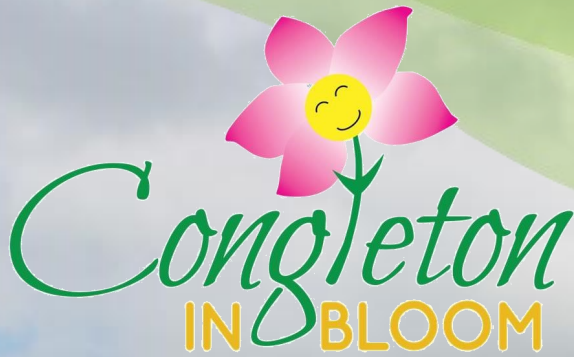


Creating a Cleaner and Greener Congleton

2015-16



UK FINALIST
2016

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KEY IMPROVEMENTS 2015

Congleton in Bloom has been going strong for 16 years. The group works with the community to find out what areas people think should be improved, and what areas local people will help work on and look after. The group also works on plans to maintain areas already improved. The table below shows a summary of our key new projects for 2015:

Where and What	Key Fact
More hanging baskets in the town	Number of hanging baskets purchased by businesses increased from 160 to 240
Congleton Park	More sustainable beds, introduced an allotment, changed some flower bed shapes, new bins,
Antrobus Street Garden Improvements	Opened up this green space for the public and add outdoor Gym equipment
Moody Street Garden—Greening Grey Areas	Funds from CEC, planting CTC, Greening a Grey Area campaign
Canal and Railway Station improvements	Group meets monthly and has drastically improved this area of town.
Over 100 Trees added	Gateway project—adding colour—Rowan Trees
Street furniture Painting	Adding gold rings to bollards to represent In Bloom Gold and took on painting other street furniture
Space gardens—youth	Planting up planets for a Congleton Garden Exhibition



Celebrating GOLD at Britain in Bloom



Back breaking removal of weeds—heritage path



Planting up WHERE WHAT WHEN?



Another Green Flag for the Park

Congleton in Bloom

Congleton in Bloom was formed in 1998 and has vastly improved Congleton in terms of adding greenery, gardens and improving the physical look of the town. The group has achieved national and regional recognition:

- **Won NW in Bloom 2000, 2006 & 2013 - GOLD in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014**
- **Finalists in Britain in Bloom in 2001, 2007 & 2014—gained GOLD in 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. Bromley Farm Neighbourhood group has entered IYN since 2012. The Jubilee Club at New Life Church, Heath View Care Home and Hilary Avenue Allotments entered IYN awards in 2014 and The Queens Head is a new Business entry for 2015.

The In Bloom Committee has a core management team of eight which meets in the Town Hall at least every 6 weeks—and weekly from early June. The group links with many supporting volunteer groups which provide much of the manpower and creative ideas.

Congleton in Bloom 2014-15 Aims and Objectives

- To make Congleton an attractive place to live, work, shop and visit
- To provide opportunities for the community to become involved—especially those who may feel isolated or excluded
- To make Congleton a clean, green town through anti-litter campaigns and action, removing graffiti and fly posting, improving grot spots & 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 WE ARE FUNDED

Congleton Town Council	£17,500 + staff	Purchase plants, watering, streetscape
Congleton Partnership	£8,500	Supporting In Bloom related projects
Shops—hanging baskets	£3,965	Sponsoring Baskets
Businesses		Sponsorship
Donations		Local people and organisations
Volunteer Hours	£15,000	3,237hours @ £5 per hour
TOTAL		



Sharing information with SW in Bloom



Greening the Town Centre for shoppers



Cleaning up our neighbourhoods



So many people to thank for their help and support

Calendar 2014-15

In Bloom is an all year around commitment. The work and planning never stops! Our calendar of events include:

August :Enjoy the fruits of our labours! Britain in Bloom judging. Open weekends at the Growzone Back2Back Gardens. Wildflower meadow in the Park in full bloom. Make notes and take photos to help inform next year's plant choice. Keep on top of watering , deadheading and weeding.

