

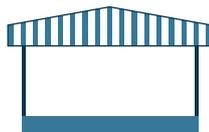
# NEWCASTLE IN BLOOM

2023

NATIONAL PORTFOLIO



Communities Growing Together



NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

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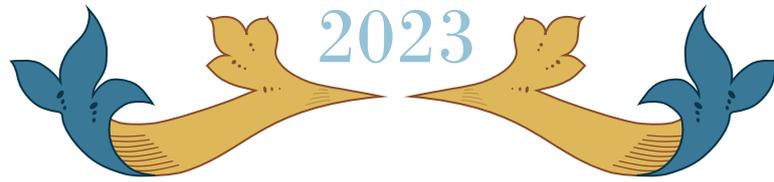
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# INTRODUCTION

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## WELCOME TO NEWCASTLE IN BLOOM



It's safe to say that Newcastle is proud to be back delivering our Bloom campaign in the usual format. The last few years have not been easy for any of us and we have been very keen to reconnect with our bloom family and have some 'normality' introduced back into our lives.

Following on from last year where we delivered a full "hands on" campaign and received a Gold certificate. We also had a proper "celebration" event at the New Vic Theatre where we were able to thank our many partners and friends who help to make our Bloom campaign so special.

We've been so excited about this year as its all about celebrating the **850** years of Newcastle-under-Lyme's Royal Charter. A theme we hope which will energise our local "bloomers" like never before. The following pages detail many of the activities and events which have taken place over the past 12 months all of which help to make Newcastle such a wonderful place to live and work.



# 2022 Review

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The last couple of years have really been about us getting our many Bloom projects and initiatives built back up to their “pre pandemic” levels. This year, using a combination of our “heritage” theme along with the boroughs celebration of the 850 years since its original charter, we really are “all guns blazing”.

Our “Community Pledge Planting Scheme” where schools and community groups can adopt and take ownership of floral displays, has settled back down into the twice per year regular planting sessions. Our Bloom local competitions are now back up to full strength with entries in all categories on the rise again.

As always we really have to thank our sponsors, who despite the difficult times we are in carry on supporting the Bloom campaign and making everything we do possible. We really are so grateful! As a “finale” for all of the above we will also be hosting the National Bloom judges this Summer, when we hope to “knock their socks off” with the tour of our borough and visits to many of the exciting initiatives we have on the go.

Here are some of the highlights of the past 12 months.



# Community Gardening in 2023

Community gardening is a great way to connect with others and improve the place where you live. If there's one thing that we all learnt from the pandemic, it's the importance of human contact and the ability to connect with each other.

There are so many benefits that come with being involved in community gardening including:

- Pride of place: public spaces improved by the people that use them allows a sense of ownership and shared learning
- More gardens means a cleaner and greener place to live and visit
- Attracting wildlife with plants creates a healthier environment, helping to boost local biodiversity and tackle air pollution
- Community gardens can regenerate otherwise run-down areas and boost the local economy
- Cleaner, greener environments have been proven to lower crime rates and reduce anti-social behaviour
- Growing food locally can help people make better eating choices, while green exercise is linked to better mental and physical health

As well as benefits to the wider community, gardening also has individual benefits such as meeting new people, learning new skills and improving physical and mental health. Something that is so important in today's current climate. So what's not to love!

The RHS are encouraging us all to make new connections in our communities through the power of plants. We reach out to anyone who's at a loose end and would like to help us in making a difference to our beautiful borough.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

A1

A2

A3

A4

B1

B2

B3

C1

C2

C3

# A Day Fit for a King



In celebration of His Majesty, King Charles III's Coronation on Saturday, 6 May 2023, Newcastle-under-Lyme Markets boasted a Royal-theme on The Stones and the streets were adorned with coronation themed bunting to mark the occasion.

Providing ambience on the day was local songsmith, Levi Knapper and town centre favourites, Tippy Transit who provided some much-needed refreshments. Also attending was the regular general market traders plus additional indies, the Town Crier and His Worshipful, The Mayor.

Partners, Newcastle-under-Lyme BID provided children's entertainment which included; free face painting, art and crafts, Coronation themed street performers and of course, a bouldering wall.

A fun day in town, fit for a King, was had by all residents and visitors.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

A1

A2

A3

A4

B1

C1

C2

C3



# Community Planting



We are proud to be entering the eleventh year of our Community Pledge planting events which take place in the borough.

This initiative has developed over the years and allows either community groups or local growers to pledge to adopt a particular flower bed. This can be in the form of agreeing to come out twice a year in June and October to plant the bed; or by supplying the plant material for the groups. All taking part receive a framed certificate to display and benefit in many other ways, such as helping to promote the business supplying the plants, volunteers feel that they have more ownership of their local environment, and all the same social and physical advantages of taking part in this sort of activity.

One outstanding initiative at Newcastle has been the re-establishment of our community orchards at Lyme Valley Park. They were created a few years earlier in partnership with the then active Friends group. However, as time passed they had become neglected and overgrown. Until local resident “Matt Linley” took an interest in the site and decided to make improvements.

