



Standard Marking Sheet

Name of Entry: Congleton in Bloom

Judge: Bernard Pendleton, Mel Kirby and Lucy Stowell-Smith

Date of Assessment: 14th/15th August 2024

Category: Large Town

MAXIMUM OF 10 POINTS PER SUB SECTION

									Total marks awarded in sections A, B & C	Medal level awarded in sections A, B & C
A Horticulture 40%	A1	10	A2	9.5	A3	9.5	A4	9.5	38.5	Gold
B Environment 30%	B1	10	B2	9.5	B3	9.5			29	Gold
C Community 30%	C1	9.5	C2	9.5	C3	9.5			28.5	Gold

Total Score out of 100: 96

Overall Medal Awarded: Gold

Medal Guide: Gold, Excellent 85-100 Points; Silver Gilt, Very Good 75-84 Points; Silver, Good 60-74 Points; Bronze, Satisfactory 50-59 Points. 49 Points and below – certificate of participation.

Introduction and Overall Impression: (Please expand space as required to fit judging comments).

It was a delight for our judges to visit Congleton for two days to undertake the judging of the 2024 Large Town entry and the ever-increasing number of community Gardening Its Your Neighbourhood groups. It was brilliant to meet the mayor, the local MP, representatives from the Council, the Rotary, local groups, pre-school, Guides and many more.

Congleton in Bloom is no doubt a jewel in the RHS North West in Bloom crown. This ardent group continue to surpass the previous year's achievements. The partnership with the Streetscape Team and the wonderful groups and community volunteers is amazing. This is exemplar and the results for the town are outstanding. On behalf of RHS North West in Bloom can we thank you all for your support for all things Bloom. Your list of achievements in your excellent portfolio is a wonderful testimony to all your work. As you continue to grow, ensure you have resources in place to manage your further success. Well done to everyone.

Judges Feedback Section A – Horticulture: *(Please expand space as required to fit judging comments).*

The judges were very impressed with the horticultural achievements. Wherever you live, work or visit Congleton you will see a range of horticultural excellence wherever you go. The baskets, barrier planters, roundabouts throughout this entry are excellent. Congleton Park must be one of the best parks in the north west and even the UK. The mix of annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees (noting the many indigenous areas), orchard etc. is excellent. Elizabeth's Garden, Margaret's Place, the Bath House and all the green spaces around Congleton have an excellent plant selection with extensive year-round interest. The new hospital garden is a delight and this will continue to be another area of horticultural excellence. The quality of the plants and the maintenance of all the displays throughout the town is outstanding.

Judges Feedback Section B – Environment: *(Please expand space as required to fit judging comments).*

Congleton in Bloom have, over the years celebrated and promoted their local identity and Pride of Place. This is what makes the town unique. For the past number of years we have met representatives from the Museum. Ian always gives us an excellent short briefing on Congleton over the years. The art in the landscape, the signage, the biodiversity measures introduced are excellent. The Country Park, the woodland areas, allotments, the wildflower area, the orchards all contribute to a wonderful oasis of rich flora and fauna. The surveys undertaken provide excellent data, of exemplar note here is the survey undertaken on the birds, the impact of the Low Mow Campaign and also at the allotments. This is indeed excellent practice. Congleton Sustainability Group continue to make a difference, it is clear environmental initiatives and improvements are fully embedded in Congleton. The planting target of 30,000 trees is certainly not far off. The Community Orchards are a great asset. Continue with your excellent Environmental Management initiative. We look forward to seeing the 30,000th tree being planted.

Judges Feedback Section C – Community: *(Please expand space as required to fit judging comments).*

As stated, the Bloom Community continues to thrive. The involvement of all the partners and groups is testimony to your success. The year-round involvement is clearly embedded in the excellent portfolio. It is wonderful to see communities and Bloom groups celebrating their success. It was fantastic to hear about the event in the park to celebrate 60 years of RHS In Bloom, with friendship as the theme. The communication, education and awareness of all things Bloom is excellent. The education and learning is embedded from a very young age. Friendly Faces Nursery have excellent examples of embedding environmental aspects into learning and play; as many of the community groups also embrace. The involvement of young children and people of all ages including Freda Mary (age 100), a resident at a local care home is amazing. The support and funding, including sponsorship of baskets, tubs etc. is first class. The ongoing support of the William Dean Trust has helped the Community Garden displays and of particular note is their support for the new, wonderful, hospital garden.

