

# CONGLETON IN BLOOM

## BRITAIN IN BLOOM FINALISTS 2022



## **Table of Contents**

Welcome	1
Introduction	2
• Aims	3
• The Team	3
• Achievements	3
Congleton In Bloom calendar of events	4
Partners, IYN groups	10
Section A Horticulture	11
Section B Environment	15
Section C Community	25
Environment & Community	27
70 Cherry trees	28
Biodiversity projects	29
New projects for 2022	30
Appendix 1 Survey of IYN & Other Sites	31
Appendix 2 Recycling Figures	31
Appendix 3 Social Media	31
Appendix 4 Communication Press	32



## Welcome from David Brown, our Chair

The last three years have not been without significant challenges, this has given the team the chance to reassess our strategy and approach to maintaining and enhancing the “Congleton Experience”. We have developed very strong working groups with Congleton Partnership for specific projects which impact the environment and biodiversity.

- Tree planting 30k over 5 years (just over 15k planted so far)
- No mow May Project
- Re-wilding – planting green spaces with wildflowers, shrubs and trees. Liaising with the public to find the best sustainable solution.
- Orchard planting project
- The Just Bee Garden

The ‘recycling plants’ programme goes from strength to strength with the local radio show helping to spread the message and providing a positive message to all its listeners.

After three years we are beginning to see the impact of the ‘Keep your street weed free’ program, as more households are getting involved and feeling proud about where they live

And last but not least, our thanks go to Amanda Martin who retired as a bloomer volunteer this year after 15 years as a member of the team and we welcome two new members Sue Conway and Russell Chadwick who have joined the committee.

Thank you to everyone involved and look forward to your continued support throughout the year



## Introduction

- ❖ *Welcome to the market town of Congleton in Cheshire*
- ❖ *Congleton in Bloom began in 1998, initially run by volunteers. The team is now a mix of volunteers and the town council, who meet regularly (zoom or face-to-face) to plan the events, activities and floral displays throughout the town.*
- ❖ *This year the Queen celebrates 70 years on the throne. We have planted 70 special cherry trees all around the town in her honour.*
- ❖ *2022 is special for Congleton as it is 'Charter Year', commemorating 750 years since the town charter was granted, everyone has been engaged with making a visit to the town one to remember.*
- ❖ *Our new 'Just Bee' garden in Congleton Park demonstrates sustainable pollinator friendly gardening, together with enhancing the well-being of our visitors. Numerous local charitable trusts and voluntary organisations have given grants to make this possible.*
- ❖ *Many more trees, hedges and orchards have been planted at a number of sites, bringing the total planted over 3 years to about 15,000.*
- ❖ *Enhancing biodiversity throughout the town has been a focus since 2019, e.g. no mow May, the Blue Campaign, wildflower meadows, hedgerows*
- ❖ *We hope that you enjoy your visit to Congleton today*



*Astbury St Mary's jubilee tree planting*



*Planting begins at the Just Bee Garden*



*Town tidy based at Astbury Mere CP*



*Scouts sowing wildflowers in Congleton park*

## Aims

- To make Congleton an attractive place to live, work and visit
- 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
- encourage biodiversity, energy conservation, sustainable growing and growing food locally
- To provide opportunities for volunteers in the community to become involved either individually or in groups & encourage people to take pride where they live and work
- To raise standards and promote the town by entering competitions such as RHS Britain in Bloom
- To promote tourism and support the retail sector by providing attractive floral displays and green spaces
- To encourage our Eco Schools and parks to gain green flag awards
- To encourage intergenerational involvement

## The Congleton in Bloom Team

Cllr David Brown	Chair
Cllr Margaret Gartside	Green group
Cllr Russell Chadwick	Town centre
Ruth Burgess	Streetscape CTC
Sue Conway	Resident
Bob Edwards	Resident
Glen Williams,	Tidy town champion
Patti Pinto	eco, conservation biodiversity



## Achievements

**Britain in Bloom: Finalists in** 2001, 2007, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 (Cancelled), 2021, **2022**

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

**BIB Community Awards 2021:** Highly Commended: Green Solutions, Achievement: Community & Planting with purpose

**North West in Bloom GOLD:** 2000, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011-2019, **2021** (14 golds)

**Best Large Town North West in Bloom:** 2000, 2005, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2021



**Congleton Park** awarded 14th **Green Flag & 2nd Heritage Flag** (2021), RHS Gold medal 2019 & 2021

Cheshire Playing Fields 'Les George' Parks Award 2017

Green Flags in nurseries, schools & parks

## Congleton:

Six-time winners of the Cheshire Civic Pride Awards

Numerous Little Gem awards

Cheshire Community Pride, Best Kept Village- Overall Winner 2018

Cheshire Pride, Community Champion 2015- Patti Pinto.

RHS Community Champion 2018- David Brown

## Calendar of events August 2021- July 2022

- **August** NWIB judging; enjoying the childrens' floral displays, maintaining grass verges, pocket parks and floral displays etc



- **September** Children attend the colours of the rainbow community garden festival; Breakdown of Garden Festival



BIB community awards announced, collecting Biowise compost;



Celebrating apple harvest at school orchard; planting up at the Cenotaph before dedication ceremony

- **October** Planting up winter tubs with schoolchildren, change-over to winter bedding displays; begonia bulbs & cannas saved.



