

## Thanks to...

Adullam Homes Housing Association Limited	Congleton Town Council
Ansa	Congleton West Rangers
Astbury Mere Care Home	DJM Nurseries
Astbury Mere Country Park Trust	Eco learning
Bromley Farm Community Trust	Friendly Faces Nursery
Bromley Farm Neighbourhood	Friends of Congleton Park
Buglawton Community Group	Graham Construction
Buglawton Cubs & Scouts	Heath View Extra Care
Buglawton In Bloom	Heliosa Care Home
Canal & River Trust	Hillary Avenue Allotments
Clayton Manor Care Home	Old Saw Mill- Secret Garden
Cheshire East Council & Highways	Shops and Businesses in Congleton
Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden Trust	St. Peter's Church
Congleton Community Projects	The Laurels Care Home
Congleton Fire Station & Cadets	U3A
Congleton Food 4 Free	William Dean Countryside & Education Trust
Congleton Scouts & Guides	All volunteers and their hard work!
Congleton High School- Print Room	
Congleton Horticultural Society	
Congleton Partnership	
Congleton Rotary Club	
Congleton Schools, pre-schools, Nurseries	
Congleton Streetscape Team	



### A message from Congleton In Bloom Chairman, David Brown

"We see the In Bloom competitions as a real force for good, something to aim towards, which has been something positive in the current circumstances. The original aim of the group is to encourage community involvement leading to a sense of pride in the community. We have continued our great work as much as we could including town tidies, outdoor planting, seed swaps etc. and for that over these past two years, I feel that Congleton In Bloom has gone from strength to strength."



# Congleton In Bloom Portfolio 2021



## Meet the Team



The In Bloom Committee’s core team of seven members have been meeting remotely via Zoom since April 2020 and throughout the national lockdowns. Only recently has the group been able to meet face to face. In these meetings, the team discussed how to carry on ‘blooming’ and to support those linked with In Bloom throughout the pandemic. 2020/21 has been a strange year for all, but the Congleton In Bloom team carried on the best they could with town tidies when applicable to help enhance the work in and around the town,

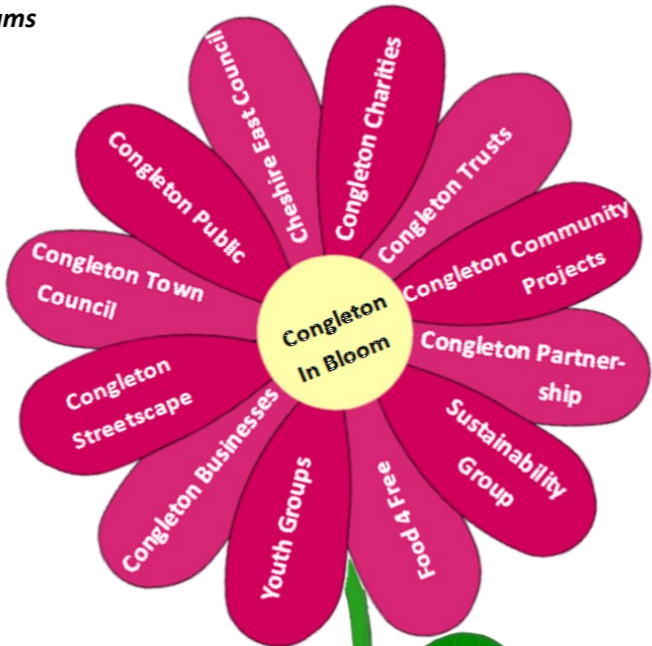
**David Brown, Ruth Burgess, Bob Edwards, Margaret Gartside, Martha Hayes, Patti Pinto, Glen Williams**

## Where it all started

Congleton In Bloom is one of the biggest and longest lasting community campaigns in Congleton, providing many benefits; increasing community pride, providing support and new friendships of people with similar interests, learning new skills and being part of a team. The group was set up by volunteers in 1998 and run fully on volunteer power until 2011. It was a campaign that the Town Council wanted to see continued and so agreed to take a more active role as this is a great way to work with the community. Over the 23 years the group has been in action, there have been many groups involved and physical transformations to the town.

## Aims & Objectives

- To make Congleton an attractive place to live, work and visit
- To provide opportunities for volunteers in the community to become involved either individually or in groups
- To make Congleton a clean, green town through anti-litter campaigns, organising litter picks, removal of graffiti & fly posting, improving local grot spots and recycling campaigns
- To promote tourism and support the retail sector by providing attractive floral displays and green spaces
- To raise standards and promote the town by entering competitions such as RHS in Bloom
- To encourage Eco Schools to gain green flag awards, encourage bio-diversity, energy conservation and the growing of local food
- To encourage intergenerational involvement
- To encourage people to take pride where they live and work



## Achievements

**Best Large Town North West in Bloom:** 2000, 2005, 2013, 2015, 2016 & 2017

**North West in Bloom GOLD:** 2000, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

**Finalists in Britain in Bloom:** 2001, 2007, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 (Cancelled), 2021

**Britain in Bloom Silver:** 2007, **Britain in Bloom GOLD:** 2014, 2016 & 2018

Six time winners of the Cheshire Civic Pride Awards

Sixteen Green Flag sites for the town - Congleton Park awarded 13th Green Flag & 1st Heritage Flag

Congleton Park Awarded the Cheshire Playing Fields Les George Parks Award 2017

Cheshire Community Pride, Best Kept Village- Overall Winner 2018

Cheshire Pride, Community Champion 2015- Patti Pinto. Community Champion 2018- David Brown

Little Gem Sites; Community Garden, Moody Street Garden, Two Bears Roundabout, Back-to-Back Gardens and more!