As stated in the introduction, it was a delight to visit Congleton over two days. One day in the brilliant sunshine with lunch outside in the park and one day with a little rain; however, that did not affect the enthusiasm. It was great to meet the M.P., the Mayor, the Councillors, the Streetscape Team and all the Bloom volunteers and supporters. Maybe next year we could meet some representatives from the Business Group who sponsor some of the beautiful baskets and tubs.

Thank you for all your tremendous efforts. Bloom, over the years, has been the catalyst for change and Congleton has embraced every aspect and achieved well deserved Gold success and made significant improvements to the horticultural, environmental and community aspects, what an achievement. We look forward to visiting next year.

10-9

8

7-6

5

A1	<u>Overall Impression</u> Taking account of all relevant factors, how strong is the impact of the entry in creating a memorable impression? Are designs and materials used appropriate to their locations? Emphasis here is on coordination and overall quality.	High impact with excellent attention to detail delivering the desired results in an appropriate and consistent manner.	Most areas are high impact with very good attention to detail although some inconsistencies.	Good overall impact although not always balanced. Some areas make an impact but others need to be more vibrant with better design.	Although generally satisfactory , more attention to detail is required in order to increase impact and improve consistency of design.
A2	<u>Maintenance of Planted Areas</u> Are the areas within the entry maintained to an appropriate standard, including cultivation, weeding, feeding, pruning, grass maintenance, tree management and maintenance? (See B3 for maintenance techniques)	Excellent standards of cultivation. Very consistent throughout. Horticultural maintenance and general care is outstanding.	Standards are very good with few exceptions. Horticultural maintenance is managed consistently.	Standards of horticultural maintenance are good and fairly consistent. A few exceptions where further attention is required.	Standards are generally satisfactory . However, the horticultural maintenance programme requires further attention to detail in some areas.
A3	<u>Plant Selection</u> Are the plants used in the planting schemes suited to their growing conditions, locations and purposes? Is there a diverse range of plant-species to attract a variety of insects and wildlife? Is there year-round interest, where appropriate?	Excellent plant selection with extensive year-round interest, and almost no exceptions.	Plant selection is very good overall with only a few exceptions and ample year-round interest.	Plant selection is generally good , but there is room for improvement in some areas in order to extend year-round interest.	Plant selection is generally satisfactory , however it requires further consideration in order to extend the season and maintain interest.
A4	<u>Plant Quality</u> Are the plants vibrant and grown to their full potential? Are they generally free of pests and diseases?	Plant quality is excellent , plants are very healthy, vigorous and grown to their full potential.	Plant quality is very good , plants are mostly healthy and vigorous, with only a few exceptions.	Plant quality and health is generally good , but not always consistent. Lack of vigour in some areas.	Plant quality and health is generally satisfactory , but could be improved.
		10-9	8	7-6	5

B1	<u>Local Identity & Pride of Place</u> 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 and 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.	Extensive evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. An excellent impression made about what makes the area unique. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in excellent condition.	Considerable evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. A very good impression made about what makes the area unique. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in very good condition.	Some evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. A good impression made about what makes the area unique. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in good condition.	Little evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. A satisfactory impression made about what makes the area unique. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in variable condition.
B2	<u>Natural Environment</u> 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?	The natural environment is managed to an excellent standard supporting an extensive range of flora and fauna, with little improvement required. Extensive effort to assess the impact of interventions. Nature is considered across all activities.	The natural environment is managed to a very good standard across the whole entry, supporting a considerable range of flora and fauna. Considerable effort to assess the impact of interventions. Nature is considered across most activities. Very little effort would lift it to excellent.	The natural environment is managed to a good standard supporting a range of flora and fauna. Some effort to assess the impact of interventions. Nature is considered across some activities. Requires further work to improve it in places.	The natural environment is managed to a generally satisfactory standard supporting some flora and fauna. Little effort to assess the impact of interventions. Nature is considered across very few activities. Needs significant improvement in places.
		10-9	8	7-6	5