September: Take down seasonal baskets, troughs and planters – re-using what we can by composting for future beds and planters. Volunteers/homes take the plants to 'over winter' them for own use following year. (timing can be delayed until October if plants looking good). 140 categories displayed at the Annual Congleton and District Horticultural Show in the Town Hall. The Congleton and District Horticultural group will be 50 years old in 2016. Start collecting unwanted apples

October: Heard we'd received a GOLD medal in Britain in Bloom and North West in Bloom. Appraised the marking sheets - how to improve for 2015 with aim of getting back into National Competition. Collected 2.5 tonnes of donated unwanted apples to turn into 500 bottles of Congleton Cider and 900 bottles of Apple Juice. Held a Seed Swap and Apple Day at Astbury Mere. Public and Council bulb planting sessions – extra 500 m2 of bulbs added. Hedge cutting and town tidy sessions. Marfields School – received a display path from RHS Tatton which was going to be scrapped.

November & December: Schools planted up the winter tubs. Saint Mary's Roman Catholic School planted an extra 1,000 bulbs on verges near their school. Community clear-ups. Extra attention given to the Cenotaph and pavement poppies added. Budget setting for 2015-16. Leaf clearing, delivery of Christmas trees, tree replacement planting including Community planting of extra 58 Rowan Trees. Found funding to improve Antrobus Street Gardens. Back to back gardens celebration event. 100th Commemorative Tree for WW1 planted at St Peters Church. Congleton Park received Green Flag. Britain in Bloom judge re-visited to advise on 2015 improvements. A Community Walk About created list of areas for improvement before the spring. Planning, designing and ordering of spring and summer bedding for roundabouts and open spaces. Streetscape team protect plants from frost

January & February: Held In Bloom thank you and support for 2015 event at the Town Hall. Finalised Town Centre spring planting scheme and order plants. Gardeners changed some of the planting shapes in the park (10 year Heritage commitment finished). Added height to plant beds. Campaign to reduce dog fouling launched. Winter maintenance programme includes pruning trees, hedges and shrubs. Member of In Bloom team invited by Britain in Bloom to share experiences at SW in Bloom regional training sessions.



Collecting Gold Medal from Britain in Bloom 2014



Pavement Poppies at Cenotaph



Bulb planting—Mayor looks on



Recycled over 120 Christmas Trees

Calendar 2014-15

March/April: Working with In Your Neighbourhoods. Carter House Art produced an project inspired by Congleton Park. Community Groups started litter picking. Open day at IYN Heathview encouraging more volunteer gardeners. More plants added to Community Garden. Joint project with Cheshire East to spring clean Town Centre areas and pick up projects from Community Walk about. 15 main projects identified including painting the Town bridge and transforming grot spots. New allotment planned for the park. Orders for 240 Hanging baskets for the shops (80 more than in 2014). Moody Street Garden chosen as our Greening Grey Britain area. New daffodil areas much admired.

May: Summer tubs planted by schools, seasonal baskets, troughs, planters and bedding added around the town. More Community litter picks. Beds rotivated and fertilized ready for bedding to be planted - added ***** plants. Scouts added plants to newly named 'Pavilion Garden'.

June: Roundabouts planted up. Litter picks, weeding, Thousands enjoy Food and Drink Festival – local produce, low food miles. In Bloom had a stall at the Festival. Town Bears have their half yearly hair cut.. Summer season of intensive mowing, weed spraying and strimming. Community workshops to make artwork for the Space and planets gardens.

July : Deadheading, weeding, watering, litter picking. Enjoying the Green spaces and North West in Bloom judging Taking tremendous trees, bears and tubs to RHS Tatton. LOL ex-soldiers also displaying a 'defiant trench allotment' which has been grown in the polytunnels and will be displayed in Congleton after the RHS Show (21-24 July)



Children admire 'their' daffodils



Getting to grips with allotments



Adam at Children's Plant up day



In Bloom at Food and

Horticultural Achievement (A)

In 2014-5 the emphasis is on 'A Blooming Town' with colourful and attractive displays. The routes into Town are lined with brightly coloured plants—changing in the centre. We have started to add height to beds and introduced more sustainable plants.

Colour, Design, Choice of Plants

This is the first full 'In Bloom year' where the Streetscape services have been managed by the Town Council. This has made it easier to co-ordinate work with the In Bloom Team and introduce town-wide themes.

Lessons were learnt from the North West in Bloom and Britain in Bloom Feedback. Jon Wheatley from BiB visited Congleton in December to advise on improvements. This resulted in some of the bedding shapes being altered in the Park, longer term plans to add more grasses, altering plans for Antrobus Street Garden to reflect surrounding heritage, relooking at plant choices to add variation in height and rethinking some of the roundabout options.