Celebrating NWIB awards in Congleton town hall, **GOLD** & **best in NW** large town category; 14<sup>th</sup> green flag for Congleton Park



Astbury Mere CP talk by Ranger;  
CIB & Trees for Congleton, Plastic-free Congleton stands at Green Fayre in town centre.

Congleton Apple Juice on sale OSM





Congleton in Bloom stand

Sharing our rewilding plans

**November**

general tidy-up at the park,

Hedge & tree planting season begins by Trees for Congleton volunteers;



new fruit tree nursery started at the park by community gardeners; childrens' tub plant-up

Community gardeners planting up at the Cenotaph;



The Cenotaph - after the Service of Remembrance

- **December** Rotary 'Tree of Light' at the Community Garden, Christmas trees through the town centre; adapting Bee garden design, sharing with young designer & FoCP



- **January** time for snowdrops, Community gardeners transform areas of the Community garden (CG); mulching, pruning



- **February** Just Bee garden: site agreed with landowner; applying for grants, looking for contractors; more Biowise compost delivered by Ansa to park.  
2nd Community Gardening Festival invites issued to schools, nurseries & care homes.  
The crocuses are out! Pruning the roses at CG, more tree planting!



- **March** 1<sup>st</sup> town tidy based at Community garden; BIB finalist seminar



Due to redevelopment we have been transplanting the Food4free garden at Capital Walk to the Fairground garden;



- tidying borders in the park ready for spring;
- planting 70 cherry trees for the Queen's Green Canopy; Elizabeth's garden tidied;
- Clearing wildflower stems at St Stephen's Church entrance.
- Advising care homes, visiting football club (new IYN); working with bowling club on their garden.
- Planting last of new hedgerows with young gardeners. Contact all IYN & new IYN & businesses for entry to NWIB 2022.

Draft BIB tour by CIB team (time to self-assess)



enjoying the dazzling daffodil and blossom displays around the town



- **April** 2<sup>nd</sup> town tidy; plant swap; Easter treats, sowing sunflower seeds for Ukraine & giving away wildflower seeds to residents;



Work on the Just Bee Garden begins (paths installed, planting with students & volunteers);



- **May:** 3<sup>rd</sup> town tidy at Congleton Park; kid's tubs planted, winter bedding removed, primulas distributed to schools, care homes, etc; IYN BHPG spring open day; 'Just Bee garden' planting continues; check all the newly planted trees, hedges & fruit trees, weed, water etc



Hankinson's field: Planting wildflower plugs with local children: May town tub planting



- **June:** summer floral displays planted; 2 June picnic in the park (celebrating the Queen's platinum jubilee); portfolio finished & submitted. Finish Just Bee garden. Community Garden Festival: planting back-to-back gardens, the boat, wheelbarrow challenge (30)



Beginning the new school garden at CHS

- **July:** town tidies; final preparations for NWIB judging on 26 July; BIB judging on 2 August
- **August:** Judging, CGF open each weekend; 13<sup>th</sup> August Medieval celebration, Congleton Park

There are over 150 **volunteers** involved in our many projects, with over 350 involved in the Jubilee cherry tree project.

### Expanding our partnerships in our community 2021-2022

The Wednesday Club at Congleton Football Club; Coronation Bowling Club, Greengables Care Home, NHS Congleton War Memorial Hospital, Congleton High School new garden, Visyon. Just Bee Garden at Congleton Park, involving multigenerational sustainable, biodiverse gardening



'Coro' bowls border Oct 21      Congleton War Memorial Hospital;      1<sup>st</sup> cherry tree for the jubilee

Encourage businesses as partners: Alexandra Court Hotel, The Lion and Swan Hotel, shops, sponsors

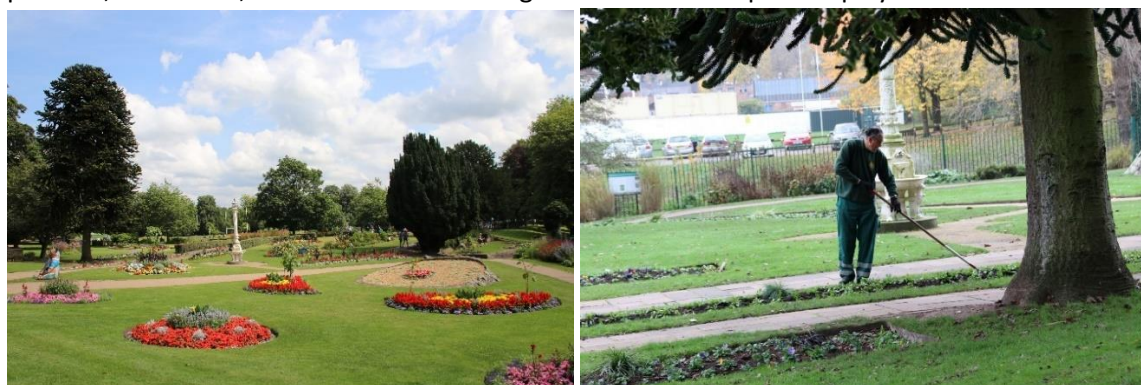
Involve: 8 Care homes, all 9 primary schools & both high schools (wheelbarrow challenge, back to back gardens, jubilee tree planting)

Charitable Trusts and voluntary groups, e.g. The Rotary Club, Congleton ('planting for polio', thousands of purple crocuses and the Tree of Light at the Community Garden); sponsorship of school gardens by WD Trust

## RHS judging Criteria

### Section A Horticulture, (A1, A2, A3, A4, overall impression, plant selection, maintenance & quality)

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 along the centre of Mountbatten Way. The Streetscape team have grown on all of the plants (supplied by a local nursery) used throughout the town in the park's polytunnels. This includes: hanging baskets, troughs, flower towers, large planters, small tubs, all roundabout bedding and the fabulous park displays.