Matt’s efforts have really been outstanding, he has worked tirelessly to get the project back up and running. He has weeded and cleared large sections of overgrown vegetation, hand-woven willow fences and mulched the tree bases to help reduce future maintenance needs. Plus of course he has planted more trees! His time working on the site has meant he has become a friendly face in the park and often speaks with dog walkers and other park users alike. Matt also invites various local schools to visit the orchard and learn about the positive impacts that trees have on the environment.

We have supported this initiative by providing many loads of wood chippings created by our Streetscene section as well as getting Matt to work in partnership with our nearby allotment tenants to the benefit of both parties. In the future there may be other overlaps in areas such as funding applications which this may help with.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

A1

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A3

A4

B1

C1

C2

C3



# Can We Dig It?.. Yes, We Can!

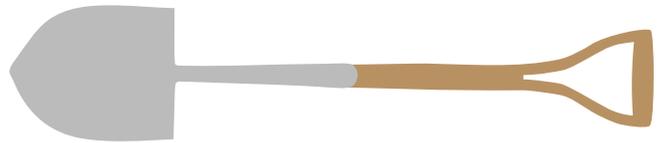
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We launched our 'Plant a Bloomin Tree' initiative and the Borough's Urban Tree Planting Strategy last year during National Tree Week (27 Nov to 5 Dec). We held two special events where local schoolchildren planted 30 British native trees to mark the number of years that Newcastle had been involved in Britain in Bloom and to kick off our campaign to create carbon capture green spaces to help mitigate the effects of climate change and become a carbon neutral Council by 2030. We also worked in partnership with the Queen's Green Canopy for the platinum jubilee. With the aim of giving every primary school in the borough the opportunity to be involved in tree planting, whether it be independently in their own school grounds or co-ordinated through us on borough Council land. We have also been encouraging groups and borough residents to plant trees in their own community spaces and gardens. We exceeded our target to plant at least 8500 trees throughout the borough to link with the 850th anniversary of the Newcastle Charter this year.

We have a 'Treetotalizer' linked to the Queen's Green Canopy, located on the Council's website where the number of trees planted is recorded along with their location. The total currently stands at 9995. Trees play a vital role in our environment providing oxygen, improving air quality, conserving water, preserving soil and supporting wildlife. It is hoped that this initiative has helped and will continue to educate the wider community, highlighting the importance and benefits of the biggest plants on our planet.

Consultation with residents living near to proposed planting sites took place with information detailed on our website.





Events took place all over the borough and the following species were planted: Field maple, Silver birch, Hawthorn, Cherry, Rowan, Alder and Oak. Many trees were applied for by schools via the Woodland Trust as well as funding from Staffordshire County Council.

The urban tree planting programme has just completed its fourth phase, as part of the borough's commitment to a sustainable environment and carbon sequestration. This phase has seen planting take place across 12 sites in urban parts of the borough, through a mixture of fruit trees, whip and feather planting of a range of native species and also has seen the creation of the Lyme Forest, which celebrates the borough's 850th anniversary of the signing of the Royal Charter. The Lyme forest has included 850 lime trees alongside a range of other native tree species on a former golf course site in the borough. Across the 12 sites a total of 14,662 trees have been planted and the areas will be protected for the future through the dedication of the sites as carbon capture sites.



Judging criteria covered

A1

A2

A3

A4

B1

B2

B3

C1

C2

C3

# We're Wild about our Feathered Friends

2023 got off to a flying start when we met up with little tots from Giggles & Wiggles Nursery.

The eagle-eyed youngsters spent time enjoying the great outdoors as they took part in the RSPB 'Big Schools' Birdwatch' initiative. They walked quietly around the park, where the nursery is based, recording all of their sightings. Blackbirds, magpies, robins and sparrows were spotted. The survey data was forwarded to the RSPB to help monitor the British bird population.

With birds facing greater challenges due to the nature and climate emergency, it's important that we all do our bit to help protect them. We can do this by taking a few simple steps e.g. providing food and water, shelter and a place to raise young. The Big Schools' Birdwatch is an annual initiative which ran from 6 Jan to 20 Feb 2023 and is free to enter.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

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B3

C1

C2

C3



# A Garden Fit for a King



A group of young, green fingered gardeners put on their crowns as well as their gloves to celebrate National Gardening Week. Children from Giggles & Wiggles nursery enhanced an area at Brampton Park by adding colourful plants to the sensory bed that they now look after.

The nursery were originally instrumental in creating a Wildlife Garden at the popular park but the development of a new extension to the museum meant that the area had to be cleared with many plants being transplanted to a newly adopted bed within the park's sensory garden.

The sun even made an appearance as the tots were keen to pick up their trowels and get stuck in. The theme was plant a container for the coronation so in true royal spirit the children wore red, white and blue and donned flower crowns which they had made using recycled materials. They also planted Delphiniums, a favourite of King Charles III. Over the past few years we've come to rely on our gardens and green spaces more than ever and the children can be seen regularly enjoying their park which acts as a great educational resource.

