

Judges Report

RECEIVED

18 OCT 2022

Name of Entry: **Leighton Linslade**

Category: **Large Town**

Date of Judging: **19 July 2022**

Judges: **John Crawley and Nigel Bloxham**

Judges Report :

Overall Medal Award: Silver Gilt

Introduction and Overall Impression:

Leighton Buzzard is an attractive historic market town that has retained much of its unique history and character. The High Street, Market Square, Moot Hall, Market Cross and canal all provide a splendid backdrop for the many floral displays provided by the Town Council. The numerous, well cared for parks and open spaces are perfect places for a number of thriving and emerging community garden projects. The general level of cleanliness is good overall across the town. There is a strong sense of community participation and active volunteer groups care for a number of high profile areas including the North St roundabout.

Section A. Horticulture.

Areas of Achievement:

The community gardens at Pages Park and Linslade Recreation Ground provide a wide range of plants types including some excellent insect pollinating and drought tolerant species. Bedding displays in tiered containers, planters, traditional beds and hanging baskets were in good condition and colourful. The North St roundabout project to transform former CBC maintained shrubberies works well and brings a good variety of well cared for plants together to create a much improved landscape. Good to see locally sourced and locally grown plants are being used. The five Green Flags achieved across the town demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining and managing high quality spaces and are a real credit to the campaign.

Areas that would have given improved score:

Some of the tiered planters lacked trailing habit but it may have been the difficult hot dry season that prevented strong establishment of trailing plants. Winter and spring displays are mentioned in the portfolio text and could have been better evidenced with more photos.

Section B. Environment.

Areas of Achievement:

There is a strong sense of heritage and local pride in Leighton Linslade and the Flypast Sculpture and heritage trail help tell the story well. The two war memorial areas are well maintained each offering a different landscape and public realm experience. The recently introduced Public Realm

Ranger service provides a means to regularly clean open spaces and react to one of requests to clean and tidy grot spots and deal with graffiti. The 'loan out' equipped trailer extends that opportunity to local groups and organisations to help themselves with such activities. Street furniture and bins are in excellent condition throughout and the use of compactor bins improves sustainability of waste collection.

The restricted use of pesticides and herbicides is encouraging and along with the pollinator strategy case study, peat reduction, water collection systems and pollinator friendly planting it is evident that the In Bloom team are serious about environmental responsibility. The drought garden was thriving in the current climate.

Areas that would have given improved score:

Whilst there is a strong sense of environmental responsibility being introduced into urban and green space projects it would have been helpful if the judges had been shown the management of a conservation or biodiverse landscape such as woodland, waterway or meadow.

Section C. Community.

Areas of Achievement:

There is strong evidence of a year-round activity and local volunteer involvement throughout and it was good to meet so many people on the tour. It is good to see that local people are made aware of and updated on In Bloom activity through a range of media such as Facebook, press and website as well as open garden days, plant stalls and high-profile litter picking events.

There is good support from pubs, local shops and businesses and having a 'Blooming Gold' ale specially brewed for the campaign is a good way to engage people and promote the campaign.

Areas that would have given improved score:

Showcasing the work of young people by visiting a school, young persons or youth project would benefit the campaign enormously. Evidence of In Bloom engagement with hard-to-reach groups and a more diverse age range would strengthen the breath and diversity of the campaign. Future plans to show new forms of fundraising will also help.