[Congleton Park](#)- visit on the tour, see new info board on History of CP, celebrated 150 years in 2021



The park is maintained by Congleton Town Council's Streetscape team with help from the Friends of Congleton Park (FoCP).

#### The Streetscape team

- has 12 operatives. In the park they are responsible for the planting, which has seen more sustainable perennials added recently to complement the bedding displays. New rose beds and grasses have been planted. The allotment has an established herb garden, designed and maintained by the Streetscape staff. The team do a great job watering & weeding public places, this along with litter picking and public bin emptying. Public floral displays areas (Jubilee Garden in Congleton Park, some roundabouts) are re-planted twice a year, so there are only four weeks in the year without plants.

#### IYN Friends of Congleton Park

- fernery with 100 new ferns in the shady border in Autumn 2018
- Sustainable planting added at the sides of the park, with new seating structure in honour of the founder and great supporter of Congleton In Bloom, Margaret Williamson MBE DL
- Trees planted 2019, 2021
- In 2021, 'hot and cool' borders were designed and planted with perennials and grasses to enhance biodiversity in the park, to provide year-round colour, reduce work load and attract pollinators, especially bees. Bee hives in the park by the riverbank

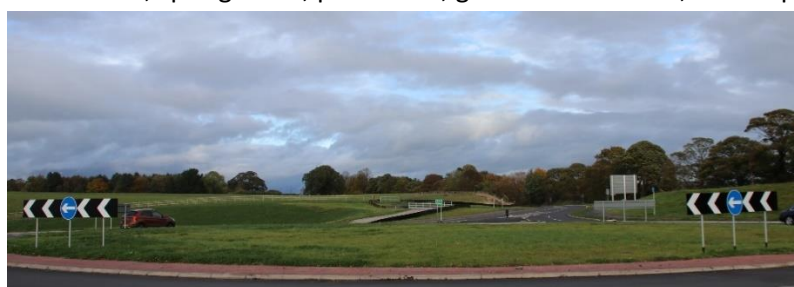
**Roundabouts-** maintained by Streetscape gardeners; Congleton has a reputation for fantastic roundabout designs. They feature a mix of seasonal bedding & sustainable (trees, perennials, bulbs) planting with Congleton In Bloom signs. The new link road roundabouts will be planted in 2022-23. Images of two of the roundabouts in spring:



### **2002-23 Link Road Roundabouts-**

The new Congleton Link Road, formally named 'Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy Way', has six new roundabouts. The Town Council Streetscape Manager is working with the local parish councils to design these roundabouts, which fall into their boundaries.

A member of the In Bloom team has already designed one of these roundabouts to be filled with wildflowers, spring bulbs, perennials, grasses and shrubs, this is sponsored by a local charitable trust.



### **Green spaces**

There are floral displays in other green spaces, which are designed, planted & maintained by volunteers, either the Community gardeners or IYN groups

**CIB held open garden sessions** all week at the end of April at gardens & IYN sites and other sessions during 'National gardening week'



**IYN Congleton Community Garden- will visit this garden** Many volunteers have worked in this garden over the 25 years since its creation from a space left derelict when the cinema was knocked down. Entered NWIB as a new IYN for 2021. Planted and maintained by volunteers, including the 'Gardening Gang' and the U3A gardening group. The garden has won many awards. It is planted with a huge variety of trees, shrubs, hardy perennials, bulbs, grasses and has 25 species of roses in the "scented" garden. In 2021.

the '**Garden of Reflection**' was created from a disused part of the garden adjacent to the Cenotaph Garden. The memorial to Tom Jackson, who died trying to save a backpacker in Australia is now here. This garden has become a quiet place to reflect on loved ones no longer with us. Certain plants have been donated by residents. ([See on the tour](#))



**Margaret's Place**- This public green space, formerly a private garden, adjacent to a medical centre, renovated in 2015-16. [Many perennials, shrubs, trees, an apple core sculpture, soft fruit bushes & bedding, plus outdoor gym equipment]. Now looked after by the 'community gardeners, who have replaced the bedding with pollinator friendly grasses, perennials & shrubs, with a calming blue/pink colour palette.



**Elizabeth's Garden will visit this garden,**  
created in 2018, 100 years Give Women the Vote

**IYN Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden- will visit this 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. Open days each spring & autumn; 14 volunteers, every Monday 11-1





**IYN Bromley Farm in Bloom**



**IYN Hillary Ave Allotments, an outstanding IYN**



**IYN Buglawton in Bloom**



**IYN Vale Allotments**



**IYN The Wednesday Club**



**Community gardeners at work with IYN Friends of Congleton Park, Trinity Church gardens**

*Other green spaces/areas include Astbury Mere Country Park, Congleton Churches, Congleton Canal, Railway Station. Many Congleton Public Houses created gardens during the pandemic.*

**Moody Street Garden**- in need of some TLC, this garden was renovated in 2017, this sensory garden is now tended by local nursery groups and is a calm retreat in the town centre.