National Gardening Week is the country's biggest annual celebration of gardening and took place from Monday 1 May to Sunday 7 May 2023. The week is a great time for young families and new gardeners to get involved whilst learning about and experiencing the many benefits gardening can bring. It also gives more experienced gardeners the opportunity to spring back into life and find new skills and inspiration.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

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B1

B2

C1

C2

C3



# One Council

Our Council is undergoing some major changes as we remodel services to be more focused on where our communities need them most. We are now well into the third year of our transformation programme, One Council, and our Neighbourhood Delivery Service, which brings together 3 service teams as key building blocks of our future operating model, is beginning to embed. The Customer Hub fields, triages and resolves customer enquiries and requests at the first point of contact and will expand over coming years to draw in most of the council's services, and ultimately our main partners. The Mobile Multi Functional Team provides a rapid response to environmental issues, either through engagement and education, or where appropriate, enforcement. It also includes the Neighbourhood Rangers for Newcastle, Kidsgrove and the wider Borough, who are a visible, high profile presence, dealing with local environmental quality issues across ownership boundaries. The Town Centres and Community Solutions Team is creating vibrancy in the town centres via our markets and other related events, and replicates the success of Bloom in engaging communities by adopting a similar model for other community projects and problems. Bloom is still deemed to be a corporate priority for Newcastle and is referenced in each iteration of our Council Plan. It is becoming further embedded as we roll out our Sustainable Environment Strategy action plan and engage with our citizens around how we can work towards becoming a carbon neutral Borough.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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B1

B2

B3

C1

C2

C3

# Investment and Opportunities

The last three years has seen a “once in a generation” funding package being secured to regenerate Newcastle and Kidsgrove. Successful bids to the Town Deal Fund, secured £23 million for Newcastle and £16 million for Kidsgrove.

This was supplemented by a further £11 million from the Future High Streets Fund and £4.8 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. An ambitious programme of redevelopment is now underway which will last for 3 years and see some radical changes to the fabric of the town centres, including the redevelopment of the Rycroft site, York Place, Kidsgrove Railway Station and Midway Multi Storey Car Park. Some of the advance work to improve the public realm has already been completed, including a comprehensive refurbishment of the Grosvenor Sunken Roundabout (the Bearpit) with new tiling based on the Bloom theme to all 5 barrels, as well as CCTV, jetwashing and a new landscaping scheme based on a Mediterranean concept, taking advantage of the micro-climate of the site. Further improvement work to town centre furniture and market stalls has also been carried out, along with jetwashing of the Ironmarket and new planting schemes on the ring road. Two Security Marshalls have also been employed, to work in partnership with the police and Newcastle BID to tackle town centre ASB and rough sitting, providing reassurance to businesses and shoppers and encouraging greater footfall.

## Sustainable Environment Strategy

In April 2019, the Borough Council passed a climate emergency motion. A central element of this was the aim of becoming carbon neutral with respect to the Council’s own estates and activities and those related to our residents and businesses.

The climate emergency motion has been a catalyst for re-invigorating the climate change agenda for the Borough Council, which has historically had a strong commitment to biodiversity and energy efficiency. In 2007, the Council was a participant in Staffordshire Climate Change Partnership and climate change adaptation group. In 2008, we were a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration, making a public commitment to tackle climate change in concert with other councils. In 2013, the Council subscribed to the ‘Climate Local’ commitment, preparing and authorising an action plan to reduce carbon emissions and to promote action to tackle climate change with our partners and residents.

We are now working in partnership across the Borough to tackle the environmental issues facing our communities and businesses and in particular with key partners such as Staffordshire County Council and Keele University. Many of the issues can only be tackled together and to this end the Staffordshire County Council has launched its own Climate Change Action Plan which will link into and support the Borough’s Strategy.

By this reasoning, it is understood that for the Borough Council to achieve its aim of carbon neutrality, it has to have a strategy and an action plan, which sets clear, stable and well-designed policies, delineating a ‘roadmap’ as to how it will arrive at this target.

The strategy is intended to be such a document, but at the same time, it is acknowledged that this is not a ‘perfect strategy’ and there will be information, plans and actions that may not have been included within it. This Strategy will not be static but one that will be regularly reviewed, added to, expanded on, specifically as more suitable and appropriate projects are identified.

All Local Authorities also have a “biodiversity duty” under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan, A Green Future (2018), pledges that this will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future. To help fulfil this duty, the Borough Council is working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to develop a Nature Recovery Action Plan, which will identify key interventions and guide the management of green spaces and infrastructure in the future.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

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B3

C1

C2

C3



# Celebrating 850 Bloomin' Years



2023 marks a momentous milestone in the history of our Loyal and Ancient Borough as we celebrate the 850th anniversary of Newcastle-under-Lyme receiving its Royal Charter in 1173 from King Henry II. We are very proud of our borough's long heritage and we are keen to celebrate it. To do this we are delivering a year-long programme of events, inviting the wider community to be part of it.

