biggest cluster of Eco Schools in the North West – with primary and secondary schools engaged in energy reduction, re-use and recycling, food cycles, caring for plants. Twelve of the 16 schools now hold at least one green flag. The other 4 are at silver level..

Seed and produce swaps organised by Congleton Sustainability Group – give local people a chance to discuss plants and swap cuttings and plants.

Apple Juice Campaign has been a practical way to educate people about not letting produce go to waste. It was an initiative which was easy for local people to get involved with, and enabled members of the Sustainability group to have discussions about lifestyle changes such as the Watch your Watts

Siemens Schools Garden Project

St Mary's and Buglawton Schools were invited to plant up flower beds at Siemens Head Office in Congleton. Each school had 260 plants and designed their own beds. Each year different schools are invited to work in the Siemens Garden. Unfortunately this is too far away from the judging route to show you.

LOL Foundation

Congleton was named as the 'Little Town with the Big Heart' by the Mercian Regiment. The LOL foundation was founded in 2012 to help support ex-servicemen living rough. They have found housing and work at 'Dream Catcher Farm' where they grow fruit and vegetables. 250 old varieties of Cheshire Apple Trees were planted by the ex-soldiers in April 2013. In April 2014 the ex-soldiers helped with sprucing up the park. They have also helped construct the Back to Back gardens in the Polytunnel area.

Clean up after your Dog

Initiatives to encourage people to clean-up after their pets were trialled on the Bromley Farm Estate and in the Park this year and are being rolled out across the town.



Community Participation

C3. Community Participation

Many primary and pre-school children are involved in planting seeds and plants in the Poly tunnel for the summer and winter tubs used in the town. This year we have also had a 'Growing for Gold' push with people from 4—80 planting sunflower seeds to make displays around the town. Unfortunately some mice had a feast and we lost over 250 seedlings from the Polytunnel!

The Fire Service has got behind the In Bloom campaign—creating new permanent planters around the Fire Station, adding new hanging baskets and working with their cadets and local children to plant up around the town. In 2015 they have ambitious plans to improve their formal displays using carpet bedding.

Local businesses have offered volunteer days—painting, weeding, litter picking and improving their town.

Regular volunteers throughout the Town get involved in the organised litter picks. This year we have concentrated on neighbourhood litter picks. The Town Council has a number of pickers, hoops and high viz vests which it loans to local groups, schools, youth groups, churches and businesses.

80 children joined in a competition to design new litter posters—the winning design has been placed on bins around the town centre.

Congleton Partnership and Sustainability Group have inspired local people to join in plant, seed and produce swaps held at Astbury Mere. Volunteers at the Community Garden have shared their knowledge and love of gardening with others—and now have new helpers.

An estimated 540 volunteer hours are given to make Astbury Mere County Park such a success. Astbury Mere holds regular nature walks and talks—as well as being the base for a 'BUG CLUB' on Wednesdays in the holidays.

Congleton Community Projects attracted thousands to the Congleton Food and Drink Festival and Tasty Town activities. The festival is about enjoying and understanding local food.

Friends of Congleton Park help to maintain the park and put on events such as Brass in the Park, Jazz in the Park, and Games Activities in the holidays.

New Life Church has developed allotments for its Jubilee Group—people are referred to the group which provide them with extra support. The Church also runs a food bank, furniture recycling centre, cookery courses and various help groups.



Community Education

Back to Back Gardens

10 primary schools have embraced a new Back to Back Garden project. The schools have all created a garden growing the plants from seeds and designing their garden. The William Dean Trust gave each school £100 towards the cost. The backdrops were transported to the newly adopted community poly tunnels. Children from the schools were invited to plant their gardens in June. They will be open to the public every weekend from 2-4pm throughout the summer. The schools are helping water, weed and maintaining their gardens. There is a huge amount of pride in the gardens that have been created. This will be included on the judging route.



Congleton Bath House and Physic Garden

Is a restoration project run by the volunteers from the Congleton Building Preservation Trust. The Bath House is a rare survivor of a private spring fed plunge pool from around 1800. There is also a Robert Adam inspired garden shelter. Volunteers are creating a physic garden to tell the story of plants used in both medicine and local industry to the end of the 19th century. The gardens are accessible to the public and volunteers can be found in the gardens every Monday and often at other times too.



Creating a new Area at the Back of Fairground Car Park

The area at the back of the Fairground Car Park was not attractive to people or wildlife. It contained a number of mature trees and shrubs, lots of ivy, brambles and weeds. Applications were filled in for a Go Wild Grant. This was not successful, but momentum for the project had grown and so the In Bloom team along with volunteers from other groups went ahead and cleared half the area, stocked up with new wildflower plants, shrubs and sunflowers and and planted a mini orchard of five local varieties of apple trees. Keeping on top of the weeds is a major commitment—and has been greatly helped by some of the guiding groups. The hard work has resulted in an area that is far more attractive to people and pollinators!

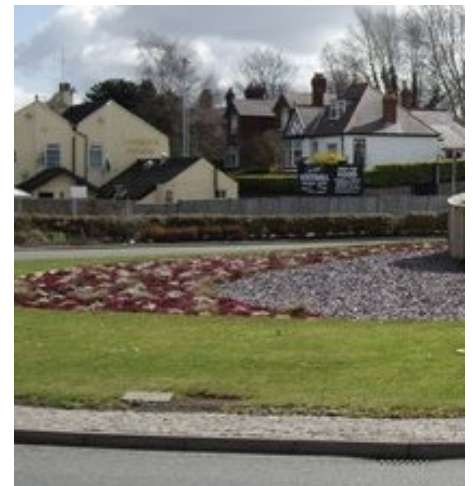


Horticultural Society Annual Show

Congleton Horticultural Society holds an annual show in the Town Hall in September. Thanks to enthusiasm for all things gardening related - there was a record number of entries in 2013. There are over 140 categories to enter—with entry costing just 20p each and free to Under 16s.