## Businesses In Bloom

In April 2020, Congleton Link Road was completed. Over the 2 year planning and construction process, GRAHAM Construction engaged with the community and local schools. One of their engagements was to help create an allotment at Marlfields Primary School. A CIB member designed the allotment and GRAHAM carried out the works as per the drawing. The school children and local community will maintain and develop the allotment for years to come. Along the 5.5km stretch of new road, upto 15,000 trees and hedgerows were planted, ponds and habitats created and wildflower areas were sown to promote biodiversity

As many businesses have struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic, the In Bloom team made the decision to supply and maintain the Town Centre hanging baskets for the second year running. The traders and town centre benefit from the brightly coloured baskets and so as a thank you for the continuous support and sponsorship, in 2020 and 2021, the In Bloom team gave back to the businesses.

Many businesses around the town support the In Bloom initiatives such as The Wharf and The Unicorn, both of these pubs have decorated their outdoor spaces with additional flowers and baskets, which makes for an attractive venue for their customers.

Linking to current ‘green issues’ Congleton Town Council’s Streetscape Team contribute by not sending anything to landfill. All that is collected by the Streetscape team is 100% recycled. Future plans is that the Town Council offices

## How Congleton In Bloom is Supported

Name	Amount	Details
Congleton Town Council	£12,000	In Bloom Budgets
Congleton Partnership	£6,000	Supporting the In Bloom Projects
Congleton Businesses	<i>Usually £4,850</i>	Baskets were provided free of charge to businesses in both 2020 & 2021 as the economy struggled, but we still wanted the Town Centre to look great which helps to increase footfall.
William Dean Trust	£71,000	£1,500 towards the tree project £2,000 each for 10 Congleton Primary Schools £25,000 towards projects at Ruby’s Fund– local charity £25,000 towards the new Sensory Garden at The Christie Hospital
Plus Volunteer Hours	£77,000	7,700 hours costed at £10 per hour

## Volunteer Hours

U3A Garden Group– 900 hours over four sites in Congleton  
Tree Group & Vols– in excess of 600 hours  
IYN’s approx. 2,000 hours total  
Town Tidies approx. 4,000 hours total  
Congleton In Bloom Team- Meetings; 200 hours  
Plus all of the work that the volunteers work on outside of CIB events.

In Congleton there are also a number of Waste Reduction Volunteers, who advise on composting, food waste etc.



## Calendar of Events 2020-21

### August 2020:

- ◇ Wildflower meadow in full bloom - Congleton Park.
- ◇ Keep on top of watering, deadheading and weeding.
- ◇ Taking pictures and notes for plant choice decision making for the following year.
- ◇ Community 'Town Tidy'.

### September & October 2020:

- ◇ Agreed Park Plaque to celebrate Congleton Park 150th Birthday— designed and to be planted by the Streetscape team.
- ◇ The last 'Town Tidy' in September due to October lockdowns.
- ◇ Production of an In Bloom Calendar with Friends of Congleton Park to celebrate 150 years of Congleton Park. Coordinated virtually via Zoom.

### November & December 2020:

- ◇ Town Centre Winter Tubs planted up by CIB Team due to COVID-19 restrictions, usually planted by children.
- ◇ Delivery of Christmas Trees. Rotary planted 'Tree of Light' in the Community Garden.
- ◇ Congleton Rotary Club provided purple crocuses for the international "Purple 4 Polio" scheme.
- ◇ Streetscape team protect plants from the frost.
- ◇ Buglawton In Bloom volunteers held several outdoor sessions and planted up new planters, three fruit trees, spring bulbs and extended the wildflower area.
- ◇ Lots of work was ongoing at the Community Garden in the Town Centre.
- ◇ The 'Trees for Congleton' group share their plans for the winter planting season.



### January & February 2021:

- ◇ Designs, colour choices and plant orders were finalised and ready to be planted in the spring.
- ◇ Winter maintenance— pruning trees, hedges and shrubs etc.
- ◇ Recycled over 120 Christmas Trees.
- ◇ Planning for the Community Festival and Wheelbarrow Challenge.
- ◇ Design started for the Park 'Hot & Cool' borders.
- ◇ Designs started for the new Link Road roundabouts. Communication with the local parishes for this.
- ◇ The CIB team continued to meet virtually throughout the multiple lockdowns.
- ◇ Virtual tours of open green spaces also posted on social media for people in isolation to enjoy.

### March & April 2021:

- ◇ Trees for Congleton tree planting started. Currently 3000+ trees planted in the first two years. Excluding those planted on private land.
- ◇ Plenty of pruning and tidying in the different pocket gardens.
- ◇ Orders placed for 240 hanging baskets for the businesses in the town centre.
- ◇ Two members of the In Bloom team attended an RHS National Finals Zoom conference.
- ◇ Start of National Gardening Week, good response at all sessions from group members and the public:

**Monday-** Hillary Avenue Allotments & Bromley Farm In Bloom, **Tuesday-** Community Garden, **Wednesday-** Elizabeth's Garden, **Thursday-** Bath House & Physic Garden & Margaret's Place, **Friday-** Congleton Park, **Saturday-** Riverside Garden, **Sunday-** Buglawton In Bloom. **#NationalGardeningWeek.**

## Calendar of Events 2020-21

### May 2021:

- ◇ May Town Tidy starting from the Community Garden.
- ◇ Town Centre tubs planted up for the summer by local school children— all old compost recycled.
- ◇ Hanging baskets, troughs and planters brighten up the town.
- ◇ More volunteers signed up to the In Bloom database.
- ◇ Beds rotovated and fertilised ready for bedding to be planted.
- ◇ Work continued on the Community Orchard at Astbury Mere, there was also a 'Town Tidy' at Astbury Mere.
- ◇ Wheelbarrow Challenge began with delivery of wheelbarrows and peat free compost to all entrants.
- ◇ Streetscape stripped the beds of Winter bedding, ready for the Summer planting.
- ◇ Members of the CIB team cleared, added compost and re-planted the Riverside Garden with wildflowers.