**Congleton & District Horticultural Society**- Over 50 years old, the group typically 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. In 2019 & 2021, members of the society were delighted to judge the Wheelbarrow Challenge entries.

## Section B Environment (B1, B2, B3)

### B1 Local Identity & Pride of Place

*Is there a sense of place, with appropriate acknowledgement of local heritage (including biodiversity) and its relevance for the community; e.g. art in the landscape, signage, interpretation, etc.*

*Consider the pride taken in hard landscape (including streets), open spaces (including grass areas, wild areas and beaches if appropriate), street furniture maintenance, etc.*

*To include cleanliness, absence of litter, graffiti vandalism, flyposting/temporary signage, chewing gum, and effective dog fouling control measures.*

#### Evidence

Local heritage: art in the landscape,

- Two bears on the roundabout
- community orchard at Astbury Mere, sculptures of animals & apple core created from felled trees (2012 & 2016)



- Sculptured seat to commemorate Margaret Williamson MBE DL founding member of CIB in 1998, in Congleton Park (2017)
- Penny-farthing on Park Lane roundabout to commemorate Stephen Sebire (autumn 2021)
- Statue of suffragette in the town centre (5 Mar 2022)
- New seating & tree planters in pedestrian area
- No litter, graffiti etc, dog fouling posters by children
- Street furniture: recycling bins in the town centre & park
- Monthly town tidies based at different locations

## **B2. Natural environment: Conservation & Biodiversity**

*Is there an understanding of what biodiversity means locally? Have efforts been made to create, restore or maintain appropriate habitats to support wildlife?*

*What has been done to assess the effectiveness of any interventions? E.g. through surveys.*

*Is nature being considered in all activities, rather than just restricting wildlife-friendly practices to a specific project or area?*

### Evidence

There are many green open spaces in Congleton, with trees, hedges, wildflowers and orchards for the public to enjoy.

Throughout all the lockdowns, **Astbury Mere CP, Congleton Park, St John's recreation ground, Stirling Close NR and Dane-in-Shaw Pasture**, amongst other green open spaces were well utilised & definitely helped with people's mental health as they could go for walks to clear their heads. The



park & Astbury Mere CP with all-weather paths were well used by the public for their daily exercise.

[Astbury Mere Country Park and Eco Centre- will see this on the tour](#)

Astbury Mere is a former silica sand quarry that has been transformed into a much-loved Country Park, owned & 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 £30K a year for upkeep of the site. Schools from around the area use the educational facilities. Programme of activities including; weekly Parkrun, Nordic walking, Pram Fit, Nature walks, U3A walking groups, dog training classes, by the 'Dog Father'. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Visitor Centre was shut and the activities were on hold. These have restarted & are attracting the public again.

Margaret, one of the Astbury Mere trustees, took a look around the park during the spring. These is what she saw:



"During lockdown, we've all seen more closely the gradual changing of the seasons with the first tentative snowdrops, the catkins and the pussy willow. The Park has a wealth of wildflowers often in hidden places and it's been worth exploring to find the hidden clump of cowslips, the violets and bluebells; today I even found orchids.

The burst of early spring blossom on the blackthorn was followed by the gradual greening of the trees as the buds opened to their own timetable. It's only in spring, that we observe the many different shades of green as each individual tree makes its own contribution to the

colour palette".

Recently the paths were covered with white 'cotton wool' as the willow trees shed their seeds. The green changed to white as the hawthorn (May) and apple trees were covered in blossom. Now the trees are full of bird song as the birds produce their young.

Congleton Sustainability Group created the first **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. This orchard is now looked after by the Congleton West Rangers, the community gardeners & the Ranger.



The community orchard at Astbury Mere, flourishing in 2016, fruitful in 2022

A commemorative woodland and wildflower meadow for late Trustee Margaret Williamson MBE was created at the Mere in 2016 by volunteers.

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. Numerous bird species can be observed in the wood and new bird boxes have been added, along with an interpretation board.



Tree species in the wood include beech, oak, pines, hazel. Wildflowers in the wood include: wood anemones, bluebells, archangel, wood avens, wild garlic. There is a woods management programme run by the owners Cheshire East/ANSA.



**Dane-In-Shaw Pasture-** a SSSI with grassland of national importance, 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 now a 'donor' meadow, providing seeds for the creation of new meadows at 'recipient' sites in Cheshire, including nearby Swettenham Meadows.

Residents on a Feast of Flowers walk through Dane-in-shaw pasture led by a CE Ranger, May 2022

- ❖ **Wildflower Meadows-** Congleton Rotary has sponsored a wildflower meadow in the park at the site of the annual Rotary Bonfire for 8 years ([see on the tour](#)).
- ❖ 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 was deferred until 2021/22. Fourteen sites have been chosen, several have been seeded this spring by the Streetscape team.

