

CONGLETON IN BLOOM

2023-2024



Celebrating all things
In Bloom with oodles
of Community Spirit.



Congleton
Town Council

Welcome

Cllr David Brown, Chair of Congleton in Bloom



"The number of IYN groups continues to grow and we are all one big happy family here in Congleton.

We have developed very strong working groups with Congleton Partnership for specific projects which impact the environment and biodiversity.

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

Welcome to the market town of Congleton in Cheshire. Congleton in Bloom started in 1998, initially run by volunteers. The team is now a mix of volunteers and the town council, who meet regularly to plan events, activities, and floral displays throughout the town.

2024 is special for us as we **celebrate 60 years of in Bloom with the RHS**. Everyone has been engaged with making a visit to the town one to remember.

Enhancing biodiversity throughout the town has been a focus since 2019, e.g. No Mow May, the Blue Campaign, sowing wildflower meadows, planting hedgerows, orchards, and trees (more than 22,000 since 2019). The town council's Biodiversity Action Plan was launched in April 2023 at the first of 30 sites in the plan, Stirling Close.

Our **Just Bee Garden** in Congleton Park, funded by local charitable trusts and voluntary organisations, continues to demonstrate sustainable pollinator-friendly biodiverse gardening. Designed and created in spring 2022 and maintained by volunteers, this is a wonderful example of the community coming together. This garden enhances the well-being of the many visitors to Congleton Park. We were delighted to be awarded a Bees' Needs Champion Award from Defra for the Just Bee Garden in June.

A major new **well-being garden** has been designed and created by volunteers at our local hospital to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the opening of Congleton War Memorial Hospital.

We hope that you enjoy your visit to Congleton today.

Aims of Congleton in Bloom

- ✿ To make Congleton a clean, green town through anti-litter campaigns, organising litter picks, removal of graffiti & fly posting, improving local green spots and recycling campaigns
- ✿ To encourage biodiversity, sustainable growing and growing food locally
- ✿ 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 & encourage people to take pride where they live and work
- ✿ To raise standards & promote the town by entering competitions such as RHS Britain in Bloom North West
- ✿ 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
Cllr Heather Pearce
Cllr Russell Chadwick
Cllr Glen Williams
Cllr Susan Mead
Cllr Heather Seddon
Cllr Rob Moreton
Cllr Rob Brittain
Ruth Burgess
Sue Conway
Bob Edwards
Margaret Gartside
Patti Pinto

Chair
Green Group
Town Centre Regeneration
Tidy Town Champion



Streetscape CTC
Resident
Resident
Resident
Eco, Conservation, Biodiversity

Achievements

Britain in Bloom National Competition

- ✿ Finalists in 2001, 2007, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2022
- ✿ Britain in Bloom Silver: 2007
- ✿ Britain in Bloom Gold: 2014, 2016, 2018, 2022
- ✿ Britain in Bloom Community Awards 2021: Highly Commended
- ✿ Green Solutions, Achievement: Community & Planting with Purpose



North West in Bloom

Congleton

- * Gold: 2000, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011-2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 (**16 Golds**)
- * Best Large Town North West in Bloom: 2000, 2005, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2021, 2022
- * Pride of Cheshire East: 2016, 2023

Congleton Park

- * Awarded 16th Green Flag & 3rd Heritage Flag (2023)
- * RHS Gold medal: 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023
- * Cheshire Playing Fields 'Les George' Parks Award 2017

Congleton - other awards

- * 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
- * Green Flags in nurseries, schools & parks
- * Bees' Needs Champion award for the Just bee Garden from Defra received just in time for Bees' Needs week



New Projects for 2024

- * Refurbish & sustainably replant roundabout (Tesco Express, A34)
- * Celebration of '60 years of the RHS with in Bloom' picnic in Congleton Park
- * Design and create a new well-being garden at Congleton War Memorial Hospital
- * Congleton Park: floral plaque celebrating 100 years at Congleton War Memorial Hospital
- * Redesign and plant a sustainable front garden at St Peter's Church
- * Community Garden Festival in Congleton Park (weekends August- September)

Congleton's Theme for 2024 'Friendship'

During our RHS 60th Anniversary Garden Festival, local children who attended were invited to write their friendship message on handprints. These have been hung on the tree within Congleton Park, to share the message with all our visitors.



New Signage for 2024



With support from the local community groups and sponsors, this year we have had a huge drive on signage across our areas, to help the local community and visitors understand the works we are doing. Children have loved the new vibrant signs encouraging them to learn more about the plants, insects, and wildlife within Congleton.

RHS Judging Criteria

Section A Horticulture (A1-A4, overall impression, plant selection, maintenance & quality)

Throughout the year, Congleton boasts colourful and attractive floral displays, with town centre bunting and festoon lighting creating a fun, festival feel to the town. The routes into town are lined with brightly coloured plants, with troughs along the centre and sides of Mountbatten Way. The Streetscape team have grown in the park's polytunnels all of the plants (supplied by a local nursery) used throughout the town, this includes: hanging baskets, troughs, flower towers, large planters, small tubs, all roundabout bedding, and the fabulous displays in the Jubilee Garden in Congleton Park.