### June 2021:







- ◇ June Town Tidy starting from Antrobus Street Car Park.
- ◇ More community groups out in force to weed, plant and generally keep on top of the pocket gardens.
- ◇ Congleton maintains it's peat free status.
- ◇ Streetscape team added the Summer plants to the roundabouts and public spaces. Winter planting recycled to the IYN's.
- ◇ Volunteers have worked with the Streetscape team to help plant in the park, especially with the new sustainable beds.
- ◇ Town Bears on the roundabout have their yearly hair cut!
- ◇ Intensive summer season of mowing, weed spraying, strimming and watering.
- ◇ Work continued on Elizabeth's Garden by U3A volunteers, along with two other sites.
- ◇ Community groups created and posted various garden walks for those in isolation to enjoy.
- ◇ All troughs and tubs planted and in location for the public to appreciate. Including the children's tubs in the Bus Station and Town Centre.
- ◇ The new Cenotaph area was planted with sustainable borders by the CIB Team.
- ◇ Active Waste Reduction Volunteers trialling the use of Bio-wise compost across many sites. Several tonnes were delivered to the community polytunnel and distributed across the groups and schools.
- ◇ CIB Team drafted the NWIB route for judging day.



### July 2021:





- ◇ July Town Tidies planned; plenty of weeding, planting, pruning, litter picking and more...
- ◇ Grass and hedge cutting, deadheading, weeding, watering and litter picking works ongoing.
- ◇ FoCP Clean up in the park- cleaning, planting and weeding.
- ◇ Re-doing the paths in the Riverside Garden.
- ◇ CIB entering the National RHS Britain In Bloom by submitting three videos chosen from five categories.
- ◇ Another quick trim for the roundabout Bears.
- ◇ Complete planting in Garden of Reflection at the Community Gardens.
- ◇ Maintain the Elizabeth's Garden, new slate and plants also added.
- ◇ Work continues on the Community Festival to complete for the open weekends, August through September.



Project	Key Facts
<b>IYN Buglawton In Bloom</b> 	New team with new ideas. The group has been concentrating on the area outside the Church House in Buglawton. There has been sustainable planting and a wildflower area added with a bug hotel and lots of spring bulbs.
<b>Congleton Park</b> 	At the start of May 2019, Congleton Park had a bee hive installed. This is situated at top of the riverbank, behind the polytunnels and can be seen from the Pavilion bridge. This is part of an initiative to help save the bees! In the future, the In Bloom team would like to see this become an educational activity for schools. The bee hives have also produced local honey. December 2018, 100 ferns were planted by Friends of Congleton Park. As well as this, more recently, eight new Beech trees have been planted with a wildflower base. Two members of the In Bloom team created a compost bay in the Park. 2021 celebrates Congleton Park's 150 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary, to mark this, the main park plaque displays the 150th message, a commemorative calendar was created by the In Bloom team. The Friends of Congleton Park team have organized Sunday afternoon Brass Band Concerts, the first one was 'Roberts Bakery Brass Band' and more are planned during the Summer.
<b>Mountbatten Way</b> 	The planted trees are sponsored by Congleton Partnership. The troughs along Mountbatten Way continue to be planted with Winter bedding and sustainable planting. The plants are recycled for both the Summer and Winter planting schemes. This started in 2018 and now is an annual occurrence. It adds all year round colour to the dual carriageway. There is only a two week swap-over where the troughs are empty.
<b>West Street Rose Border</b> 	Members of the In Bloom team planted this area with a group of children in December 2013. A local resident has maintained this area. The local Town Trust agreed to pay and install a watering system to help the upkeep of this area. More volunteers now help to look after the area, it benefitted from old compost from the B2B gardens. 12 new roses added to extend the bed, also white and yellow primulas for more Winter colour and sunflowers in 2021. Project in line with the RHS Community 'Grow Social' initiative.
<b>Elizabeth's Garden</b> 	This project started in 2018 with Congleton In Bloom and the fire cadets to create a Suffragette Garden. In Spring 2019 work commenced with the fire cadets and U3A garden group. A local farmer donated 4 tons of top soil and the garden has been planted and renamed the Elizabeth's Garden to honour Congleton's own Suffragist: Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. Local William Dean Trust have sponsored this garden. Behind the garden, the West Road play park has recently been renovated and plants added. Work to this area is always ongoing.
<b>Community Gardeners Group</b> 	New for 2019, this gardening group adopted three CIB sites and have been working on them weekly since March. Throughout the pandemic, this group has still met up where they can (in line with restrictions) to continue to look after Congleton's pocket gardens.