Photo of Streetscape sowing seeds



Planting wildflower plugs near the river



the seedlings are growing



School children sowing wildflower seeds; buttercups & stichwort growing in the longer grasses

Congleton has adopted the '[Blue Campaign](#)' and there are many blue hearts throughout the town.



The Blue campaign is a national campaign to rewild areas to benefit wildlife. Wildflower meadows are something that the In Bloom team are passionate about, as they encourage biodiversity and are great for wildlife.

### Hankinson's field

Already rich with trees and wildflowers, this public field is next to the River Dane. A new hedgerow & six cherry trees were planted by Trees for Congleton with Congleton West Rangers & Visyon volunteers.





As part of the Branching Project, 200 wildflower plugs suitable for the riverside verge were bought & planted by 30 local schoolchildren.

#### Congleton Park Allotments- will see this on the tour

Previously an Aviary, the park allotment was introduced in 2013 after a suggestion by the In Bloom judges. The Streetscape team plant the allotment, signposted & enjoyed by the public. A big bug Hotel, Hedgehog Houses & Compost Bays have been built by volunteers to encourage biodiversity.



Leaflets for children to pick up & identify the different foods & herbs to make the allotment more interactive & educational.

#### **Surveys by volunteers** of 'No Mow May' grassy areas/verges

Wildflowers observed included: Dandelion, meadow buttercup, daisy, Common mouse-ear, Common Cat's ear, Cuckooflower, cowslip, Ribwort plantain, nettles, dead nettle, oxeye daisy, speedwells, red & white clover, purple vetch, Dove's foot cranesbill, Ragwort.  
Grasses included Yorkshire Fog, Meadow Foxtail, Rye, Timothy & Cock's Foot.

### **B 3 Environmental Management**

**Congleton Sustainability Group-** Since 2010, the Sustainability Group have collected unwanted apples from the public to make them into award winning Congleton apple juice and cider, this prevents tons of apples from going to waste/landfill. 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, cider and cider vinegar at the Old Saw Mill. Now 10 tonnes of donated apples are processed each autumn onsite at the Old Saw Mill.

There is now a monthly Repair Café, meals on wheels, weekly clubs and activities at the OSM 'running on volunteer power'.



Volunteers working at the Secret Garden, created by volunteers back in 2016.

### **Climate change**

Congleton takes its commitment to the environment seriously. In 2019, the town council declared a climate emergency. It set up **Congleton Green Group**.

Volunteer group 'Trees for Congleton', is a sub group of Congleton Sustainability Group and Congleton Partnership, which is helping Congleton Town Council with their green solution project '30,000 trees for Congleton'.

**Trees for Congleton** comprises a group of volunteers with different expertise, landscape architect, conservation biologist, CWT, Green group etc who manage the tree & hedge planting in & around Congleton

#### Aim/target

to plant 30,000 trees, hedges, woody shrubs, approximately one per person in the town, over 5 years

Funding: Congleton Partnership & the William Dean Trust (years 1-3), Tree Council (year 3)

Timeline: From Oct 2019, slower progress during covid lockdowns especially in year 2

Number of **trees** planted so far **~15.5K (51.5%)** **8 new hedges** planted in 2022 (**1750 plants**)

Number of **fruit trees** planted **150+** **21 new community orchards** created

110 volunteers involved which equates to 685 hours in Nov21- May22 (age range 3-80)

This year external funding grants (~£5K) from Tree Council (Community hedge fund & Branching Out) were awarded, funding hedges, wildflowers and encouraging young people under 25 to volunteer for the project.

## Trees for Congleton

Great involvement by members of the public, with external national funding from the Tree Council (hedgerows at 7 sites) and 'Branching Out' grant from the Tree Council, working with Friends of Congleton Park, Trees for Congleton & Visyon, a local charity working with young people & their families to help with mental health problems.



Planting the new hedgerow at Windsor Place & Salford Place  
(Tree Council 'close the gap' Community hedge fund)

## **Community orchards**

After planting over 150 fruit trees at over 20 sites, over 3 years, the trees need annual maintenance.

Cardboard layer added pre-mulching



winter weeding & mulching



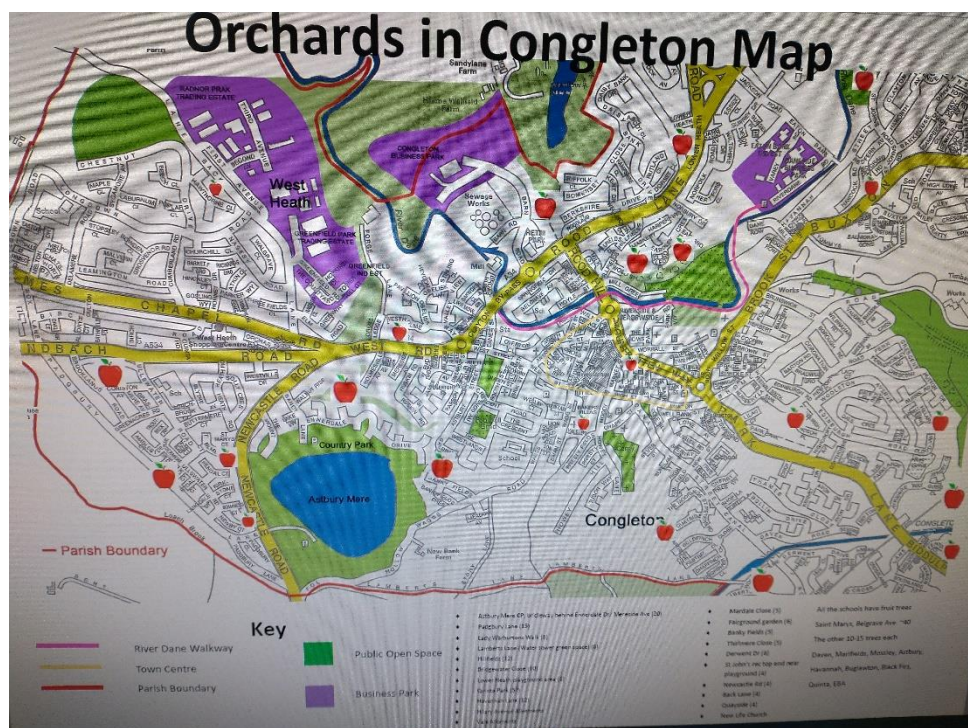
Windsor Place, spring 2021, 15 apple & pear trees planted by young volunteers