Food4Free has continued its campaign to add blueberry bushes around the town and maintains and nurtures the edible and flowering plants at the Capitol Walk garden—meeting on the 4th Sunday of the month.

Orchards have become further established at all the Congleton Schools and at three community sites - Cheshire heritage variety of trees have been used such as Lord Derby.

Work continued to plant Rowan Trees in clusters around the town to add a splash of red in the autumn. The 100 trees were part of WW1 remembrance. The 100th tree was planted in November 2014.

The Town Council has employed an apprentice gardener—who is learning new skills planting in the park. A butterfly bed and ladybird bed were added by the Children's play area as well as a community allotment in the 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, Railway Station, Astbury Mere and Bath House.

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 and Cheshire East's Ansa section. Plants are grown at the nursery and delivered to the Town Council poly tunnels for planting out.



**Town Centre Flower—
pedestrian area**



Butterfly in the Park



**240 Hanging Baskets
sponsored by companies**



**Formal Plaque in celebration of
the World Cup Rugby 2015**

Horticultural Achievement (A)

Congleton Park

Originally designed in 1871 by Edward Kemp. HLF grant used to restore in 2005. 10 year maintenance contract has now ended so in a position to deviate from original plan. In 2015 have removed four small beds and replaced with two larger ones. Introduced some children's fun beds, formal plaque using Carpet Bedding represents Rugby World Cup. New Allotment. Sustainable planting. Taken on a gardens apprentice to teach planting and designing skills. Growzone community growing area (9 months of year). Streetscape maintain the park with support from Friends. Space to Bloom gardens grown by schools and youth groups



Congleton Park

Congleton Community Garden - Maintained and planted by volunteers. Note over **species of roses add in the 'scented' garden. Country Garden range of flowers at the Canal Street end. Garden has been established for 20 years—from a bare piece of unloved land in 1995.

Capitol Walk - Edibles and bee-friendly plants. Scheme designed for all year around colour. Looked after by volunteers

Dutch Wall - adding colour and hardy plants —looked after by a volunteer.

Fairground Car Park - removing old woody shrubs and introduced bee-friendly, edibles, fruit trees and sunflowers

Antrobus Street Garden—added soft fruit bushes and trees, bee-friendly bedding, removed most coniferous trees, redesign with section 106 and Congleton Partnership funds (£40K)

Mountbatten Way—added ** troughs, ** half moon, supplemented ** flower towers with some additional summer bedding (has spring flowers too)

Town Centre—businesses sponsored 240 baskets plus ** In Bloom baskets and two flower towers. Shop Window competition new for 2015

Roundabouts - three with bedding plants and two with sustainable planting. Adding more height to roundabouts, more grasses to the 'Heather Roundabout' in negotiation for sponsorship. Bears won GOLD at Tatton 2004

Cenotaph—unsuccessful with HLF grant for major changes. Streetscape continue to plant and care for the area.

Congleton and District Horticultural Society—49 years old! Record entries at Annual Show in the Town Hall in September 2014—140 categories. Under 16s enter free



Community Gardens—
now est. 20 years



New Community Allotment in the Park



Horticultural Show—
Town Hall Sept 2014

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 13 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 its Apple Juice campaign. The campaign is in its 6th year.

B1. Conservation and Biodiversity

Astbury Mere Country Park and Eco Centre - Astbury Mere is a former silica sand quarry that has been transformed into a much loved Country Park managed by a volunteer trust and with a paid Countryside Ranger support. The land covers 14ha of open space—which includes a wildflower meadow, pond, all weather easy access path and Cheshire's first 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. There is a Programme of activities including weekly Parkrun, Nordic walking, Pram Fit and Nature walks. In 2012 Congleton Sustainability Group introduced a Community Orchard within easy walking distance of the Mere.

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. 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 in 2014.

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. In 2014 it was designated a Coronation Meadow—an honour awarded to one meadow in every county. It is also a 'donor' meadow, which provides seeds for the creation of new meadows at 'recipient' sites in Cheshire.

Wildflower Meadows - Congleton Rotary has sponsored a wildflower meadow in the park at the site of the annual Rotary Bonfire for 4 years. There are also wildflower meadows at the Mere, and at many of the schools.



Ariel Shot of Astbury Mere



At Astbury Mere



Town Wood Interpretation Signs



Wildflower Meadow looks best in August

Environmental Responsibility

Eco Schools Project—Congleton has one of the largest clusters of Eco Schools—with 13 schools now holding a green flag

Re-using Summer and Winter Bedding—Over the past two years there has been a campaign to re-use bedding plants where possible—with only those plants not taken by local groups or organisations going to compost.