Congleton Park (*we will visit on the tour*), see new information boards on the park's history, trees & butterflies; *note* celebrated 150 years in 2021.



The park is maintained by Congleton Town Council's Streetscape team with help from Friends of Congleton Park (FoCP) volunteers. The Streetscape team within the park are responsible for trees, shrubs and grass cutting, together with most of the planting. More sustainable perennials have been added recently to compliment the bedding displays. Public floral displays areas, Jubilee Gardens in Congleton Park, and some roundabouts, are re-planted twice a year, so there are only four weeks in the year without plants. The team does a great job watering all the troughs & hanging baskets & weeding public places, with daily litter picking and emptying public bins.

Roundabouts maintained by Streetscape gardeners; Congleton has a reputation for fantastic roundabout designs, featuring a mix of seasonal bedding & sustainable planting (trees, perennials, bulbs) with metal 'Congleton in Bloom' signs.



One of the roundabouts has had major remedial work this spring, with the central walled feature completely remade and lined with polythene to prevent rot. A new Welcome floral feature was planted by Streetscape (*we will visit on the tour*).

IYN Friends of Congleton Park

- Fernery with 100 new ferns in the shady border in Autumn 2018
- Sustainable planting in the riverside border, with new seating structure in honour of the founder and great supporter of CIB, Margaret Williamson MBE DL
- Trees planted: 2012 (lime avenue), 2019, 2021-23 (beech, cherry)
- In 2021, 'hot & cool' borders were designed & planted with perennials & grasses to enhance biodiversity in the park, to provide year-round colour, reduce workload & attract pollinators, especially bees. Bee hives in the park by the riverbank
- The Just Bee Garden was designed and planted by volunteers in April 2022. Over 100 plant species, all pollinator friendly can be found there

Gardens in Green Spaces

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



IYN Congleton Community Garden *(we will visit on the tour)*

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.

Planted and maintained by community gardening volunteers; the garden has won many awards. It is planted with a huge variety of trees, shrubs, hardy perennials, bulbs, grasses & has 25 species of 'David Austin' roses in the scented roadside border.

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



Elizabeth's Garden *(we will visit on the tour)*

This garden was created in 2018, 100 years since Give Women the Vote Act was passed.

It is beautifully designed based on the colour palette of green, white, and violet, with a spiral on one side and stripes to represent the suffragette sash on the other.

IYN Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden (we will visit on the tour). Congleton Bath House was rescued from demolition. The Physic Garden with a range of medicinal, industrial & edible plants was created within the grounds by Congleton Building Preservation Trust, complete with a Georgian Bath House. Open Days each spring & autumn (Heritage Day); up to 14 volunteers, every Monday 11am-1pm.



Other green spaces/floral displays include:

- * The canal, railway station, fire station and leisure centre
- * Congleton Public Houses, many created gardens during the pandemic and they are still there today for the public to enjoy
- * Churches in Congleton, many have gardens tended by volunteers. The URC has gained a bronze award from Eco church

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, 2022 & 2023, members of the society were delighted to judge the William Dean Trust Wheelbarrow Challenge entries (we will visit on the tour).

Section B Environment (B1, B2, B3)

B1 Local Identity & Pride of Place: Evidence

Local heritage: art in the landscape

- * Two bears (living sculptures) on the roundabout
- * Community orchard at Astbury Mere, (2012) & in 2016, an edible hedgerow & sculpture of apple core created from felled trees were added
- * Apple core sculpture at Margaret's Place
- * 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, a local businessman (autumn 2021)
- * Statue of suffragette, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy in the town centre (erected 5 March 2022)



- * No litter, graffiti etc, with dog fouling posters created by children
- * Street furniture: recycling bins in the town centre & park
- * Monthly Town Tidies based at different locations around the town
- * Green electrical boxes in Congleton Park painted by local artists (see on tour)

B2 Natural environment: Conservation & Biodiversity: Evidence

There are many green open spaces in Congleton, (e.g. **Astbury Mere Country Park, Congleton Town Wood, St John's recreation ground, Quinta Park, Stirling Close Conservation Area & Dane-in-Shaw Pasture**) with trees, hedges, wildflowers & numerous orchards for the public to enjoy. These green open spaces are well used and definitely help with people's mental health as they go for walks to clear their heads & relax in nature.

Astbury Mere Country Park and Eco Centre (we will visit 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 voluntary trust with paid countryside ranger support. The land covers 14 hectares 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.

Most of the tree stock is less than 45 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 the upkeep of the site.

Programme of activities including weekly Parkrun, Nordic walking, Pram Fit, Nature walks, U3A walking groups, dog training classes, by the 'Dog Father'.