## Ongoing Projects

-  **St. Stephen's Gate-** In celebration of Congleton Park's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Congleton In Bloom, with the Friends of Congleton Park team organised for the grassy entrance into the park by St. Stephen's Church to be re-planted with wildflowers. This project will encourage biodiversity and has created an attractive route into the Park. Funding was received from housing developers, a lottery scheme and a local charitable trust. Plug plants were purchased, nurtured, and grown on by three dedicated volunteers through the winter of 2020-21 until they could be planted on site. Sixty children from three local primary schools planted the wildflowers in this area along with their teachers and two members of the CIB team. The CIB team has received positive feedback about this site and many of the children that helped to plant have returned to show their parents all their hard work. This was great to see as it gives a sense of community pride!
-  **Riverside Garden-** This pocket garden has been adopted many times over the past 10 years by different community groups. This spring the Congleton In Bloom team took this on. They completely renovated this garden to create another attractive entrance into Congleton Park along the River Dane Walk Way. The CIB team cleared the front semi-circle bed and added tonnes of Biowise compost. Stepping stones were re-laid and more recently bark paths added for people to walk through the garden. A range of wild flowers and wild strawberries were planted here. The CIB team recognise this site as part of the Blue Campaign, with a blue heart to indicate re-wilding. Moving forward, the CIB team are looking to remove more of the large perennial weeds to allow the wildflowers to flourish.
-  **Hot & Cool Borders at Congleton Park-** Following the success of the Sunshine Border that the Congleton In Bloom team took to RHS Tatton Show in 2019 and also in line with the park's 150th anniversary, a member of the Congleton In Bloom team offered to re-design the two long borders, where certain plants had outgrown the space and ground elder and buttercup were rampant. Over the last 6 months, the Community Gardening Team have removed these weeds and overgrown perennials, creating the space for the two new designs. One bed is predominantly in the sun and so for this 'Hot Border' the plants chosen reflected the sun, using mainly yellow, orange, pink and red plants. These plants were also chosen as they attract bees and butterflies. The 'Cool Border', closer to the Town Wood and so predominantly in the shade was planted with cooler colours; silver, blue, purple and included more sensory plants; Eryngium, Stachys, Verbena and Helichrysum (curry) plants for smell. Both borders offer a range of colours, heights and textures, sustainable planting and have paths through them to encourage the public to be closer to nature.
-  **Library Shrubbery-** In 2020 this area was planted by the Food4Free team to extend their pollinator friendly area by Congleton Library. This area now backs onto the small wildflower meadow at the back of the Town Hall.



## Future Projects

-  **Wildflower Verges-** To encourage biodiversity and re-wilding in Congleton, the In Bloom team are looking for more locations in and around Congleton to re-wild with wildflower planting. In May 2021, the In Bloom team chose areas to target for 'No Mow May' and these were greatly received by members of the public, with some great feedback on the CIB Facebook posts. On the back of this, the team are exploring more areas to permanently re-wild.

**Link Road Roundabouts-** After the completion of the new Congleton Link Road, formally named 'Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy Way' this gave Congleton six new roundabouts to design and plant in line with the current colourful displays. The Town Council Streetscape Manager is working with the local parish councils to design these roundabouts which fall into their boundaries. One member of the In Bloom team has already designed a roundabout and these designs have been accepted.

**Congleton Celebrates 750 Years of the Town Charter in 2022-** To mark this, there will be a variety of events throughout 2022, including a Medieval Festival in the Park mid-August, as well as a week long historical exhibition for primary school children at the Town Hall. The Town Centre will be dressed with medieval flags and banners. The main park plaque will be planted with purple and gold to commemorate this special anniversary year.

## Community Garden Festival

Earlier this year Congleton In Bloom decided that as gardening had helped many through the stress and isolation of COVID-19, the group wanted to safely bring as many different groups together as possible at a local green space to celebrate gardening and to benefit their well-being, both physically and mentally. **‘Colours of the Rainbow’** was chosen as a vibrant theme, but also to link with the NHS rainbow that was frequently used throughout 2020/21.

Many schools and community youth groups have designed and planted their gardens. The age range of the gardeners starts at pre-schools and nurseries through to elderly residents in care homes. The grey tunnel has been injected with colour and encapsulates intergenerational working. (400 children and 100 elderly gardeners)

A first for the festival is a model ‘forest school’ and tree trail, linked with the National Young Tree Champion project and the Trees for Congleton group. It has been great working with a wide age range, as lots of enthusiasm and skill sets are shown and exchanged in the polytunnel.



The Community Gardeners managed to create their ‘Garden of Serenity’ for the festival, only buying a couple of small bags of sand for their path; the slabs and bricks were disused, the trellis was donated as were the hedgerow plants. Everything else they grew from seeds, cuttings or were given the plants during the last three years. The gardening team wanted to showcase a garden created from mainly recycled items to show how effective it can look as well as being sustainable and a place to be mindful.

In Autumn 2020 three rowing boats were donated to Congleton In Bloom. One is the centre piece of the festival. The boats were painted by volunteers. Flora bear in her boat was planted by Congleton West Rangers. After working on this project, some Rangers will be tour guides at the garden open weekends.

The Congleton In Bloom team has received many compliments and positive feedback for this festival and looks to continue and grow it year on year.

## Trees for Congleton

**Trees for Congleton-** Congleton Town Council declared a ‘Climate Emergency’ in Autumn 2019, following this, Congleton Partnership got on board with members of Congleton Sustainability Group and Congleton In Bloom to form ‘Trees for Congleton’ with the aim of planting 30,000 trees, one per person for those living in Congleton, over the time span of five years. This project has brought a lot of volunteers in to help. It has been advertised via the separate dedicated ‘Trees for Congleton’ Facebook page and shared multiple times by Congleton In Bloom, Congleton Town Council, Congleton Partnership and many individuals, it has had a great response so far. Different species of trees and hedgerows are being planted all over Congleton. In year two, of the five year tree project, the current tree totaliser shows that over 3,000 trees have been planted by 200 volunteers, accumulating over 400 volunteer hours. The In Bloom team find this very impressive considering the restrictions and lockdowns that hit in the second year of the scheme. Volunteers’ age ranging from 2 to 70+, highlighting the intergenerational ethos of Congleton In Bloom.

**Tree of Light-** As part of this project, one of the trees planted is situated in the Community Garden for the ‘Tree of Light’. This initiative launched in 2019 with a Christmas tree based in a large container and then recycled afterwards. After much thought on location by both the In Bloom team and the Congleton Rotarians, a tree was purchased and planted, with dedicated use of being the ‘Tree of Light’. Lit in December 2020 for the first year, this tree allows the public to leave written messages on stars that decorate the outer railings for their family members and friends that they cannot be with at Christmas time. A lovely initiative, supported by hundreds of local residents.