Allotments - Campaign to keep the Vale Allotments on-going after plans for potential development revealed. New allotment at park and churches

Sustainability Groups- plant and seed swaps prevented 2.5 tonnes of apples going to waste in 2014 - 1400 bottles of Apple Juice/ Cider. Apple Day held each year and apple pressing at local schools.

Cycle Routes—New path and route added from the Town Centre to the Railway station. Temporary cycle stands set up at events

Local Heritage—Bath House - introducing plants used for medicine and industry in Congleton since the 18th Century and protecting heritage.

Congleton Household Waste and Recycling - Tonnage 2014/15

Category	14/15 Tonnage (t)
Waste to landfill / incineration	705
Green Waste	522
Hardcore/Rubble	766
WEEE	199
Card	135
Wood / chipboard	503
Scrap Metal	175
Glass	15
Paper	59
Plastic	2
Textiles	52
Miscellaneous	11
Recoverable	78
Total Recycled / Reused	2517
Rate of recycling (Does not include rubble)	70%
Diverted from Landfill	78%



Junior Recycling Officers – winners!



**Seed Swaps—Astbury Mere
Oct 14 and May 2015**



**Congleton Apple Juice
and Congleton Cider**



**Community Orchard in
Bloom**

Community Participation

Congleton has over 150 local groups and organisations and a full 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. The In Bloom and partners have generated well over 3,000 hours of volunteer work on Bloom related activities.

c1. Development and Continuity

Congleton In Bloom and Food4Free provide opportunities for the public to understanding choosing, planting, growing and looking plants and areas—to create greater community pride. The group regularly asks the public to report Grot Spots and areas for improvement and actively seeks more volunteers to turn plans into action. Recruitment is carried out through Community Newsletters, Town Centre Activity days, Facebook, workshops, school visits and word of mouth. Certificates are awarded at an Annual Thank-you event in the Town Hall. Friends of Congleton Park and the Back2Back Gardens contributors hold separate thank you and celebration events.

The number of Local Authority employees working on the public realm has decreased over the past three years making it even more important to plan wisely, invest in proper equipment and work with partners where possible. Partners include Plus Dane Housing, National Community Service, Probation Service, local firms, Duke of Edinburgh Schemes. The town has 5 IYN all of which have their own volunteers determined to improve their areas year on year.

The Town Council manages the Polytunnel area of the park and agreements to allow partners to use the site for the majority of the year.

Railway and Canal Working Group

A volunteer team set up in March 2014 with a remit to improve the area around the canal and Railway Station. On average, 8 people have met every month with dramatic results. Improvements include planting, weeding, improved paths, community art and a more attractive area.

Congleton Food4Free

The group started with blueberry bushes and tubs in 2012. In 2013 it transformed the area by Capitol Walk to create a Bee Friendly and largely edible garden. In 2014-15 efforts concentrated on improving the Capitol Walk garden and assisting with the new planting at the back of the Fairground Car Park.

Tree Enhancement along the A34

In Autumn 2012 Lime Trees were planted on the A34 and in the Park. This is planning ahead so that the trees can be established before older deceased trees needs to come down.



Back2Back school gardens in Polytunnel



Planting up baskets



Railway and Canal Working Parties collecting litter



Capitol Walk bed—all year around colour

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. Community Plant-Ups take place in November and May where people can learn new skills and create something special. RHS trainers came in and spent a day with one of our primary schools enlightening and encouraging them to get creative with gardening. Workshops were held at Bromley Farm to teach people how to create hanging baskets. In Bloom members have worked with the high schools to create school gardens.

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. Thirteen of the 16 schools now hold at least one green flag, the other three 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 is a community environmental improvement that local people have related to and embraced. Cider was introduced this year.

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. In 2015 they have designed a ‘trenches garden’ for RHS Tatton, which will be displayed in the town after the show.

Clean up after your Dog Initiatives to encourage people to clean up after their dogs and not drop litter have been rolled out across the town supported by local people including school children and the local media.

Space Gardens—In 2014 Back2Back Gardens were introduced in Congleton with schools designing up gardens which were displayed in the Polytunnels and attracted lots of positive attention. This year the scheme is being repeated but rolled out to other youth groups and organisations with a ‘Space’ theme.