Margaret Gartside, Astbury Mere Trust Chair, took a look around the park during the spring. This is her account of what she saw:

"We can see the gradual changing of the seasons with the first tentative snowdrops, the catkins & 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 & 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 birdsong as the birds produce their young."



A commemorative woodland and wildflower meadow for late trustee, Margaret Williamson MBE, was created at the Mere in 2016 by volunteers. The first **Community Orchard** was created in 2012 by **Congleton Sustainability Group** with many young volunteers. It is within easy walking distance of the Mere. In spring 2016, this was upgraded with new steps, a sculpture, an edible hedge & soft fruit under planting. This orchard is now looked after by the Congleton West Rangers, the community gardeners, and the Cheshire East Council Ranger. Each autumn locals pick the fruit, apples, gages, currants, and plums.

Congleton Park

Congleton Town Wood this is an important biological resource in the heart of Congleton to the north of the park. It is an ancient & semi-natural woodland, a 1000-year-old remnant of riparian woodland, now a County SBI. Formal bound gravel paths (renewed winter 2022-2023) ensure accessibility through the wood throughout the year.

Tree species in the wood include beech, oak, pine, hawthorn, and hazel.



During spring there is a superb display of native bluebells.



Wildflowers in the wood include wood anemones, archangel, wood avens, wild garlic. Numerous bird species can be observed in the wood & new bird boxes have been added, along with an interpretation board.

Hankinson's Field (just across the bridge to Congleton Park)

Already rich with trees & wildflowers, this public field is next to the River Dane. The hedgerow & six cherry trees, planted by Trees for Congleton with Congleton West Rangers & Visyon volunteers (2022) are flourishing.

Congleton Park Allotments (we will visit on the tour)



The Streetscape gardeners plant the allotment each spring. It is signposted and the produce is enjoyed by the public. Leaflets are available for children to pick up & identify the different foods and herbs to make the allotment more interactive & educational.

A big bug hotel and compost bays, using reclaimed wood, were built by volunteers to the rear of the allotment. Local children refill the bug hotel each spring and autumn to encourage biodiversity. Hedgehog houses are sited next to the bug hotel.

Dane-In-Shaw Pasture a SSSI with grassland of national importance, managed by Cheshire East (CE) 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, each spring.

Wildflower Meadows and Verges

- * Congleton Rotary has sponsored a wildflower meadow in the park at the site of the annual Rotary Bonfire for at least 10 years (we will visit on the tour). A new area behind the town hall has been added this spring
- * There are natural wildflower meadows at Astbury Mere and at many of the schools
- * Fourteen sites were chosen and seeded in spring 2022 by the Streetscape team. More wildflower areas have been created this year
- * Congleton has adopted the '**Blue Campaign**' a national campaign to rewild areas to benefit wildlife. There are many blue hearts (Blue Campaign symbol) throughout the town
- * Wildflower meadows are something that the in Bloom team are passionate about, as they encourage biodiversity and are great for wildlife



Volunteers have surveyed grassy areas/verges (Low Mow Town Campaign)

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, red campion, orchids. Grasses included Yorkshire Fog, Meadow Foxtail, Rye, Timothy & Cock's Foot.



Sowing wildflowers



Low Mow May Town grass verge



Differential mowing at Hillfields green space, as requested by Friends of Hillfields, allowing a wonderful area for wildflowers to thrive.

B3 Environmental Management

Congleton Sustainability Group (CSG) Since 2010, CSG has collected unwanted apples from the public to make them into award winning Congleton apple juice and cider. This has prevented 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 (OSM). Now typically **10 tonnes of donated apples** are processed each autumn onsite at the OSM.

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



Volunteers working at the Secret Garden



The Secret Garden created by volunteers back in 2016

Climate change: Congleton takes its commitment to the environment seriously. In autumn 2019, Congleton Town Council declared a climate emergency and set up **Congleton Green Group** and commissioned the **Biodiversity Action Plan** featuring **30 sites around the town**.

Trees for Congleton is a subgroup of Congleton Sustainability Group and Congleton Partnership.

It comprises a group of volunteers with different expertise, including a landscape architect, conservation biologist, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Green group etc. who design & manage the tree and hedge planting in and around Congleton. Their aim is to plant 30,000 trees, hedges, woody shrubs, approximately one per person in the town, over a 5-year period, started in December 2019.

Tree planting is very popular. Members of the public have worked with Congleton in Bloom, Friends of Congleton Park and Trees for Congleton planting a diverse mix of trees, shrubs, hedges, and fruit trees.