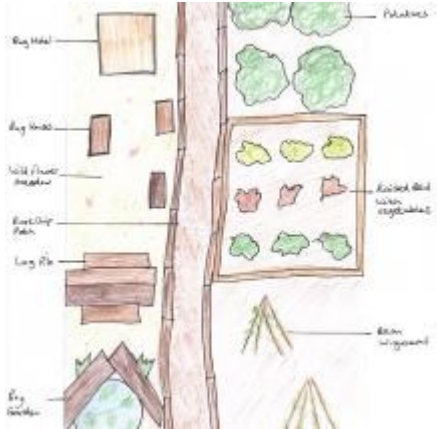
Spring Planting



Park In Bloom



Schools in Bloom



Preparing for the Schools Back to Back gardens—designing, planting and putting it all together



Schools planting up at the Siemens factory in Congleton - two flower beds are designed by two different schools each year



Pre-schools, primary schools and high schools—everyone has been busy planting for Congleton in Bloom and to improve their neighbourhoods!

Churches and Business in Bloom



Town Centre



Congleton Library



Flower tubs outside Carl Christopher



Queens Hotel



Heath View Residents Home



Congleton Fire Station



New Life Church



United Reform Church



St Mary's RC Church

From Grot to Hot!



Old Rose Beds in Congleton Park - the two old rose beds in Congleton Park had stopped producing and had gone 'woody'. This year they were replaced with 161 new plants including *Stachys lantana*, *Geraniums* (Ingwerson's and Rosemoor), *Azaleas*, *Astrntia*, *Anemone*, *Erysinium*, *Phormium bronze*, *Nepeta* and *Carrex*.



Wildflower Meadow—for the 3rd year running Congleton Rotary have paid for a wildflower meadow to be planted on the bonfire site. This transforms the area and is much admired by visitors to the Park.



Tree renewal —Trees do not last forever! 12 young lime trees were planted in Congleton Park to give them time to mature before the Horse chestnut trees are removed. 42 Rowan trees were add Spring 2014, 58 more autumn 2014 at entrances around Congleton.

From Grot to Hot!



In Spring 2014 **Friends of Congleton Railway Station** was launched. The Friends have already had two work parties where plant borders have been cleared and replanted, litter removed and the area cleaned. Northern Rail has promised to paint the station and introduce a tap. Local children working with artists have created mosaics to go on the newly painted walls.



The Macclesfield Canal brings hundreds of visitors to the town. It also provides a flat route for cyclists and walkers to cross the town. The Rivers and Canal Trust came to the In Bloom open evening in February and a new group was formed to improve route for visitors and residents.



The In Bloom team encourage schools and community groups to get involved in litter picks. Churches, businesses and youth groups have all answered the call to help clear up areas around the town.

From Grot to Hot!



The space at the back of the **Fairground car park** has not been cared for and the overgrown shrubby plants were not of much interest for people or wildlife. With the help of volunteers - including senior girl guides, the area has been dug over, and new herbs, flowers and a mini orchard added to this space. There are plans to extend it further next year.



West Street bus stop area was picked up as an Improvement Area following In Bloom 2013. The old weedy beds were stripped out by volunteers and 500 daffodils and 50 rose bushes added in November 2013. The daffodils gave a wonderful display in April and the roses are being appreciated by residents, visitors and pollinators!



The **raised bed in Victoria Street** is in a shady side street which doesn't get a lot of sun. The Town Council plant up the two planters in the sunny pedestrian area with flowers—but this year the In Bloom team have added a mixture of help-yourself herbs to the Victoria Street bed.

From Grot to Hot!



Bedding Area by Capitol Walk - Autumn 2012 was full of litter and old shrubs. Last year some blueberry bushes were added to the front of the bed. This year the group has transformed the area, clearing it and then adding bee-friendly and edible plants for all round activity and colour.



Congleton Fire Station—is on a gate way into the town. They have not taken part in Bloom before. This year they have introduced two new permanent flower beds which this year have don't use Mobile Phones and Road Sense sign. Officers and cadets involved.



Mill Street three empty shop units on Mill Street are due for demolition and can't be rented out. We agreed with the developers to use the site to show community art (schools), Street Art (edibles and direction to the Art Studios), Reasons to Visit Congleton and Key Dates and pictures of what will be built on site.

Big thanks go to...

Astbury Mere Trust	Congleton Horticultural Society	Mossley Primary School
Astbury St Mary's Primary School	Congleton in Bloom Team	New Life Church
Bromley Farm Community Trust	Congleton Inclosure Trust	Parks and Streetscape Team
Blackfirs Primary School	Congleton Partnership	Plus Dane Housing Group
Bromley Farm Neighbourhood	Congleton Rotary Club	Quinta School
Buglawton Community Group	Congleton Sustainability Group	Scholar Green School
Buglawton Primary School	Congleton Town Council	Siemens Care and Share
Canal & Riverside Trust	Daven Primary School	Smallwood Primary School
Cheshire East Parks Officer	Eaton Bank Academy	St Mary's RC Primary School
Congleton Business Association	Eco-Learning	Tim, Albert and Ian—Community Garden Volunteers
Congleton Children's Centre	Electric Picture House	Various pre-schools—planting seeds
Congleton Community Projects	Friends of Congleton Park	William Dean Trust
Congleton Food 4 Free	Havannah Primary School	Woodcocks' Well Primary School
Congleton Fire Station	Marlfields Primary School	
Congleton High School	Mossley Beavers	