James 18, pruning at a school orchard;



## Community orchard at Lady Warburton's Walk 2022



## Other environmental news.....

Plastic free Congleton, a sub group within Congleton Sustainability Group is celebrating!



After 3 years of campaigning and in spite of covid-19, we can celebrate that Congleton has been awarded 'Plastic free Communities status' by Surfers against Sewage in June 2022.

The Congleton in Bloom team are doing their best to deal with the effects of **climate change**, while following the guidance of the Royal Horticultural Society with regard to **sustainability**.



One of the challenging areas has been the tree planters in Congleton Town Centre. We know how much they add to the ambiance of Bridge Street, casting a welcome shade on hot days and helping to give a Mediterranean feel to the area. What's tricky is deciding what to plant with the trees, in the planters, as the trees take up so much water. So the team looks for plants that can thrive in dry shade, and will carry on year after year, not needing to be replaced annually.

Recently, there has been a team of In Bloom volunteers out planting a collection of ornamental grasses, mixed with penstemon, that are now coming into flower. It is hoped that residents and visitors find this choice of plants interesting and up to date as we experience more weather extremes, and try to keep plants going year after year.

Other volunteer groups are now active in Congleton, e.g. Climate change, plant swap/gardening for wildlife, Congleton Food4free, Waste Reduction Volunteers, who all hold meetings/ interact with the public either via Facebook or at events. These groups all give the public opportunities to be involved in projects to combat climate change and enhance biodiversity

**Keep Britain Tidy: International awards; Green flags** held at the following sites:

Eco schools: Marlfields Academy, Saint Mary's Catholic Primary, Friendly Faces Nursery  
Congleton Park & Astbury Mere Country Park.

One of our CIB team is an experienced green flag assessor, and she is currently working with several schools on their eco topics

## Waste/recycling

- ❖ Congleton is within Cheshire East.
- ❖ All residents have recycling bins (*\*\*% rate of recycling*)
- ❖ All residents with gardens have brown bins for garden & food waste collected for a new facility at Crewe, ANSA, Biowise compost
- ❖ Recycling bins in the town centre & Congleton Park

Streetscape – daily litter collections throughout the town

## Section C Community Participation (C1, C2, C3)

- Over 150 local groups & organisations 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 & manpower of a wide range of groups & individuals, all working towards a common aim of making the town a great place to live, work & visit.
- In 2020-21, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings were online; outdoor tasks took place following Government regulations. Some groups provided video tours of their gardens for those in isolation to enjoy.
- It was great to see the community participation continue throughout the pandemic. We are grateful to see more volunteers back out in the town as covid regulations have eased.



Volunteers at Congleton Park, late 2021 & May 2022

- ❖ Recruitment: - community newsletters, town centre activity days, open garden sessions, Facebook & Twitter advertising, workshops, school visits & word of mouth.
- ❖ 5000+ hours of volunteer work on In Bloom-related activities.
- ❖ CIB team meetings, advice & gardening sessions (8 members)
- ❖ Community gardeners (6-14) who work at several sites (Elizabeth's' garden, park borders, Margaret's Place, Community Gardens/Cenotaph Garden/Garden of Reflection, Just Bee Garden), average 100-125h/month, ave 120h x12m = 1400h/y
- ❖ IYN Buglawton in Bloom & BHPG groups, weekly 2h sessions, with 6-14 volunteers (total 1800h/y), The Wednesday Club (14) weekly, care for grounds & terraced garden.
- ❖ Trees for Congleton: Oct- March planting, numerous sites



**Community garden festival** (in the tunnel at the park, from June to September), is as sustainable as possible. Many schools, nurseries & care homes are involved, planting small back-to-back gardens &/or wheelbarrows. ([see on the tour](#))

## Support & funding

**Sponsorship** Local charitable trusts are very generous to many of our projects

The **William Dean Trust** has awarded in 2021-22

- thousands to 10 local schools (£1-2K each) during the pandemic to enable them to improve their outdoor facilities, grants have funded polytunnels, raised beds, gardening equipment etc, with children actively gardening in their school grounds
- £25,000 to renovate the outdoor garden at Ruby's Fund, for disabled children
- £25,000 to create the garden at the new Christie extension at Macclesfield hospital
- £1600 to plant the link road roundabout
- Grants to local volunteer groups to plant trees (Trees for Congleton, Dane Valley Tree Group)

The Just Bee Garden project in Congleton Park was awarded over £5000 from 9 local charities/groups this spring. (WDT, CIT, C4C, CYPT, Rotary, FoCP, MWM Fund, Town Trust, CDHS).