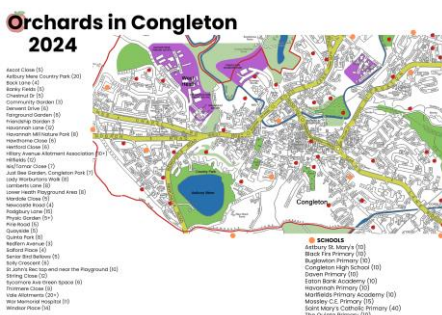


New collaborations with businesses successfully began in 2024. At three corporate responsibility sessions at Hall Farm and Havannah Nature Park 1,500 trees/hedge plants/fruit trees were planted. At a local factory, volunteers from the workforce planted over 500 hedge plants/trees and fruit trees.

Funding Congleton Partnership and The William Dean Trust are funding years 1 to 3 of planting and maintenance and the Tree Council will fund years 3 to 5.

This year external funding grants available from The Tree Council (Branching Out) were awarded. this funded hedges, wildflowers, and the marketing of encouraging young people under 25 to volunteer for the project.

Community Orchards 450 fruit trees were planted across 50 sites in Congleton, over 10 years. These orchards require annual maintenance, this includes weeding and mulching. We are now noticing the work paying off as fruit is now plentiful at these sites.



Apple, Plum and Pear trees in blossom

Other environmental news

Other volunteer groups are very active in Congleton, e.g. Climate Action Group, 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 are proudly flown at the following sites: Congleton Park & Astbury Mere Country Park.

Eco schools: 6 International Green Flags: Marlfields Academy, Saint Mary's Catholic Primary, Buglawton Primary, Smallwood Academy, Friendly Faces Nursery, Astbury Lane Nursery. One of our CIB team is an experienced green flag assessor, and she is currently working with several schools on their eco topics (e.g. biodiversity, waste, litter, school grounds etc).



The Congleton in Bloom (CIB) core team are doing their best to deal with the effects of climate change, while following the guidance of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Waste/recycling

- * Congleton is within Cheshire East, all residents have recycling bins (56.3% rate of recycling)
- * Residents with gardens can choose to register to have brown bins for garden & food waste, collected fortnightly. The waste is sent to a new facility at Crewe, ANSA, to make Biowise compost
- * Recycling bins in the town centre & Congleton Park
- * **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
- * **Rotary Initiative** a stall for recycling/swapping showcased in Congleton Park (we will visit on the tour)



Compost CIB has committed to only using peat-free compost in the floral displays. For four years we have taken delivery of Biowise compost from Cheshire East Council, via our active Waste Reduction Volunteers. The Biowise has been used as mulch in the park, a growing medium for the community gardening festival, and given away to allotments, IYN groups, schools, and care homes.

Spreading Biowise at the Fairground garden



Learning how to make compost at school



Woodchips as mulch to suppress weeds and retain moisture. Any tree work at the park generates chippings, which are used on site. In addition, 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 and Elizabeth's Garden.

Water Our many troughs have water reservoirs, which are filled by Streetscape using the bowser, drawing the water from the River Dane (a licensed procedure).



Green Walls Congleton is a town of trees, wherever you look there are trees and hedges, new and old, as well as the numerous floral displays. For example, mature trees and hedgerows line Clayton by-pass except for the bridge across the river. Ivy clad walls & fences can be found all around the town.



Section C Community Participation (C1, C2, C3)

- * 13 IYN groups, numerous businesses and local charities all contribute to make Congleton Bloom
- * CIB meetings (13 core members), advice & gardening sessions in national gardening week (April)
- * The CIB 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 & visit
- * Volunteers via open garden sessions, community newsletters, town centre activity days, Facebook and Twitter advertising, workshops, school visits and word of mouth
- * Community gardeners (between 6 -14 volunteers) who work at several sites (Elizabeth's' Garden, park borders, Margaret's Place, Community Garden/Cenotaph garden/Garden of Reflection, Just Bee Garden, and the well-being garden at Congleton War Memorial Hospital), average 100-125 hours per month, average 120 hours x 12 months = 1,400+ hours per year
- * All our IYN volunteers meet weekly at various sites across Congleton
- * Congleton Food4free 120 volunteer hours per year (three volunteers)



Seed Swap at URC



Adding signs at the fairground



IYN Tennis Club

- * Trees for Congleton: Oct- March maintenance & planting, numerous sites, all volunteers welcome
May & Sept maintenance



Rangers helping out at the Community Garden

- * Working with partners, e.g. Congleton & District Horticultural Society, Rotary International, Congleton West Rangers, Dane Valley Beavers
- * Local artists for Art in the Park (we will visit on the tour)
- * Community Gardening 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 (we will visit on the tour)

Support and Funding

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

The **William Dean Trust** has awarded **£29,500** in 2023-24 to numerous projects in Congleton, including volunteer gardening groups, schools, nature parks and IYNs and a major grant to East Cheshire NHS Congleton War Memorial Hospital's well-being garden of £15,000 (we will visit on the tour).

Trees for Congleton and residents donated towards the cost of a new perimeter hedge (700 plants) and orchard (11 trees at the hospital).

Businesses

Alexandra Court Hotel - small hotel RHS In Bloom Entry.