As part of our urban tree planting strategy we are creating a commemorative Lyme Forest in recognition to the original Lyme forests of North Staffordshire and South Cheshire that gave the town its name. The new Lyme Forest will consist of 850 lime trees of varying species and are complemented with a range of other native broadleaf trees on the site. This forest will form part of an essential mosaic of local greenspace sites that will be protected for the benefit of nature recovery and carbon capture for the future. The general public can go online to make a financial donation towards this project.

A colourful plaque displaying the official symbol of Newcastle-under-Lyme has been saved and given a new lease of life. The large moulding which bears the borough's first coat of arms originally sat over the balcony of the former Civic Offices, following the demolition of the old Council headquarters to make way for an ambitious redevelopment of the Ryecroft.

The symbolic object is a visual reminder of part of the borough's heritage. It's been cleaned and repainted and has been given a new home in a prominent position at the front of St Giles' Church. The area has been enhanced with planting and is sponsored by SPS Envirowall.

We also called on one of our sponsors, local ceramicist, Ian Minshull from Black Star Ceramics who kindly created a bespoke tile display which acknowledged the borough's 30 year involvement with the Bloom campaign back in 2021. We asked Ian if he could upcycle the masterpiece by updating it and linking it with this year's current theme. It now sits proudly in Queens Gardens and reads 'Celebrating 850 Years of Newcastle-under-Lyme's Royal Charter'. Another tribute to the legacy of our loyal and ancient borough.

Many events have been planned including the 'Celebrate Newcastle' event which was held at the Brampton Park in June. It was a great success with over 3000 people attending. 36 pints of milk were used in the new Museum café to make tea and coffee and Radio Stoke and the Sentinel came along to report on the merriment which included a re-enactment of Medieval life, combat displays, wandering minstrels and a dragon. Other activities range from a mini circus, military parades, yarn bombing and rediscovering the stories of famous residents. The aim is to reach out to as many different sections of society as possible, uniting residents of all ages in a shared appreciation of our Borough's special nature. Newcastle is steeped in history and it's important to share the knowledge and reflect on the spirit and determination of those who made the town thrive and prosper through the centuries.

Judging criteria covered

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B3

C1

C2

C3



# Green Wall Project



The idea behind this initiative was born when Council Leader, Simon Tagg observed a school project adjacent to our town centre bus station. Hassell Primary School constructed a large “green wall” filter system to help capture some of the pollutants produced from the nearby traffic. The surrounding area experiences a high volume of traffic as it is part of the town centre ring road and has many visitors due to the bus station, school and shopping areas used by many members of public, so the prospect of creating a similar project on the opposite side of the roadway seemed a perfect fit.

With the combination of Climate Change funding from our “Local Area Partnerships” and a sponsor, Brampton Recruitment, we have installed a series of “green wall” panels created from ivy plants. The screens are two different heights, fitted alternately to give a castellated effect to link with Newcastle’s heritage. This environmental project will hopefully help to reduce pollutants in the town centre. We have also joined forces with Keele University and their students who are monitoring the levels of toxic substances in the air to try and ascertain what effect the screens are having. Its early days but we are hopeful to develop and enlarge this project over time with many more panels planned for.

This pilot project is part of an ongoing programme to help the Council reach its ambitious goal to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Judging criteria covered

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B2

B3

C1

C2

C3



# The Great British Spring Clean...

## Yes, he's back due to popular demand

Orinoco was back in town for two weeks with our school children, spreading positive messages to encourage a new generation of environmental warriors to take pride in their area. He travelled underground and overground as part of this year's Great British Spring Clean. The famous Womble came up from Wimbledon Common for an action packed week, full of fun and frolics and oh yes, I almost forgot, we picked up some litter on the way, over 850 hours were spent across the borough to celebrate our 850th anniversary of Newcastle-under-lyme! Approximately 350 #LitterHeroes including schools, businesses and volunteers, took part in 20 events, collecting over 450 bags of rubbish to keep their community clean covering over 500 miles. The annual campaign, run by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, completed over 400,000 pledged litter bags.

In the last few year's especially during the pandemic we've continued to see a huge increase in people taking pride and wanting to clean up their areas, particularly young people. We've been inundated with requests for our litter picking kits and have set up a database where volunteers' details are recorded and green bags supplied when needed. We now have 107 who are active within the borough with new volunteers joining every week. Everyone concerned is inducted to be made aware of the relevant H&S and risk assessment requirements.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

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B3

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C2

C3



# Children's Bloomin' Painting Competition

Following on from our successful comeback last year once more the children did not disappoint as we received 737 entries from 16 schools across the borough. The theme for this year's Newcastle in Bloom children's painting competition was 'Celebrating 850 Bloomin' Years of Newcastle's Royal Charter'. It was part of a planned programme of projects and events which linked with the heritage of Newcastle and celebrated the importance of learning about the local area and the sense of pride it provides.