**Businesses:** We have a sponsorship scheme for local residents and business who can sponsor a Hanging baskets; troughs/ planters or even any of our 5 roundabouts, this has been a successful scheme over the last few years and has helped us develop many neglected spaces with the extra money this brings in.

The Alexandra Court Hotel (3x GOLD medals NWIB)

The Lion & Swan Hotel (1<sup>st</sup> time entry)

**Communication:** via Local newspaper, radio, social media

Town tidies advertised on all Facebook pages & local newspapers for volunteers to help make our town cleaner & greener. Jobs include litter picking, weeding by hand, cleaning signposts, street furniture, planting, mulching etc

Interviews on local radio



## Sections B & C Environment & Community

### 70 cherry trees for the Queen's platinum Jubilee, as part of the Queen's Green Canopy

Planted Feb-April 2022 all around the town, ~350 volunteers; species right plant right place

- ornamentals at sports venues, verges, (P. Hillieri Spire, P. Pandora, P. Kanzan, P. Sargentii, P. avium Plena)
- wild/bird cherry (P avium) in AMCP & Hydro site
- edibles (Early Rivers, Vega & Morello) in 9 primary schools, ornamentals in 2 High Schools: edibles & ornamentals in care homes



Coronation Bowling Club

New IYN The Wednesday Club, Congleton Town Football Club



Black Firs

Daven



Buglawton

Saint Mary's



The Quinta



Mossley

Marlfields

Havannah



Our Care Homes



Astbury Mere Care Home,

The Laurels,

Greengables



Heath View Extra Care



Clayton Manor



Park Lane



Bradwell Court

### Individual/groups of volunteers planting their special cherry tree



## Compost

- CIB has committed to only use peat-free compost in the floral displays.
- For two years we have been able to take delivery of Biowise compost from Cheshire East Council, via our active Waste Reduction Volunteers.
- The Biowise has been used as mulch, a growing medium, and given away to allotments, IYN groups, schools and care homes.



### Woodchips as mulch

Several local tree surgeons have donated their excess woodchips/bark for the Trees for Congleton project (mulching the new hedgerows and trees) the Just Bee Garden, to suppress weeds and retain moisture

**Water** - Our many troughs have water reservoirs, which are filled by Streetscape using the bowser, taking water from the River Dane (licensed).

**Plant pots**, we have a stock of plastic plant pots at the park polytunnel, which are reused by the community gardeners each year. Plastic planting trays are returned to the local Nursery for re-use.

## Biodiversity Projects (2020-2022)

**St. Stephen's Gate**- to celebrate Congleton Park's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Congleton In Bloom, with the Friends of Congleton Park transformed a grassy entrance to the park by St. Stephen's Church, planting **wildflowers**, enhancing **biodiversity** & creating an attractive route into the Park. Funding: (housing developers, a lottery scheme & a local charitable trust). Plug plants were purchased, nurtured, & grown on by three dedicated volunteers through the winter of 2020-21, until they could be planted out



Sixty children from three local primary schools planted the wildflowers in this area along with their teachers and two members of the CIB team. 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! The wildflowers have flourished, with bees & butterflies in abundance on site.

**Library Shrubbery**- Late in 2020 this was planted by the Food4Free team to extend their pollinator friendly area by Congleton Library, adjacent to the wildflower meadow behind the Town Hall.



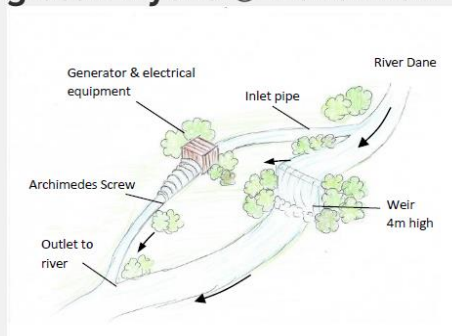
**Riverside Garden-** This pocket garden has been adopted many times over the past 10 years by different community groups. In the spring of 2021, the Congleton In Bloom team decided to completely renovate this garden, creating another attractive entrance into Congleton Park along the River Dane Walkway. The team cleared the front semi-circle bed and added tonnes of Biowise compost. Stepping stones were re-laid & bark paths added for people to walk through the garden. Wildflowers & wild strawberries were planted.. Now signed as part of the Blue Campaign, with a blue heart to indicate re-wilding. The CIB team will remove more of the large perennial weeds to allow the wildflowers to flourish and establish an edibles area (fruit trees and bushes) at the rear.

#### **Hot & Cool Borders at Congleton Park- *See on the day***

In 2021, Patti, a member of the Congleton In Bloom team re-designed the two long borders, where certain plants had outgrown the space & ground elder & buttercup were rampant. Over 6 months, the Community Gardening Gang removed weeds & overgrown perennials, creating space for the two new designs. The sunny or 'Hot Border' has mainly yellow, orange, pink & red flowering plants, which attract bees and butterflies. The 'Cool Border', closer to the Town Wood is shadier, so was planted with cooler colours; silver, blue, pinks & purple & included more sensory plants; Eryngium, Stachys, Verbena & Helichrysum (curry) plants for smell. Both borders offer a range of colours, heights and textures, **sustainable** planting & have paths through them to encourage the public to be closer to nature.