Our local town centre shops purchase hanging baskets (200), in addition all businesses have the opportunity to sponsor in Bloom.

Calendar of events August 2023 - July 2024

Congleton welcome North West in Bloom Judges to our town and all the IYNs on 1 August 2023



August - September: Maintaining grass verges, pocket parks and floral displays etc. Judging wheelbarrows. Breakdown of Gardening Festival autumn, open day at IYN Bath House & Physic Garden. Congleton Apple Juice on sale by IYN Old Saw Mill.



October: Change-over to winter bedding displays; begonia & cannas saved, general tidy up and pruning at all the gardens. Celebrating apple harvest at school orchard.



NWIB awards ceremony at Bolton

Congleton Large Town - Gold, Pride of Cheshire East, Congleton Park - Gold

12 x IYN Awards - 1 x 'Level 3', 2 x 'Level 4', 9 x 'Level 5'



November: Celebrating NWIB awards in Congleton Town Hall, **Gold in NW** Large Town Category; **16th Green Flag** (Keep Britain Tidy) for Congleton Park.



Children's Autumn tub plant-up



The Cenotaph, Remembrance Sunday

December



Rotary 'Tree of Light' at the Community Garden



Christmas trees through the town centre



A snowy Just Bee Garden



Summer bedding and perennials chosen by CIB core team.

Trees for Congleton awarded grant for hedge, orchard & tree planting project (The Tree Council).

Work starts to clear the front borders at St. Peter's Church.

January



East Cheshire Tree Alliance conference and meet the farmers making a difference

Over 40 attended the inaugural meeting in Congleton Town Hall, with representatives from 10 towns and villages all with an interest in more trees in Cheshire East.

The following day, a number of farmers met with Cheshire Wildlife Trust and Congleton Town Council to discuss the way forward for wildlife on farms.



Snowdrops



Fruit tree pruning training



February

Tons of Biowise compost delivered by Ansa Environmental Services to the park.

The crocuses are out!



More tree, orchard & hedge planting 1st town tidy at Mossley



March

- * Town Tidy based at Community Garden, tidying borders in the park ready for spring
- * Elizabeth's Garden tidied; visiting & advising new IYNs
- * All IYN, new IYN and businesses were contacted to see if they would like to participate in NWIB 2024

Tree planting with local factory workers



Enjoying the dazzling daffodil and blossom displays around the town



April - June

Town Tidies, Big Litter Pick, RHS Big Seed Sow



Community Gardening Festival invites issued to schools, nurseries & care homes, themes of 10, 60 and friendship.



National gardening week visiting IYNs at their regular sessions

*Waste Reduction
Volunteers 'Amble with
ANSA' a wellbeing walk
through Congleton Town
Wood, the park, and the
Just Bee Garden, led by
Patti.*



Red tulips in spring at the Cenotaph

19 & 20 May

Celebrating World Bee Day at the Just Bee Garden in Congleton Park. A collaboration between Friends of Congleton Park and Congleton Rotary.

Hunt the Bee



Planting in the Just Bee Garden



Kid's tubs planted; winter bedding removed, primulas distributed to schools, care homes, etc.



IYN BHPG spring open day



Trees for Congleton volunteers check all the newly planted trees, hedges & fruit trees, weed, water etc. Summer floral displays planted (park, roundabouts, troughs).



Special party in Congleton Park to celebrate the centenary of Congleton War Memorial Hospital



Displays by two IYNs at Congleton Food Festival



Community Garden Festival at Congleton Park

The first garden to be planted 'Flora in her Boat' planted by 14 young rangers.

9 additional back-to-back gardens to be planted later in July by schools, nurseries, and uniformed groups.

July

Town Tidy; portfolio completed; big polly tunnel re-roofed.

Party in the Park to celebrate 60 years of RHS In Bloom, a joint event with Congleton Lions Youth Band.



August

Final preparations for NWIB judging on 14 & 15 August.

2024

Welcome:

New IYN this year, Clayton Manor Care Home.

Returning IYNs, Astbury Mere Care Home, Heath View Extra Care, New Life Church Jubilee Club.

Our established IYNs: Bromley Bloomers, Bromley Farm in Bloom, Buglawton in Bloom, Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden, Congleton Lawn Tennis Club, Friendly Faces Nursery, Hillary Avenue Allotments, Friends of Congleton Park, Friends of the Community Garden, The Vale Allotments.

Encourage:

- ❖ **Local trusts and voluntary groups:** e.g. Rotary Congleton ('planting for polio,' thousands of purple crocuses and the Tree of Light at the Community Garden; helping in the grounds of several schools, sowing wildflower areas & Trees for Congleton, donating & planting new hedge and orchard at the hospital)
- ❖ **Businesses as partners:** Alexandra Court Hotel, The Lion & Swan hotel, Congleton Market Quarter, Congleton Fire Station
- ❖ **Shops as sponsors:** Many of our local businesses, independent and national have taken part
- ❖ **Gardening at churches:** St Peter's, St Mary's, United Reform Church, Wellspring (Appendix B)
- ❖ **Sponsorship of school gardens & IYN groups** by William Dean Countryside and Educational Trust

Involve:

Care homes, primary schools & both high schools, uniformed groups, e.g. Rangers, Scouts, Guides, etc (wheelbarrow challenge, back-to-back gardens, new mini-gardens, tree & wildflower planting).