It was interesting to see how the children had cleverly linked the heritage of Newcastle to the bloom campaign and its core values. The creative masterpieces ranged from vibrant paintings of circus inspired art to dark sketches depicting the challenges of the mining industry.

For the first time, we were able to take advantage of the large screens at our local sports centre, Jubilee 2 as the winning artwork was digitally displayed. The children were rewarded for their outstanding efforts at an awards ceremony which took place at Keele University on Wednesday 7th June and was enjoyed by 52 winners who took home certificates and prizes donated by sponsors, The Art Studio, the New Vic Theatre and Alton Towers, all presented by the Borough Mayor, Councillor Simon White.

Seen below are under 7's winner, Aidey Suttcliffe, aged five from St. Luke's Primary in Silverdale. Aidey impressed judges with his dancing trout made from recycled materials. Harry Sidebottom aged 10 from Hemsalls Primary School in Newcastle won the over 10's category. His textured effect work shows a castle amidst colourful blooms. A perfect link to our bloom campaign and the heritage of our ancient borough.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

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C3



# Calling All Bloomers



As soon as spring decided to grace us with its presence, we invited fellow bloomers to join us in making Newcastle a better bloomin' place by taking part in one of our local competitions. Last year, following the pandemic, we eased ourselves in gently but we made a comeback and went for it full steam ahead!

Entry forms were available from our community hubs and potential entrants could register online via our website or email. Judging took place at the end of June and throughout July. Our judges were really excited to be back on the road again to engage with everyone and see the progress of familiar projects and were also blown away by many new ones. They were taken to schools, allotment sites, residential gardens, community gardens, businesses and licensed premises all over the borough. Everyone involved continues to do their bit to improve the quality of life in their local area and the competition gives people a real focus to work towards, something that many of us have come to rely on of late. Our experienced judges boast a wealth of knowledge which they are more than happy to share.

2023 is a special year, as we are celebrating the 850th anniversary of Newcastle-under-Lyme gaining the Royal Charter. With this in mind, our 'Special Feature' award will be given to the best Newcastle 850 themed project.

Participants could follow the link to find out more about Newcastle 850 and how the Council plans to engage with businesses and the community [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/newcastle-lyme-850th-anniversary](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/newcastle-lyme-850th-anniversary).

Our competitions were sponsored by local businesses, Garners Garden Centre and Jackson's Nurseries. Donated prizes, certificates and much-coveted trophies will be awarded to winners at a ceremony, held at the New Vic Theatre at the end of September. One of the main highlights in the Bloom calendar and an event we all look forward to as it's a great way to thank everyone for their efforts and round off the year.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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C2

C3

# A Night on the Tiles



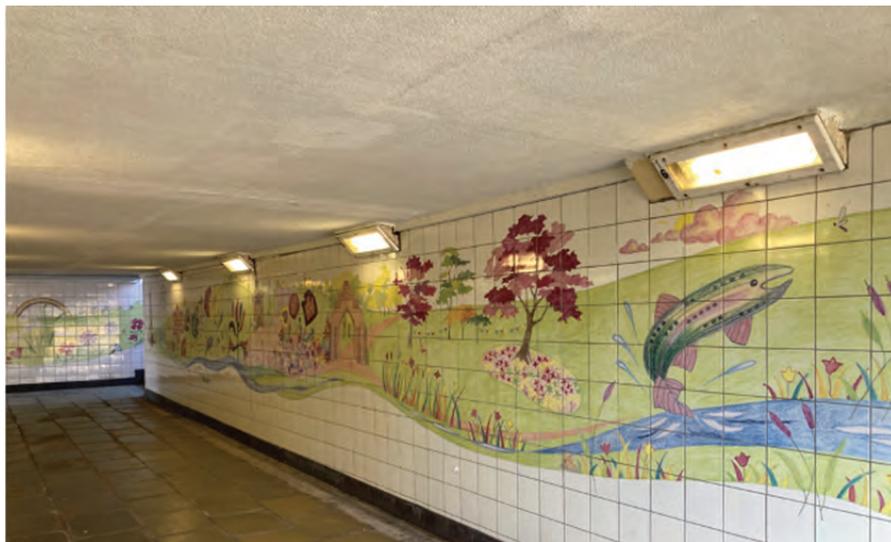
Over the last few years funded through Town Deal, a number of the town centre subways have been re-tiled with bespoke designs. The idea is to create attractive spaces for people to walk through on their way to the town centre.

Grosvenor Roundabout subways, were completed last year with designs inspired by children's drawings and paintings to reflect Britain in Bloom. We continue to receive positive comments from people who use the refurbished subways.

Working with local company Digital Ceramics, we've recently completed Ryecroft subway, known locally at the Philip Astley subway, which celebrates contemporary circus. The barrel of the subway has been completely re-tiled with designs created by local artists Elizabeth Taylor and David Salt, which has been well received.

