

Judges Award: to Moira, Toni and the Chellaston Scouting group for their planters celebrating the Olympic Games.

Introduction: Chellaston is an ancient settlement recorded in the Domesday book. It is now considered a suburb of Derby yet retains a strong sense of community. The In Bloom group have been entering IYNs for a number of years but this year have progressed to their first entry to the In Bloom competition. The judges met the team at St Peter's church and were taken on a well planned and interesting tour. There are colourful planters and floral corners on show managed by a variety of volunteer groups. There is a developing community orchard and an impressive community garden.

Areas of Achievement Section A

The Chellaston volunteers have been enhancing public spaces in their community since 2017 originally as Chellaston Community Volunteers and later as Chellaston in Bloom. Their original aim was to improve areas no longer maintained by the council including overgrown wasteland and redundant planters on High Street. Places visited on the well-planned tour included St Peter's churchyard, which boasts its own 'green group' who maintain the planted borders and wildflower areas in the church grounds and have created a maze. Other areas included 'WI corner' which was very well tended, a square planter containing a collection of wildflowers maintained by the Guides, and the Pinfold which is managed by the local history group.

On the High Street we saw planters outside the shops, the corner planter containing drought tolerant plants, and further along a brick planter with perennials including bright geraniums. These are all cared for by Chellaston in Bloom volunteers. All are planted up slightly differently depending on availability and suitability of plants and overall are well maintained with some healthy plants. Planting includes perennials such as lavender, Hebe and Cistus. With colourful additions of Erysium and Osteospermum.

The grounds of the bowls club were planted up in traditional style and were very well tended by volunteers. A water butt was in place and dead plant material is composted onsite. The Ridgeway planters maintained by the scouts were interesting and colourful although a little dry. Plants are donated by volunteers and grown locally. Perennials are being planted with the aim of being more sustainable. A local nursery is supportive and provides plants at cost.

Some areas such as the corner maintained by the WI and community orchard have been underplanted with spring bulbs. The highlight of the work of the volunteer group to date is the community garden. Originally a disused toilet block this is now an attractive and peaceful place to sit and reflect on the High Street. Opened in 2022 it is home to a Cornus Kousa, an herb bed, a spring display of tulips (as near to the Chellaston Beauty as possible) and a colourful central planter filled with annuals, perennials, and bulbs for year-round interest.

The garden is enjoyed by workers during lunch breaks and the wider community for plant sales and Christmas carols.

Section B

Chellaston has an interesting history, and this is celebrated with good information boards in the community garden, a plaque at the Pinfold and in the booklet produced by the local history group. The seating in the community garden is both attractive and practical. It was thoughtfully chosen to prevent litter accumulating under the seats. A local foundry produced the striking archway over the entrance with an oak leaf motif and wall art showing the Chellaston tulip and an alabaster miner.

Areas maintained by the volunteers were neat and tidy but throughout the tour the judges saw many areas which were less well tended with litter and untidy street furniture. Litter picking is carried out regularly by 'the Wombles' but there is room for improvement.

The community orchard and nature reserve planted on the old brick works site is impressive. Planting of native trees including fruit trees, medlar and nut trees has taken place in three phases. Trees can be purchased and planted by groups or in memoriam. The Nature reserve and orchard is maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers who meet once a month. Trees are well cared for following a practical lesson on pruning. Bat and bird boxes are in place here. In the churchyard and in the community garden log piles and bug hotels were noted. Understanding of the importance of sustainable gardening is evident although sometimes difficult to employ in all areas given the size and layout of the entry. Peat free compost is used for propagating and planting up.

Section C

The strong volunteer group plans activities in advance and uses social media to inform about meeting times and task lists. Groups meet a minimum of monthly throughout the year. Engagement with other community groups was clearly seen on the judges' tour.

Planters are maintained by the Guides, WI, and local history group. The Ridgeway planters have been planted by Chellaston Scouting Groups. These were delightful and clearly involved hands on planting by the children. The series of planters celebrate the Olympic Games each using a different colour of the Olympic rings and information about the continent represented.

A session on pruning technique was organised at the community orchard. Everyone reported to have found it helpful, and volunteers have since practiced the techniques learned in their own gardens. The group uses social media and a local free magazine to promote activities and encourage new volunteers. The list of local supporters at the community garden and in your portfolio is impressive. Funds are made throughout the year from plant sales and a 100 club.

Areas for Development

Section A

Your outline plans to further develop a wildflower area in the churchyard are in place and would be a very welcome addition. The wildflower area managed by the council would benefit from some management and you may wish to consider taking on responsibility for this. We passed some attractive front gardens and pubs on our walk, and you may wish to encourage them to enter the floral awards next time.

Section B

In future years it would be good to see evidence of biodiversity in the nature reserve using butterfly or wildlife surveys and these are accessible from RSPB websites amongst others. The active community Scouting groups might be able to do this.

Litter can be difficult to manage in a large community, working with schools and youth groups can bring rewards. We saw little evidence of water harvesting although this has been considered.

The site of the community garden is leased from the council and so access to water and electricity has been limited but composting and water conservation could be used in the churchyard or on the community centre which is currently being refurbished.

Section C

More evidence of your future plans in your portfolio would be helpful. Consider getting a bowser to make watering easier or invite local houses /shops to assist with watering. Signs for sponsors which support planters could be considered and it may assist in encouraging other sponsors.

You may wish to consider visiting a school or allotments on the judges tour next time. Although it was impressive that so many volunteers wished to be involved on the day, it was often difficult to hear all the information being delivered as the group was spread out and it would be easier with a smaller group. Consider using just a couple of guides next time with a chance to meet key volunteers along the route and at the end of the tour.

Marks Section A:27

Section B:24 Section C:25

Total Marks:76

Medal Awarded: Silver Gilt