**Garden of Reflection-** From July 2021, Congleton’s ‘Garden of Reflection’ is now situated in the Community Garden, behind the memorial Treo statue and adjacent to the newly renovated Cenotaph, an ideal location for members of the public to sit and reflect. A Congleton In Bloom team member designed this area, the Streetscape team helped to remove the debris and re-build walls. The Community Gardeners have created borders filled with white flowering plants in this space to create a tranquil garden for all to enjoy.

The front border of the Cenotaph Garden was planted in June 2021 by Congleton In Bloom team members and staff from the Streetscape team, the borders are planted with sustainable planting to bring year-round colour to the site.



**Young Tree Champions-** Two Congleton Primary Schools; Saint Mary’s and Marfields are ‘Young Tree Champion’ Schools who have both completed their own ‘talking tree’ trail and planted trees to support the ‘Trees for Congleton’ initiatives. Buglawton Primary School are part of the Mersey Forest scheme and the Year 6 students at Mossley Primary School have helped to renovate their woodland area which includes new ‘Fairy Gardens’.

## Horticultural Excellence

Throughout the year, Congleton boasts colourful and attractive floral displays along with the town centre bunting and festoon lighting which creates a fun, festival feel to the town. The routes into town are lined with brightly coloured plants, with troughs adorning the centre of Mountbatten Way. This year, the Streetscape team have grown on all of the plants used throughout the town in the Park polytunnels. This includes: hanging baskets, troughs, flower towers, large planters, small tubs, all roundabout bedding and the fabulous Park displays.



**Congleton Park-** The Park is maintained by Congleton Town Council's Streetscape team with help from the Friends of Congleton Park. The Streetscape team is made up of 12 operatives, the team do a great job watering, deadheading and weeding public places, this along with litter picking and public bin emptying. In the park they are responsible for the planting, which over the years has seen more sustainable perennials added to complement the bedding displays. New rose beds and grasses have been planted, along with 100 ferns in Autumn 2018. The allotment has an established herb garden, designed and maintained by the Streetscape staff. Sustainable planting has been added at the sides of the park, which leads to a new seating structure in honour of the founder and great supporter of Congleton In Bloom, Margaret Williamson MBE DL. Other public areas are re-planted twice a year, so there are only four weeks in the year without plants. Several areas have been converted to sustainable planting to provide year round colour, reduce work load and attract pollinators, especially bees, which is now helped by the hives in the park. This year a 'hot and cool' borders has been added to the display to promote biodiversity.

**Below are areas that are mostly managed by volunteers:**

**Congleton Community Garden-** A new IYN for 2021. Planted and maintained by volunteers, including the 'Gardening Gang' with occasional volunteers from the U3A gardening group. The garden has won many awards. It is planted with a huge variety of trees, shrubs, hardy perennials, bulbs and has over 25 species of roses in the "scented" garden. More recently, the 'Garden of Reflection' has been moved to this area as a quiet place to reflect, adjacent to the recently renovated Cenotaph, this seemed the most appropriate site.

**Dutch Wall-** Adding colour and hardy plants, this area is looked after by volunteers.

**Margaret's Place-** This public open space was renovated in 2015 adding perennials, shrubs, an apple core sculpture, soft fruit bushes and trees and bee-friendly bedding as well as outdoor gym equipment. Signage was added in 2016. Now looked after by the 'Gardening Gang'.

**Moody Street Garden-** This area had a make-over with new surfacing and furniture. The sensory garden is tended by local nursery groups and is a calm, sensory retreat in the town centre.

**Roundabouts-** Congleton has a reputation for fantastic roundabout designs. Three with seasonal bedding plants and two with sustainable planting, including a new 'spring bulb' circle. Signs were added to show off Congleton as a Gold In Bloom town. In the future, the In Bloom group will look to coordinate with the design of the new Link Road roundabouts and add these into the selection of displays. These are maintained by Streetscape gardeners.

**Congleton & District Horticultural Society-** Over 50 years old, the group holds monthly meetings, open to the public, with an annual show each September at the Town Hall, where local people display over 140 varieties of plants, flowers, fruit, veg and handicrafts. A record number of young gardeners were presented with awards in 2019. Due to the pandemic the show was cancelled in 2020 & 2021, but will return in 2022. Members of the society will be judging the 2021 Wheelbarrow Challenge.

**Congleton Choral Society-** This musical group celebrates its 50th anniversary and has a new bed in the park, planted up by group members in purple and gold, the design incorporates musical notes to identify the group.

Other areas include Astbury Mere Country Park, Congleton Churches, Congleton Canal, Railway Station, the Secret Garden at the Old Saw Mill and the Buglawton 'green' area in front of the Church House, also other Congleton Public Houses.

## Community Participation

Congleton has over 150 local groups and organisations who contribute a lot to make Congleton what it is! 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 team and partners have generated well over 7,000 hours of volunteer work on In Bloom related activities. Recruitment is carried out through community newsletters, town centre activity days, Facebook & Twitter advertising, workshops, school visits and word of mouth. More recently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings have been online, and outdoor works could only take place considering the Government regulations. Some groups provided video tours of their gardens for those in isolation to enjoy. It has been great to see the community participation continue throughout the pandemic.

### Development & Continuity

Congleton In Bloom, the IYNs, U3A and Food4Free provide opportunities for the public to understand choosing, planting, growing and looking after 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. A grot spot that has been improved is an entrance into a play park area on West Road, this was dug out by the Fire Cadets from Congleton Fire Station and designed and planted By U3A gardeners to create a garden to honour the Suffragette movement and local Congleton Suffragist- Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy.

♥ **Bath House & Physic Garden-** A volunteer group was formed about 20 years ago, to renovate the old garden and Bath House. The team meet weekly to improve the area. Lots of hard landscaping in Winter 2016 and Spring 2017 took place as well as new planting, funded by a grant awarded through the Tesco "Bags of Help" scheme. This IYN hosts open days and tours, as well as now being a venue for the annual Hidden Places arts & Jazz n' blues performances. The BHPG team are delighted to have rainwater harvesting installed.