We're currently working on designs to re-tile Queens Gardens subway to celebrate 850 years since the signing of the Royal Charter and have plans to move onto Pool Dam subway later in the year.

The Grosvenor subway leads to the gardens which have been given a makeover during the past few years and are now starting to look established. Old shrubs in the large raised beds were replaced with palms, Italian cypress trees and colourful herbaceous plants to give the gardens a tropical Mediterranean feel.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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C3

# Bedding Royalty



Streetscene have gone to town this year with our “royal” theme and are celebrating the 850th anniversary of our first charter for Newcastle. The colours used in our Queens gardens displays will coincide with the boroughs coat of arms design, and are:

Burnt Orange / Bronze, Rudbeckia “Cherokee Sunset”

Yellow / Gold , Rudbeckia “Prairie Sun”

Blue / Black, Delphinium “Black Bee”

As a special addition this year at the ends of the central beds there will be a raised “carpet” bed , highlighting the number 850 in red on a yellow background.

We hope this will be an eye catching and memorable floral display to really catch the attention of all our visitors and residents alike.

Plan of bedding scheme:



Judging criteria covered

A1

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A4

B1

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B3

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C3

# Bradwell Crematorium



Our award winning Crematorium continues to be developed and improved going forward with the installation on further “leaf” gardens where people can have small memorials to lost loved ones.

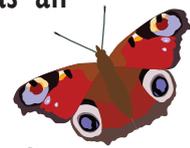
This fits with our overall theme of remembrance and tranquillity which the site conveys to its many users and visitors alike.

As can be seen in these pictures lots of the sites benches, trees and planted areas are sponsored by the public, which goes a long way towards the cost of maintenance.

The Bradwell Crematorium Leaves Garden was constructed in February 2019 as an extension to the adjacent, very popular petal gardens.

The theme of the gardens follows a similar pattern to the petal gardens, whereby cremated remains burial plots are arranged in groups or individual ‘leaf gardens’.

Pre-drilled and numbered base slabs were installed beneath a gravelled surface (local stone- Staffordshire Pink gravel) to form the headstone area. Four burial plots are positioned within the grassed area to the front of each slabs. Perennial planting provides a backdrop to each burial plot (with the majority of species selected from the RHS plant pollinators list). The use of perennial planting is new to the cremated remains burial plots, previous backdrop planting to the petal garden has been shrubs.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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A2

A3

A4

B1

B2

B3

C1

C2



# Down to a Fine Art



We worked with partners, Appetite, to create a beautiful, Bloom-inspired street art mural which now brightens up a busy town centre yard entrance in Stubbs Street.

Appetite is a Creative People and Places programme that encourages local people to experience and be inspired by the arts.

Their Artist-In-Residence, Semaan Khawam is inspired by the freedom of birds and his design forms the focus for the artwork. Born in Syria, Semaan says he's seen a lot of death and destruction in his own country. His family fled Syria in the 1980s, settling in Beirut, Lebanon and more recently he travelled to the UK. Semaan worked with a group of refugees and asylum seekers to express elements of their journeys through painting and poetry.

As part of his residency he also created a stencil of his emblematic 'Birdman' which was spray painted by Rob Fenton,

Whilst the work is an expression of hope, joy and pride, it also pays homage to the disillusionment and sense of loss many of our participants have experienced/are experiencing.

It is also very much about people wanting to become part of something, somewhere, about being allowed to remember and rejoice in their origins and wanting to positively contribute to new communities.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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A2

A3

A4

B1

B2

B3

C1

C2

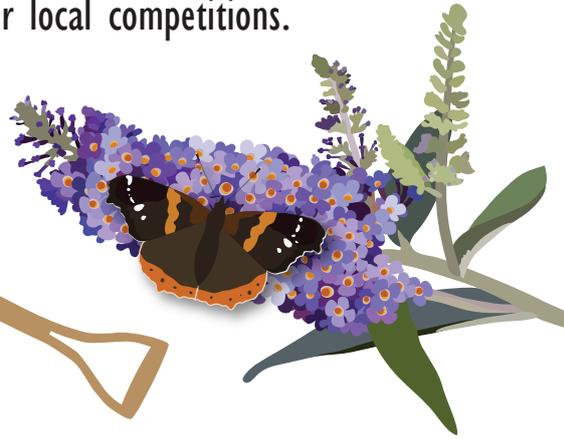
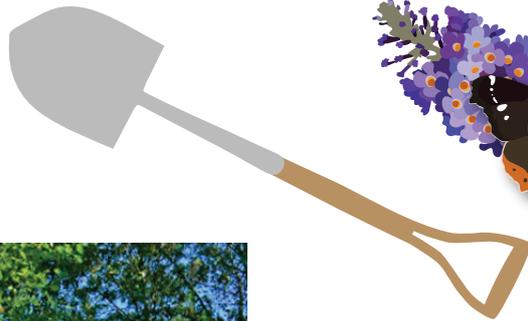
C3

# Allotments



We have six allotment sites that we currently manage with around 250 plots in total. The benefits of allotments are well known and include physical and psychological therapy for the tenants. The recent pandemic along with the cost of living crisis have led us to rely on our outdoor spaces and many of us have had a craving to grow our own food. This trend has resulted in an increase in allotment demand throughout the borough. Kidsgrove Care Solutions, a provider of respite and personal support for adults and young people with learning disabilities, have taken on the challenge of reinstating a former food garden at their premises in Chesterton Park. This will provide a great outdoor space that the clients will benefit from.