Bath House and Physic Garden—hold open days and is establishing itself as a location for events. Volunteers teach others about the historical aspects of the gardens and buildings.

Favourite Front Gardens—The public have been encouraged to nominate their favourite front gardens. Publicity is given to those entering resulting in greater competition in some areas of town!



School Children plant town tubs



Pre-school children growing flowers



Community Workshops June 2015



No Dog Fouling signs added to pavement

Spring Planting



Spring Bedding Plants—Town Centre



Blossom and Flags—Mountbatten Way



New Daffodils—Clayton Bypass



Spring entry—Favourite Front Gardens



Spring Bedding —Town Centre



Spring Planting—Heath View



Spring Congleton Park



Spring Blossom - St Mary's School



Bluebells—Town Wood

Favourite Front Gardens Churches and Businesses



Highly Commended - Cross Lane



Highly Commended Longsdale



Highly Commended Kingsley Street



Highly Commended Lower Heath



Highly Commended Park Road



Highly Commended Cedar Court



Congleton Library



Brown's Jewellers



Davenports Window Display



CHURCH—Mossley Holy Trinity



McCarthy Stone Retirement home



St Peters Church

Improvements 2015



Antrobus Street Gardens - Open Space opened up—new access, gate, arch, sculpture, paths, soft planting, out door gym equipment and eventually herb gardens. Work carried out using Section 106 monies, Congleton Partnership funding and with the support of Readsmoor Surgery (who own some of the land)



Grot Spot Sorting —A community walk-about in December generated a list of around 20 projects that needed completing—from painting the 1889 Town Bridge, to community tidy up areas, sign removal, bench painting, road markings etc



Moody Street Garden—Greening a Grey Area —this was flagged up by the Public as a particularly poor area. Old woody shrubs pulled out and area replanted with colour. Paving replaced

Improvements 2015



Congleton Railway Station and Canal Working Parties- since launching in Spring 2014 this group has held monthly parties put in over 360 volunteer hours. The group has unearthed an old path, cleared weeds, planted flowers, litter picked and vastly improved the area. Children produced six mosaics. Cheshire East paid for canal path improvements from the Town-side of the Railway. Northern Rail painted the station



Tree Planting— In Autumn 2014 local groups were involved in planting a further 58 Rowan Trees in small copses around Congleton. These will add a colour each Autumn. 100 were planted in total as part of the Town's WW1 commemorations. The final one was planted in November at St Peters Church. Avenue of Lime Trees in the Park are becoming well established ,



Litter Picking, Painting and Tidying throughout the year groups and organisations have been involved in litter picking, painting, and making Congleton a greener and cleaner place.

Big thanks go to...

Astbury Mere Trust
Astbury St Mary's Primary School
Bath House Trust
Bromley Farm Community Trust
Blackfirs Primary School
Bromley Farm Neighbourhood
Buglawton Community Group
Buglawton Primary School
Canal & Riverside Trust
Canal & Riverside Tidy Volunteers
Cheshire East Council
Congleton Business Association
Congleton Community Projects
Congleton Food 4 Free
Congleton Fire Station
Congleton High School
Congleton Horticultural Society

Congleton in Bloom Team
Congleton Inclosure Trust
Congleton Partnership
Congleton People's Trust
Congleton Rotary Club
Congleton Scouts
Congleton Sustainability Group
Congleton Town Council
Congleton West Rangers
Daven Primary School
Eaton Bank Academy
Eco-Learning
Electric Picture House
Friends of Congleton Park
Havannah Primary School
Marlfields Primary School
Mossley Beavers & Rainbows

Mossley Primary School
New Life Church Jubilee Club
Parks and Streetscape Team
Plus Dane Housing Group
Quinta School
Readsmoor Doctors Surgery
Scholar Green Primary School
120 shops and businesses
Smallwood Primary School
Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
Tim, Albert and Ian—Community Garden Volunteers
Various pre-schools—planting
William Dean Trust
Woodcocks' Well Primary School

Purple = provided funding



Our biggest thank-you must go to

Margaret Williamson MBE DL

Who started Congleton In Bloom in 1998 and who passed away suddenly on 7th April 2015.

Margaret was the inspiration and driving factor behind many of the greener and cleaner programmes, Congleton Park restoration and Asbury Mere development. Congleton in Bloom plans to keep her legacy alive by continuing the good work for many years to come and enthusing young people to respect the environment.