♥ **Congleton Food4Free-** A dedicated group of volunteers began the Congleton Food4Free initiative back in 2012 with blueberry bushes, since then the garden at Capitol Walk has been transformed with edible and bee-friendly planting, autumnal perennials were planted to provide all year round colour.

**Old Saw Mill Secret Garden-** In April 2016 this was a derelict area and rescued for the Old Saw Mill's open day in May 2016. A group of volunteers have worked tirelessly to renovate the area. The garden was designed based loosely on Jekka McVik's Apothecary garden at Chelsea by CIB team members.

♥ **Vale Allotments-** A new IYN for 2021, the allotments were bought by Congleton Green Spaces Trust in 2016 and supported by a campaign led by Congleton Sustainability Group.

♥ **Community Orchard-** Congleton has many Community Orchards, including; Astbury Mere Country Park, New Life Church, Fairground Car Park, Hillary Avenue Allotments, Tesco, Lamberts Lane, Lady Warburton's Walk, Padbury Lane, Hillfield Steps, as well as 'pocket orchards' at other ten sites.



## Bloom for All Ages

**Eco Schools Project-** Congleton has one of the biggest clusters of Eco Schools in the North West, all 16 schools are registered with the RHS campaign for school gardening with awards at various levels. 13 of these schools have been awarded green flag from KBT Eco-schools, two of which have received five or six green flags each. Their eco topics include school grounds, biodiversity, healthy living, water, litter and waste. December 2020 saw local children's nursery 'Friendly Faces' gain its first green flag.

Out of the 16 Primary and Secondary Schools in Congleton, one of them became joint Winner of the Cheshire East JRO finals after two years as runner up. The major project was harvesting one tonne of excess apples some donated to Congleton Sustainability Group, some made into Saint Mary's Apple Juice and cider. Despite the pandemic, Saint Mary's Primary School still harvested and donated one ton of apples to prevent them going to waste. Previously awarded best set of recycling materials out of 60 schools in Cheshire East having made 368 bottles of their own apple juice.



Another primary school won an award for wildlife equipment for Learning from Landscapes.

Our Eco-schools are passionate about recycling, no litter, improving school grounds and gardening in school and out in the community.

Twice a year children from each of the Primary Schools are invited to plant up the small town centre tubs. Unfortunately over the past year, the November plant-up was cancelled, but, adhering to social distancing guidelines, the May plant-up went ahead and the small tubs positioned in the bus station area and town centre look great!



In addition to the tub planting, children from three primary schools helped to re-plant a new CIB project for 2021, St. Stephen's Entrance, this was part of Congleton Park's 150th celebrations, by creating an attractive entrance into the park for all to enjoy. All children and teachers enjoyed and have been back to the site to show off their work!



As part of Congleton In Bloom promoting intergenerational work, the team have previously worked with local care home Bradwell Court, amongst others, but Bradwell Court gardens needed a makeover. In Bloom team members met with the Home Manager to work out what could be done. From there a programme of garden sessions were decided. Friends & relatives were invited to help the residents, along with Bromley Farm Youth Group. Planters were repainted, beds weeded and dug over, a path to the greenhouse was laid, new compost added, plants donated.

Care Homes and Primary Schools work well together, currently this work has paused due to COVID-19 restrictions, but we all hope to see this return as it brings many benefits.

## It's Your Neighbourhood

Eight IYN's for Congleton in 2021. This year the Congleton In Bloom team have provided support to all groups via guidance, volunteer hours, recycling of Summer and Winter bedding plants and donating them to the groups, as well as Biowise compost for all IYN's.



**Buglawton In Bloom-** A volunteer-led team in Buglawton that looks after the area on the A54 main road. These volunteers love gardening and want to make Buglawton 'Blooming Marvellous'!



**Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden-** Congleton Bath House was rescued from demolition. A Physic Garden with a range of medicinal, industrial and edible plants was created within the grounds by Congleton Building Preservation Trust, complete with a Georgian Bath House.



**Friends of Congleton Park-** A group of trustees who look after the activities and welfare of Congleton Park. They meet regularly to discuss plans, maintenance and future projects.

**Bromley Farm In Bloom-** Officially started nine years ago, although the Trust has been involved with environmental projects for the last 18 years. The group has covered a range of projects from tackling litter and dog-fouling to the installation of new paths and more. The group works with many surrounding residents and volunteers, including the Youth Club that meets at the Bromley Centre.



**Heath View Extra Care-** Heath View is a local retirement housing complex, which now has a lovely garden for their residents to sit and relax. Many residents are involved with the garden maintenance and design.



**Hillary Avenue Allotments-** The association was set up 13 years ago to run the town allotments, providing 20 plots for local people and community groups to get involved. The group has an active committee that continues to develop new features, including;; fruit orchard, wildflower area, storage facilities and introduction of trial plots for less mobile residents. Future plans include water harvesting.



**Community Gardens-** A new IYN for Congleton In Bloom in 2021, the same year the gardens celebrates its 25th Anniversary. A new group of volunteer gardeners has been set up here to maintain the pocket town-centre garden, and more recently worked very hard on the re-location and design of the 'Garden of Reflection', within the Community Gardens, adjacent to the new Cenotaph.



**Vale Allotments-** Close to the Town Centre, but hidden away within the small Howty Valley, which connects the Town Centre with the open countryside. The entrance is off the historic Vale Walk which connects Priestly Fields & Moody Street with Waggs Road. It has been in use for growing food for as long as anyone can remember. Bought in 2016 to save from being built on, the area now has about 30 plots, a community orchard and pond... a haven for wildlife and people.