We link allotments to our BIB campaign through our local competitions.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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C3

# Environment/Recycling



Our recycling tonnages have increased by 22% since implementation of the simplified recycling service and participation has increased by over 10% in a number of areas. What we collect in Newcastle under Lyme is such high quality that almost everything is reprocessed in the UK. With this increase in performance in our recycling service, our refuse tonnages have gone down. We've reduced our service costs, and simplified our fleet. All of our collections vehicles now run on hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) a renewable diesel which has slashed the carbon emitted during collection services.

We're still collecting around 60tonnes of food waste each week. Our message about avoiding food waste is succeeding, as while we have extended collections from houses into schools, nurseries, residential home settings and now some flats, our total tonnage collected has remained steady. We continue to visit schools with our 'food face' caddy stickers for pupils to take home and customise their food caddy. We hope that this will increase participation by engaging our young recyclers. We monitor the number of food caddy requests as well as any potential increase in tonnage, and also look out for the fun faces on the green caddies when presented for collection.

In Newcastle under Lyme food waste is sent to an Anaerobic Digester (AD) Plant in Staffordshire where it is broken down to produce bio gas, a renewable source of energy. The bio gas is used to generate electricity and heat that is exported to the National Grid. Another by-product from recycling food waste is bio-fertiliser, which is rich in nutrients such as the nitrogen and potassium required for healthy plant growth and fertile soil. This is used to grow more food!

We believe that it's all about achieving good relationships when it comes to making recycling and sustainability work for schools, colleges, the local university, scout groups and housing associations (including Aspire Housing, Housing21, Sanctuary Housing and Honeycomb to name but a few). That sometimes means tailoring the waste and recycling collections to suit their specific needs. We develop links through environmental education sessions within schools, as children (and teachers!) like to know what happens to their recycling when it leaves their home or school. These sessions are very popular, help schools to become more sustainable and can even result in money savings for them too. These sessions aren't exclusive to schools; we also visit nurseries and independent living/residential homes.

Our Facebook page has gone from strength to strength and now has over 4.6k followers across the Borough. That means we've built a close relationship with our residents, and use it all the time to push digital self-service and website use, just as much as pushing ideas to achieve full and proper use of our collection services. We recognise that not all our residents have access to social media, so we liaise closely with a local 'one stop' shop who stock a supply of recycling bags and food caddies. All our community libraries hold stock too, as does the Guildhall. They are a useful link between our residents and ourselves and helps us to make sure our services are accessible where residents live.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

B1

B3

C2

We'd like to say a massive thank you to Alison from Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council! She visited us yesterday to share her vast amount of knowledge on recycling. The children were eager to learn more, asking lots of questions. We sang Alison our recycling song which she loved. Alison is providing us with recycling bins so we can practice sorting our rubbish in the setting. Fruit peels in the food waste bin, scrap paper in the blue bag. Embedding recycling now to help in the future ♻️

Please check your Tapestry accounts as we have set a challenge for the Wiparound children...



# Grounds Maintenance and Tree Works

There are several agencies who maintain land within the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, these include the County Council, Aspire Housing and of course lots of Parish Councils. However, we at the Borough Council are proud to say we take the lead in looking after the majority of parks and open spaces in Newcastle. To do this we have a dedicated team of staff working in the most efficient ways possible carrying out operations ranging from grass cutting to litter bin emptying and tree maintenance. Our priorities are set out in our Green Space Strategy as well as various management plans for the major parks.

Over the last few years we have renegotiated our highway grass cutting arrangements with Staffordshire County Council. The Leader of the Borough Council is also the Cabinet member for the Environment at the County Council and we have had a renewed focus on sustainability and joint working as we remodel our services with the climate change agenda very much in mind.

As a result, we have reduced the frequency of grass cutting and chemical weed control on highway verges, now cutting verges a maximum of 6 times per season in urban areas, and two times per year in rural areas. Weed control has also reduced to one spray per season, with an optional second spray in identified urban areas if needed. We focus our more intensive grass cutting operations on the town centre roundabouts and ring road, and other key gateways into the town. We also strim and hand weed the pedestrianised areas in the town centre to maintain a clean, tidy and cared-for impression.

All our mowing is done using rotary cut machines which give an acceptable standard of finish whilst also removing the longer seed heads which can look very unsightly if left, and of course would require further work to remove.

We have a dedicated member of staff who helps to coordinate all our Bloom related operational activities, from children helping to plant floral displays to community groups maintaining areas of public open space.