A springtime image of Congleton Fire Station



Clayton Manor residents with their Wheelbarrow Challenge award

Appendix A Communication: via Local newspaper, radio, social media

[@Congletontowncouncil](#) (5.2k followers), www.congleton-tc.gov.uk
[@Congleton-In-Bloom-1377417495816332](#) (1000+ followers)
[@Congleton-Partnership-39675823430058](#) (616 followers), www.congletonpartnership.co.uk
[@FofCP](#) (1.3k followers), www.friendsofcongletonpark.co.uk
[@CongletonPark](#) (4,190 followers)
[@Congleton-Bath-House-and-Physic-Garden-183758682045944](#) (818 followers), congletonbhpg.co.uk
[@OldSawMill](#) (2.9k followers), www.theoldsawmill.org
[@Congleton-Sustainability-Group-1633258516905672](#) (318 members); CSG 252 followers
[@Buglawton-In-Bloom-752316145167633](#) (497 followers)
[@CongletonFood4Free](#) (673 Followers)
[@Trees-for-Congleton-102719481683789](#) (506 followers),
www.congletonpartnership.co.uk/sustainability/trees-for-congleton
[@The-Vale-Allotments-145140415692844](#) (188 followers)
[@thealexandracourthotel](#) (1.6k followers), www.thealexandracourthotel.com
[@Astburymerecountrypark](#) (5k followers), www.astburymerecountrypark.uk
www.porthaven.co.uk/astbury-mere-congleton
www.congletonu3a.org.uk

Monthly Town Tidies are 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, articles in the local press



Bloomers shimmer in gold at celebration

The Congleton in Bloom team was honoured to receive a string of awards during the North West in Bloom 2023 ceremony held at two events in Bolton.

Bearwood scooped gold for the large town entry and for Congleton Park, while it also picked up the Fringe of Cheshire East discretionary award.

To mark the success, town mayor Councillor Rob Moreton welcomed more than 140 volunteers to a celebratory event at Congleton Town Hall.

Coun David Brown, chair of Congleton in Bloom, opened proceedings by speaking to the volunteers about the achievements, the park, and the community scheme, it's Your Neighbourhood, made up of 12 groups in Congleton.

Fellow in Bloom team member Patti Pinto then spoke about the Community Garden Festival, held in Congleton Park during the summer.

The festival's theme was "Celebrations", featuring the back-to-back gardens, a flower-filled rowing boat, prizes for the King, a union flag, universities and "all about bees", 22 flower-filled wheelbarrows and lots of handmade colourful bunting. The many gardeners involved were aged from two to 102, and more than 250 people visited the festival over the summer.

Coun Moreton also awarded certificates to participants from nurseries, pre-schools, primary schools, youth groups and care homes, for their "outstanding" contribution to the town's success.

They included: Congleton West Rangers (the host), Buglawton Primary, Eaton and Hulme Wolfley, Riverbank, Friendly Faces Nursery, The Nursery, St Mary's Catholic Primary, The Quinta Primary, Mossley Primary, Smallwood Academy and Bromley Farm Youth Group.

The William Dean Wheelbarrow Challenge awards were judged by Congleton and District Horticultural Society (represented by Margaret Callimore) and sponsored by the William Dean Trust (represented by trustee Rebecca Franklin).

Mr Pinto said: "We always want to encourage our young gardeners, after all, they are the gardeners of the future. It has been a joy to have so many gardeners young and old take part in the Community

Garden Festival. I must thank the community gardeners who helped from June to clear the tunnel, prep for the gardens, maintain during the summer and clear away at the end of September.

Congleton West Rangers were also great guides for the visitors. Everyone who visited the festival came away with a smile on their face and left lovely comments to encourage us for next year."

One of the judges, Bernard Sheridan, commented: "Outstanding example of community gardening, what can be done when people get together, so much colour and fun. Well done everyone!"

'Tremendous'

While Vale Allotments achieved its first "outstanding" this year, many of the other groups have been awarded their gold equivalent for more than five years, which is a "tremendous" achievement, the in Bloom group said.

In the business category, the Alexandra Court Hotel entered the small accommodation category and was awarded yet another gold medal.

Mr Pendleton thanked everyone for attending and for giving their time throughout the year. He said that it was "marvellous" to see so many young gardeners represented, and that "the future of gardening is safe in Congleton".

Almost 1,000 bloomers had attended three days in Bolton for the North West in Bloom awards 2023. Some 580 in Your Neighbourhood groups and 140 Bloom entrants took part in this year's competition.