# Environmental Responsibility

## Conservation & 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 with paid Countryside Ranger Support. The land covers 14hs of open space- which includes a wildflower meadow, pond, all weather easy access path and Cheshire's first and only 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 upkeep of the site. Schools from around the area use the educational facilities. There is usually a programme of activities including; weekly Parkrun, Nordic walking, Pram Fit, Nature walks, U3A walking groups, also, dog training classes, by the 'Dog Father'. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Visitor Centre was shut and the activities were on hold. Throughout all the lockdowns, Astbury Mere was well used by the public for their daily exercise. The all-weather path was ideal for people to get out and walk. Astbury Mere, Congleton Park and Dane-in-Shaw Pastures, amongst other green open spaces were well utilised and said to have helped with people's mental health as people could go for walks to clear their heads. The Congleton Sustainability Group introduced a Community Orchard in 2012 within easy walking distance of the Mere, in spring 2016, this was upgraded with new steps, sculpture and soft fruit under planting. A commemorative woodland and wildflower meadow for late Trustee Margaret Williamson was created at the Mere in 2016 by volunteers. The Orchard at the Mere was the first of Congleton's community orchards. This is currently looked after by the Congleton West Rangers and the community gardeners.

**Congleton Town Wood-** The Town Wood is an important biological resource in the heart of Congleton to the north of the park. It is an Ancient and Semi-Natural woodland, a 1000 year old remnant of riparian woodland, now a County SBI. Formal bound gravel paths ensure accessibility through the wood throughout the year and the park wardens along with volunteer teams ensure the paths are kept clear. During the Spring there is a superb display of native bluebells, local people can find out more through organised walks and talks. Numerous bird species can be observed in the wood and new bird boxes have been added, along with an interpretation board.

**Dane-In-Shaw Pasture-** This is an 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, including nearby Swettenham Meadows.

**Wildflower Meadows-** Congleton Rotary has sponsored a wildflower meadow in the park at the site of the annual Rotary Bonfire for 8 years. There are also wildflower meadows at the Mere and at many of the schools. £13,000 worth of S106 money was earmarked to create new wildflower meadows along roadsides in 2019/20, this has been deferred until 2021/22.

Congleton has adopted the 'Blue Campaign' and so be sure to look out for the blue hearts throughout the town. Wildflower meadows are something that the In Bloom team are passionate about, as they encourage re-wilding.

**Congleton Park Allotments-** Previously an Aviary, the park allotment was introduced in 2013 after a suggestion by the In Bloom judges. The allotment is planted by the Streetscape team, signposted and enjoyed by the public. Bug Hotels, Hedgehog Houses and Compost Bays have been added to encourage biodiversity. To make this more interactive and educational there are leaflets for children to pick up and identify the different foods and herbs here.



Congleton Bandstand & Wildflower Meadow



Dane-in-Shaw Pastures



Congleton is taking its commitment to the environment seriously and has recently set up a Congleton Green Group and Trees for Congleton which work closely with Congleton Sustainability Group, Congleton Partnership and Congleton Town Council.

♥ **Sustainability Group-** The Sustainability Group collect unwanted apples from the public to make them into apple juice and cider, this prevents the apples from going to waste. Other unwanted fruits that are donated are made into a variety of jams, jellies and chutneys. The profits from the sales of these items are ploughed back into local community projects. Teams of volunteers make juice at the Old Saw Mill. The team also experimented with making cider vinegar. Now 10 tonnes of apples per year are processed onsite at the Old Saw Mill.

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

♥ **Reduce-** Converting some bedding into more sustainable planting ; recycling plants where we can to the IYN groups and other green spaces in the town.

♥ **Reuse-** Spring and Winter bedding plants used in other areas, these get offered to members of the public to over-winter. Any plants not taken are used for composting. In Congleton Park, the sustainability group built a compost bin from old pallets, sited at the park allotment. The planters that have been replaced in the Town Centre and along Mountbatten Way, have been reused by local groups who have purchased the planters and re-planted to bring some colour to their areas, groups include: Bromley Farm In Bloom, Daneside Theatre, the Old Saw Mill, residents in Mossley. Thousands of bulbs have been stored overwinter and re-planted throughout the town. The plants used for the RHS Tatton border gardens were sourced and grown locally by volunteers and then after the shows were re-planted in other gardens to avoid waste.

**Recycle-** All households in Congleton have "silver" recycling bins, collected every two weeks, 87% of waste taken to the household amenity centre is recycled. This is less than 5% landfill. Dual bins in the town centre and park incorporate separate sections for recycling and general waste. Congleton Town Council's Streetscape team are 100% recyclable with nothing going to landfill, the Town Council offices at the Town Hall plan to follow suit.

## Local Heritage

**Congleton Park-** Originally designed in 1871 by Edward Kemp. September 2017 marked Kemp's bicentenary, the Friends of Congleton Park team celebrated this with a guided tour around the park in his name. The Park celebrates its 150th Anniversary this year (2021), the raised bed was designed to show this off and a promotional calendar was made and sold to members of the public in Autumn 2020.

♥ **Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden-** Introducing plants used for medicinal and industry purposes in Congleton since the 18th Century and protecting the heritage. A unique indoor bath house of the era is located here.

**Congleton Bears-** Congleton is nicknamed "Bear Town" from the 17th Century when according to legend 'Congleton Rare, Congleton Rare, Sold the Bible to Buy a Bear!' You'll see bear references all around the town, including the green topiary bears on the main roundabout.

**Treo Statue-** Statue erected in 2018 to a local war hero dog "Treo" funds raised by local people to honour this award winning dog.

**Elizabeth's Garden-** This garden has been planted using Green, White and Violet plants- an acronym for "Give Women the Vote" as this area is tribute to our own Congleton Suffragist Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. Plans are currently underway for a statue of Elizabeth in the Town Centre and an Elizabeth's Trail.