The boroughs trees are maintained by a team of 6 specially trained operatives, predominately through the winter months as this is a more efficient way to manage resources.



Judging  
criteria  
covered

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B2

B3

C1

C2

# How We Fund the Campaign

Funding of our Bloom projects is derived primarily through sponsorship from many local businesses all over the borough. Despite the pandemic we have retained most of our sponsors. One of our real strengths is been able to offer a very “flexible” approach to businesses with options including signage, events and general donations all catered for.

We now have a donations service on our ‘Plant a Bloomin’ Tree’ webpage. We are very conscious that not everyone is in a position to physically plant a tree. Having a facility which enables individuals to make a donation towards the cost of a tree/trees makes the initiative more inclusive and everyone is able to get involved with the knowledge that they ‘re making a difference to the wider community for many years to come.

We have worked really hard to develop this area of Bloom over the years, and the results really do speak for themselves. It’s true to say we just couldn’t operate the campaign without this support.

Judging  
criteria  
covered

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A4

B1

B3

C1

C2

C3



# Marketing

To launch our campaign each spring we spend a couple of days out in the community, engaging with local residents and businesses, raising awareness of all things 'Bloom'. We are continually building on previous relationships and trying to form new ones and we've continued to promote the campaign and its core values through our social media channels, connecting with our community.

We have combined our 'Growing Together' and 'Eco Schools' newsletter to save resources. The publication continues to be a great way to market the campaign and showcase many of the excellent projects and outstanding works carried out by our volunteers throughout the borough.

We try very hard to achieve the best possible coverage of our all year round campaign within the local press, social media, radio and other publications. Shown below are some examples of coverage.

Judging criteria covered

A1

A3

B1

C1

C2

C3



**DOING THEIR BIT:** Children from Newcastle's Giggles & Wiggles nursery visited the town's Brampton Park to help with a litter-picking activity.

"We teach and encourage the children to look after their surroundings and getting them to pick up litter and taking ownership of their litter at an early age starts a good habit"

Nicole Finney, from the nursery, said: Pictures: Pete Stonier



# Future Plans for Newcastle in Bloom

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2023 is the 850th anniversary of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Charter. This is a huge milestone for our borough and to mark the occasion we have planned lots of activities and events, many of which link together Newcastle's heritage with the three core pillars of bloom; community, sustainability and horticulture. We are very excited about this unique theme that we have weaved into our campaign and we are enjoying the celebrations.

As usual we look forward to reviewing this at our awards event in September.

## Conclusion and Thanks

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We are delighted and honoured to welcome the RHS National UK judges to the Loyal and Ancient Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme in our special 850th anniversary year.

We are hugely excited to showcase the many different projects our communities have been working on over the last 12 months – we certainly haven't been letting the grass grow under our feet!

Indeed, Bloom activity has continued to thrive for many of our existing and new groups over the past year and has brought a renewed focus on sustainability as well as helping us with our physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We hope our national judges enjoy meeting us all and appreciate seeing what has been going on in our Blooming wonderful Borough as we chalk up 32 years of Bloom in Newcastle.

I'm sure the judges will be as impressed as ever with our ongoing enthusiasm, innovation and all round embracing of all things Bloom in our Borough.

I'd like to thank all of the groups, individuals, schools, partners and others who continue to keep Newcastle Blooming, whatever the challenges, and we'll see many of you at our local awards ceremony in September.

In the meantime – “keeeeeeep Blooming!”

Judging  
criteria  
covered

A1

A2

A3

A4

B1

B2

B3

C1

C2

C3

# SPONSORSHIP

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AI Mini Skip Ltd

Affinity, Staffordshire - Outlet Shopping

Alton Towers

Art Studio, The Barracks

Asda, Wolstanton

Aspen Landscaping and Driveways

Barry's Place

Bayfields (Newbold Opticians)

Bigfoot Self Storage

Black Star Ceramics

Bliss Bathrooms, Bedrooms, Kitchens

Brampton Recruitment

Brown Recycling Ltd

Business Improvement District

(Newcastle-under-Lyme)

C McGough & Sons (Funeral Directors)

Cheeky Monkeys

Cornwells Chemist Ltd

Derek Mawby Surfacing

Edenhurst Preparatory School

Garners Garden Centre

Halstone Mobile and Technology

J T Salt Flooring

Jackson's Nurseries and Tea Room

Jason Knight Design Ltd

John Pass Jewellers

Kidsgrove Town Council

MyWasteman

New Vic Theatre

Newcastle-under-Lyme School

Pastel Solutions

Pinkstones Toyota

Premier Placement Services

Roseville Taxis and Mini Buses

Rotary Club of Wolstanton

S A Platt Builders

Sandyford Garage, Newchapel

Silverdale Parish Council

SPS Envirowall

St Quentin Residential Home

The Barracks Trust, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Thriving Futures

Tidysite Skip Services Ltd

Vogue Carpets

W J North Ltd



**Local Businesses putting  
“Newcastle” on the map!**