Mr Pendleton said Congleton's gold was "well deserved" and he encouraged everyone to keep gardening and keep the town beautiful.

Coun Gartside thanked all the various community groups who worked "so hard" throughout the year.

Special mentions went to Congleton Partnership, Congleton Sustainability Group, the Rotary Club of Congleton, Congleton West Rangers, Congleton and District Horticultural Society, The Wednesday Club (Congleton Town Football Club), Congleton Community Gardeners and the Tatton team.

Also thanked were Ruth Benson, Coun Suzi Firkin

and team for their work on biodiversity as well as Cheshire East Highways and Anna, Ashbury Mere Country Park, Ian Doughty from Congleton Museum, Elizabeth's Group, Anne Brightwell, the volunteers from Trees for Congleton, who are well on their way to their target of planting 50,000 trees and all those who turned out each month to the "town tidies".

Thanks were also given to Congleton Town Council for its "tremendous support", and all the Streetscape staff who kept the town "looking so clean", emptying at least 130 litter bins daily and maintaining all the roundabouts, town troughs and flower displays in the park.

Coun Gartside mentioned Ruth Burgess and Adrian Bullock, who were now RPS North West in Bloom judges. They were both congratulated and thanked.

Last, but not least, the Congleton in Bloom team was invited to the stage to show the awards.

A surprise presentation of flowers from the in Bloom team was given to Coun Gartside, Suzi Conway and Mrs Pinto for their continued dedication to the group.

Coun Gartside finished with another thanks to everyone, including anyone who may have been forgotten from the long list. She reminded everyone that "Bloom doesn't stop and we are already working on our next projects".

Coun Brown said: "We all enjoyed this evening. It was wonderful to share all these awards with our numerous dedicated volunteers from groups across the town. A big thanks to the staff at the town hall who made this evening special."

The awards were as follows:

Pre-schools

Distinction: Cherish and Impe, Kids Planet, St Mary's Catholic Nursery.

Highly commended: The Nursery, Ashbury St Mary's, The Quinta.

Commended: Friendly Faces, New Life Nursery, Buglawton, Havannah, Matfield.

Primary schools

Highly commended: Mossley, Daven, St Mary's Catholic.

Commended: Black



Bromley Bloomers.

Fira, Matfield, Smallwood Academy.

Over-11s

Distinction: Bromley Farm Youth Group.

Over-60s

Highly commended: Clayton Manor and Greenables.

Commended: Ashbury Mere, Hildon.

Green flags

Four eco-schools were awarded their Green Flags, an international award from Keep Britain Tidy. They were: Friendly Faces Nursery, Matfield Primary and St Mary's Catholic Primary, all with distinction, and Smallwood Academy.

Neighbourhoods

Outstanding (level five, gold equivalent): Bromley Farm in Bloom, Buglawton in Bloom, Congleton Bath House and Physio Garden, Friendly Faces Day Nursery, Friends of Congleton Park, Friends of the Community Garden, Hilary Avenue Allotment Association, Old Saw Mill, Vale Allotments.

Thriving (level four, silver equivalent): Congleton Lawn Tennis Club and Greengables Care Home.

Advancing (level three, silver equivalent): Bromley Bloomers, Congleton Lawn Tennis Club and Greengables Care Home were first time entries.



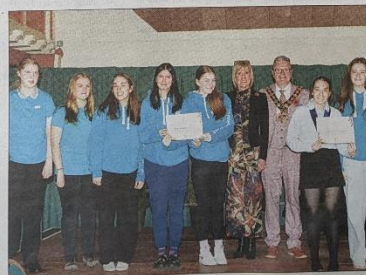
The Nursery.



Streetscape staff.



Mossley School.



Congleton West Rangers.

Appendix B Churches bloom together

Images from just two of the many churches with gardens in Congleton

Wellspring Church always looks wonderful, bulbs in spring, roses & dahlias in summer.