#### **Congleton Hydro @ Havannah Weir**



Congleton Hydro is the name of a new, small-scale hydro-electric scheme which is now operational at Havannah Weir on the River Dane by Dane Valley Community Energy (DVCE). The scheme is based on a variable speed Archimedean screw which will generate up to 65 kW, depending on river flow.

## New projects for 2022

### *Just Bee Garden for the Queen's platinum jubilee*

Based on a young student's national 'Bee Garden Challenge' 2021 design (a top 20 finalists). Sustainably planted by over 150 volunteers, funded by sponsorship from local trusts & groups (over £5k).

The judges will be able to see this new special garden in Congleton Park during their visit.



Annabel, her family & Patti plant the first tree in the garden in mid- April. School children planting & weeding the Just Bee garden in May



Plantlife's '**No Mow May**': Congleton has taken part in 2021 & 2022.

**Wildflower Verges**- To enhance biodiversity and re-wilding in Congleton, the In Bloom team with Streetscape have chosen sites in & around Congleton, where verges will be sown with wildflower seeds or left to grow naturally, often on Trees for Congleton sites.

### Congleton Celebrates 750 Years of the Town Charter in 2022

- March onwards: medieval flags and banners through the town
- 2 June Jubilee picnic in the park
- Park floral plaque '750 years'
- 4-8 July: historical exhibition for primary school children at the Town Hall
- Community garden festival in Congleton Park (weekends July- Sept)
- 13 August: Medieval festival in the Park
- 30 September: Medieval banquet

## Appendix 1 Survey of IYNs & other sites

	Compost /water butts	Perennials /grasses	Trees /shrubs	Pollinator friendly	Wild flowers	bedding
Congleton Park & IYN FoCP	y/n	y	y	y	y	Y
IYN Bath House & Physic Garden	y/y	y	y			N
IYN Buglawton in Bloom	y/n	y	y	y	y	Y
IYN Bromley Farm in Bloom	n/y	y	y	y	y	N
IYN Community Garden & Garden of Reflection	y/y	y	y	y		N
Cenotaph garden	n/a	y	y	y	y	N
IYN HAAA	y/y	y	y	y	y	N
IYN Vale Allotments	y/y	y	y	y	y	N
IYN OSM (returning)	n/y	y	y	y	n	Y
IYN Wednesday Club (new	n/n	y	y	y	n	N

## 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.thealexandracourthotel.com](http://www.thealexandracourthotel.com)  
[www.congletonu3a.org.uk](http://www.congletonu3a.org.uk)

 @CongletonTown

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



## Appendix 4 - Communication: Some of the press articles in Congleton Chronicle

### Hardy perennials of volunteering survive wet and cold weather

Two of Congleton's most popular groups of volunteers have been rewarded for their hard work and dedication to the community. The group of volunteers, known as the 'Hardy Perennials', have been awarded a special trophy for their efforts in maintaining the town's parks and gardens.

The trophy was presented to the group by the Mayor of Congleton, Councillor John Smith, at a ceremony held at the town hall. The group, which has been active for over 10 years, has been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.

The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Hardy Perennials' competition.

The trophy was presented to the group by the Mayor of Congleton, Councillor John Smith, at a ceremony held at the town hall. The group, which has been active for over 10 years, has been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.



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### Local parks scoop top Green Flag accolades

Two of Congleton's most popular parks have been awarded the top Green Flag accolades for their excellent maintenance and landscaping. The parks, known as 'Green Flag' parks, have been recognized for their high standards of care and for providing a pleasant environment for the community.

The accolades were presented to the parks by the Mayor of Congleton, Councillor John Smith, at a ceremony held at the town hall. The parks, which have been active for over 10 years, have been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.

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### Tea and trees helped bring groups together

A group of volunteers has been rewarded for their efforts in bringing the community together through the planting of trees and the sharing of tea. The group, known as the 'Tea and Trees' group, has been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.

The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Tea and Trees' competition.

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### Kids get planting for Congleton in Bloom

A group of children has been rewarded for their efforts in planting trees and flowers for the town's parks and gardens. The group, known as the 'Kids in Bloom' group, has been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.

The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Kids in Bloom' competition.

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The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Kids in Bloom' competition.

### Cherry trees planted to mark jubilee year

A group of volunteers has been rewarded for their efforts in planting cherry trees to mark the jubilee year. The group, known as the 'Cherry Trees' group, has been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.

The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Cherry Trees' competition.

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The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Cherry Trees' competition.

### Awards for green-fingered volunteers

A group of volunteers has been rewarded for their efforts in planting trees and flowers for the town's parks and gardens. The group, known as the 'Green-fingered Volunteers' group, has been instrumental in keeping the town's parks and gardens in good condition throughout the year.

The group's work includes planting trees, maintaining flower beds, and clearing paths. They have also been instrumental in organizing various community events, including the annual 'Green-fingered Volunteers' competition.

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