## Appendix 1 - Summer Plant List For Congleton green spaces, roundabouts and park

Plant Name	Quantity
Ageratum Blue Champion	400
Alyssum Clear Crystal Mixed	2500
Antirrhinum Appeal & Sonnet Mixed	650
Begonia Tuberous Mocca Mixed & Apple Blossom	350
Begonia Devil Pink, Devil Red & Devil White	2750
Begonia Heaven Red & Heaven Rose	400
Begonia Illumination Golden Picotee	100
Begonia Nonstop Yellow, Citrus Mixed & Mocca Mixed	2600
Begonia Organdy Mixed	300
Begonia Semperflorens Devil Mixed & Heaven Mixed	2200
Begonia Supercascade Mixed	200
Begonia Tuberous Sunburst	500
Calibrachoa White Rose Vein	100
Cannas Brown Leaf & Green Leaf	66
Cinerarias Cirrus	600
Cordylines Green & Red	54
Figaro Orange, Red, Violet, White & Yellow Shades	500
Fuchsia	10
Geranium Palladium Candyfloss Mixed, Apple Blossom, Bullseye Light Pink, Bullseye Mixed, Horizon Violet, Horizon Pink, Lavender & Red Picotee	3600
Impatiens Blue Pearl, Divine Islander Mixed, Divine Mystic Mixed, Hot & Spicy	2900
Lobelia Cardinalis Queen Victoria, Crystal Palace, Rosamond, White Lady &	2800
Marigold African Marvel Mixed, African Orange & Yellow, American Marvel	2750
Non Stop Begonia Orange & White	600
Ornamental Millet Purple Baron	25
Osteospermum Berries and Cream Mix	200
Pyrethrum Golden Moss	500
Red Salvias Vanguard	300
Salvia Patio Blue, Patio Deep Blue, Purple Vista & Victoria Blue	2250
Sunflowers (3/4ft)	20
Victoria White Salvias	500
Zinnia Zahara Double Strawberry	1000
	<b>31725</b>

## Appendix 2 - Recycling Figures


### Congleton Household Waste & Recycling

Category	20/21 Tonnage
Amenity Waste to Landfill	778.57
Green Waste	530.02
Card	119.89
Chipboard/Mixed Wood	281.03
Glass	10.95
Paper	52.02
Plastic Bottles	3.87
Wood	209.41
Textiles	47.61
Small WEEE (SDA)	105.26
Large WEEE (LDA)	44.96
<b>Total Tonnage</b>	<b>3,145.37</b>
<b>Total Recycled</b>	<b>2,307.19</b>
<b>Total Reused</b>	<b>54.47</b>
<b>Diverted from Landfill</b>	<b>75.2</b>

## Appendix 3 - Social Media

Thousands of likes, shares and great feedback!

[www.congleton-tc.gov.uk](http://www.congleton-tc.gov.uk)  
[www.congletonpartnership.co.uk](http://www.congletonpartnership.co.uk)  
[www.friendsofcongletonpark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofcongletonpark.co.uk)  
[www.astburymerecountrypark.uk](http://www.astburymerecountrypark.uk)  
[www.porthaven.co.uk/astbury-mere-congleton](http://www.porthaven.co.uk/astbury-mere-congleton)  
[congletonbhpg.co.uk](http://congletonbhpg.co.uk)  
[www.theoldsawmill.org](http://www.theoldsawmill.org)  
[www.nlchurch.org.uk](http://www.nlchurch.org.uk)  
[www.thealexandrathotel.com](http://www.thealexandrathotel.com)  
[www.congletonu3a.org.uk](http://www.congletonu3a.org.uk)

 @CongletonTown

[@Congletontowncouncil](https://www.facebook.com/CongletonTownCouncil) (2,924 followers)  
[@Congleton-In-Bloom-1377417495816332](https://www.facebook.com/Congleton-In-Bloom-1377417495816332) (871 followers)  
[@Congleton-Partnership-39675823430058](https://www.facebook.com/Congleton-Partnership-39675823430058) (238 followers)  
[@FofCP](https://www.facebook.com/FofCP) (794 followers)  
[@CongletonPark](https://www.facebook.com/CongletonPark) (4,190 followers)  
[@AstburyMereCountryPark](https://www.facebook.com/AstburyMereCountryPark) (3,840 followers)  
[@Congleton-Bath-House-and-Physic-Garden-183758682045944](https://www.facebook.com/Congleton-Bath-House-and-Physic-Garden-183758682045944) (514 followers)  
[@OldSawMill](https://www.facebook.com/OldSawMill) (2,101 followers)  
[@Congleton-Sustainability-Group-1633258516905672](https://www.facebook.com/Congleton-Sustainability-Group-1633258516905672) (299 members)  
[@Buglawton-In-Bloom-752316145167633](https://www.facebook.com/Buglawton-In-Bloom-752316145167633) (303 followers)  
[@NewLifeChurchCongleton](https://www.facebook.com/NewLifeChurchCongleton) (813 followers)  
[@alexandrathotel](https://www.facebook.com/alexandrathotel) (1,423 Followers)  
[@CongletonFood4Free](https://www.facebook.com/CongletonFood4Free) (488 Followers)  
[@Trees-for-Congleton-102719481683789](https://www.facebook.com/Trees-for-Congleton-102719481683789) (181 followers)  
[@The-Vale-Allotments-145140415692844](https://www.facebook.com/The-Vale-Allotments-145140415692844) (141 followers)



### Public Feedback

The Town looks great and full of colour! Just what we need!!

The upkeep of the local green spaces in Congleton is lovely, it makes you appreciate what you have!

The work of the numerous volunteers and Streetscape team is fantastic!

I brought my children to one of the community 'town tidies' it was a great morning and we felt good after it, we will be coming to more!

The town is so tidy and welcoming, keep up the good work to all involved!