B3	<u>Environmental Management</u> Have steps been taken to employ sustainable or ecological gardening practices? E.g. avoiding chemicals like pesticides and using other biological and physical controls like hand weeding or companion planting. Eliminating the use of peat, implementing solutions like composting, reducing the use of plastics and recycling those used. Taking measures to minimise the use of water. Where local environmental issues have been identified, have plants or greening solutions been considered, e.g. as rain gardens, green roofs/walls, or as barriers for pollution?	Excellent evidence of sustainable gardening practices, including the conservation of resources and minimising negative impacts. Extensive use of plants or greening solutions to address local environmental issues.	Very good evidence of sustainable gardening practices, including the conservation of resources and minimising negative impacts. Considerable use of plants or greening solutions to address local environmental issues.	Good evidence of sustainable gardening practices, including the conservation of resources and minimising negative impacts. Some use of plants or greening solutions to address local environmental issues.	Satisfactory evidence of effort to garden sustainably, conserve resource and minimise negative impacts. Little use of plants or greening solutions to address local environmental issues.
		10-9	8	7-6	5
C1	<u>Year Round Activity and Future Commitment</u> Evidence of forward planning and year-round activities, initiatives or events, highlighting where they are adding value and demonstrating the strengths or uniqueness of the entry.	Excellent evidence of activities taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning. The annual programme of activities is exceptional.	Very good evidence of activities taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning.	Good evidence of activities taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning.	Satisfactory evidence of activities taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning but some areas of improvement needed.
C2	<u>Communication, Education, and Awareness</u> Use of suitable interpretation, enabling learning and a greater understanding of purpose, and environmental importance. Engagement with schools, young people or other groups. Promotion within the immediate area through local and regional communications. Appropriate communications and media involvement evidenced.	Excellent use of signage and interpretation, and evidence of involvement in public awareness and educational programmes. Communications and appropriate media involvement are extremely well evidenced.	Very good use of signage and interpretation, and evidence of involvement in public awareness and educational programmes. Communications and appropriate media involvement are very well evidenced.	Good use of signage and interpretation, and evidence of involvement in public awareness and educational programmes. Communications and appropriate media involvement are well evidenced. A few missed opportunities.	Satisfactory use of signage and interpretation, and evidence of involvement in public awareness and educational programmes. Communications and appropriate media involvement are evidenced but limited

					and there is room for improvement.
C3	<u>Support and Funding</u> Has the entry made every effort to be inclusive and engage the support of a wide variety of local groups and organisations? Participation should be representative of the local community. Evidence of fundraising and on-going support from a range of businesses and organisations appropriate to the size of the entry, making it viable and able to continue moving forward.	The range of groups and organisations engaged are an excellent representation of the wider community. Excellent levels of funding to ensure the viability of the entry. Support in all areas is sustainable and outstanding.	The range of groups and organisations engaged are a very good representation of the wider community. Very good levels of funding to ensure the viability of the entry. Support in all areas is very good and will be sustainable over time.	The range of groups and organisations engaged are a good representation of the wider community. Good levels of funding to ensure the viability of the entry. Support in all areas is good and, with effort, will be sustainable over time.	The range of groups and organisations engaged are a satisfactory representation of the wider community. Satisfactory levels of funding to ensure the viability of the entry. Support in all areas is satisfactory and fairly sustainable over time.

Judges/Entrants notes:

- The form has expandable sections under overall impression and judges' feedback allowing the judges to provide comprehensive and meaningful comments as much as they deem necessary.
- **Maintenance of Planted Areas:** The maintenance schedule should take account of biodiversity needs through the seasons; these will vary depending upon setting and location. Examples could include avoiding hedge trimming in nesting season or leaving some grass longer at certain times of year etc.
- **Plant Selection:** Prioritising perennial or pollinator-friendly plants is encouraged where appropriate. If annual bedding is used, groups should carefully consider the provenance and buy from local nurseries that do not use peat, or, if possible, to grow their own.

Natural Environment:

- The use of sustainable practices and materials should be encouraged wherever possible.
 - When creating, restoring or maintaining habitats to support wildlife, any features should be appropriate to the particular place. They could be as varied as ponds, 'dead' hedges, or the connection of several habitats to make 'pollinator pathways'. When used inappropriately something as simple as a bug hotel can become a bird feeder.
 - Assessing the effectiveness of interventions is incredibly important and all groups should be encouraged to measure their impact. This can be through a simple survey, or through contributing to a broader citizen science project or national monitoring scheme.
- **Environmental Management:**
 - Groups should minimise their use of plastic, choosing alternative materials where possible, and where unavoidable switching to better plastics such as recycled, recyclable or compostable products. Groups should repeatedly re-use items like plant pots and trays.

- Groups are encouraged to identify local environmental issues, and tackle them, using plants. These can be very simple or low-cost interventions, e.g. adding a green roof to a bin store, or planting a hedge to reduce pollution near a main road.