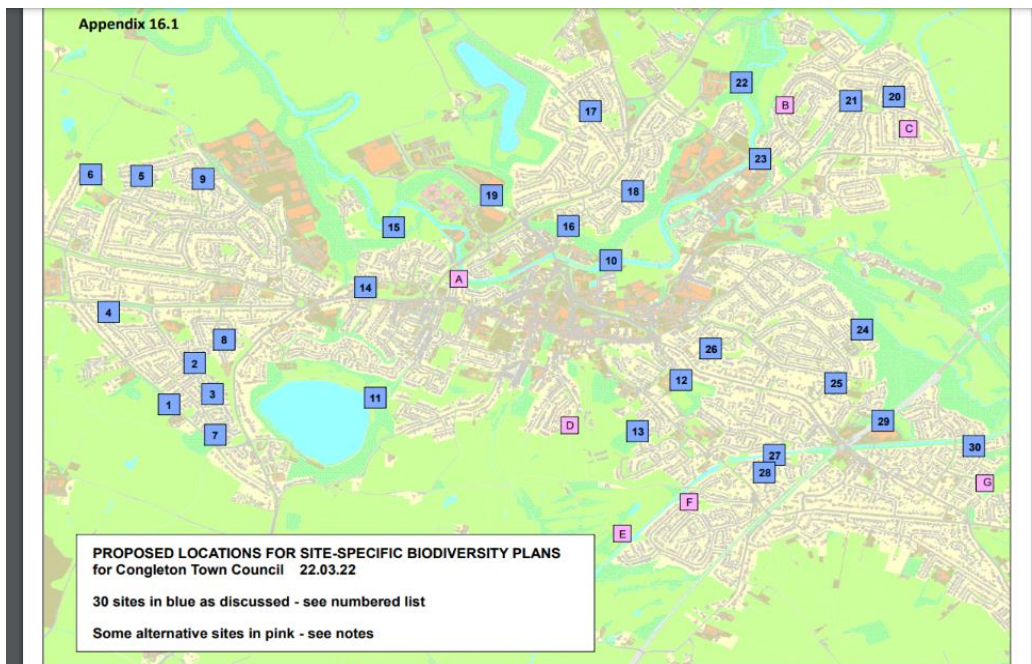


Work at **St Peter's Church** by the community gardeners and members of the church to create a more sustainable garden at the front of this historic church.



Appendix C Biodiversity

Biodiversity sites - Reference the 30 sites action plan



Stirling Close Biodiversity site

- * Stirling Close Biodiversity site was the first of 30 sites listed in Congleton Town Council Biodiversity Action Plan to be launched in April 2023
- * At the opening event people could plant trees (coronation orchard) and wildflowers, build dens, and visit a variety of stands featuring wildlife (bats, hedgehogs, trees, Food4free), climate action, council biodiversity plans manned by local volunteers
- * This year Trees for Congleton extended the orchard to 12 fruit trees & these volunteers also pruned coppiced one of the hazel hedges
- * We offered a training course in hedgelaying, led by our local Ranger Matt
- * Many more wildflower plugs were planted by volunteers
- * New biodiversity signs were installed



Appendix C continued
TREES FOR CONGLETON SUMMARY OF PLANTING 2023-243

Aim: to plant 30,000 trees in and around Congleton over 5 years.

Partners: Congleton Partnership, Congleton Town Council & Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

Contact the team: email: treesforcongleton@gmail.com

Website: Treesforcongleton.co.uk

Facebook: Trees for Congleton (602 followers)

2024 Winter/Spring planting season-4 sites in West Heath.

The largest is the area off Sycamore Avenue/Chestnut Drive/Beech Close/Laburnum Close & Poplar Close; plus two smaller sites off Chestnut Drive, two off Hawthorne Close, & one off Ullswater Drive/Sandbach Road. Plans for these four sites can be found on the Trees for Congleton Facebook page & their website. These plans included 270 metres of mixed species hedgerows, a small number of crab apple, sweet chestnut, oak & plane trees, together with 23 fruit trees.

The group was delighted that the Tree Council agreed to fund all the planting costs under its Branching Out grant scheme (<https://treecouncil.org.uk/.../our.../branching-out-fund/>). The Tree Council's Branching Out Fund provides small grants of up to £2,500 for well-planned educational projects to plant trees, orchards, & hedges in the UK that involve & educate young people up to the age of 21. In 2022 & 2023, the group were awarded grants from the Tree Council to plant hedges & orchards on over a dozen sites in Congleton, involving many young people including some Duke of Edinburgh students.

More than 3,500 plants were added to the tree totaliser (Jan-Apr 24).

In addition, this season saw planting at several other sites including *Congleton War Memorial Hospital, Havannah Nature Park, Hall Farm, Swettenham and Senior Bird Bellows, West Heath.*

Grand total_ 22,710+ planted since November 2019

Appendix D It's your Neighbourhoods (IYN)

Name of IYN	Created/Year first entered NWIB	2022 level 1-5	2023
Bromley Farm in Bloom	2013	5	5
Bromley Bloomers	2023/2023	n/a	3
Buglawton in Bloom	2003	5	5
Congleton Bath House & Physic Garden	2014	5	5
Congleton Lawn Tennis Club	2023/2023	n/a	4
Friendly Faces Nursery	2022	4	5
Friends of Congleton Park	2015	5	5
Friends of the Community Garden,	2021/2022	5	5
Hillary Avenue Allotment Association	2013	5	5
Vale Allotments & Gardening Association	2021	4	5
The Old Sawmill	2018 (Not entering 2024)	5	5
The Wednesday Club	2022 (Not entering 2024)	4	-
Astbury Mere Care home	returning		
Clayton Manor Care home	2024 New		
Heath View Extra Care	returning		



IYN Buglawton in Bloom



IYN Friends of the Community Garden



IYN Bromley Bloomers



IYN The Wednesday Club