



Willaston in Bloom 2017

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1.0 Introduction

Willaston is very proud to take part of North West in Bloom and strives each year to achieve the Gold award in the category of "Small Town". As a Parish Councillor and Chairman of the Willaston in Bloom, last October I was very proud to receive for the first time since entering North West in Bloom the esteemed gold award.

Spring starts in early February and signs of new life are evident in Willaston. In the surrounding woodlands of The Spinney, Bluebells and Primroses abound, while in the hedgerows, many varieties of cultivated Daffodils grow from bulbs. Although not an indigenous species, Camellias can be seen over many a garden walls. In May and early June, the hedgerows are luxuriant. Summer planting starts late May, giving time for the colourful flowers to settle down and blossom in time for the judging on 14th July 2017.

Willaston again this year has reached an exceptionally high standard, with a focus on our local community projects, as well as the usual bedding displays, local recycling initiatives to areas of natural habitat and conservation. Considerable time and effort has been taken to look at the management of street furniture and public parks, and focusing on sustainable practices and inventive schemes to raise money to fund projects. Willaston has one objective in mind and that is to win the overall gold award in the small town category. Again the level of community pride as well as the innovative and caring approach to the environment was an example for many to follow. All ages within the community have been involved, ranging from very young children to senior citizens. There has been an increase in civic pride through people demonstrating responsibility for their local community, through undertaking all year-round maintenance to floral displays and high levels of cleanliness.

On behalf of Willaston Parish Council, our sponsors and residents, I am delighted and honored that Willaston again is going forward to represent at Northwest in Bloom, and more importantly for those wonderful staff and volunteers who give so much of their time to help make Willaston the beautiful village it has become.

CLlr Wayne Lewis
Chairman of Willaston in Bloom

2.0 New developments

2.1 A year of awards

In October we received news that Willaston had been awarded the Best Kept Village in Cheshire award (2,500-5,000 population) and Overall Improvement Award for the most improved Cheshire village in all categories. Just two weeks later we received the ‘icing on the cake’ with our very first Gold Award from North West in Bloom.

These awards highlight the strong sense of community spirit and a sense of place the residents of Willaston have for their village.



Clrs Lewis and Flackett with Ken Denith of Crewe Road Nurseries.



2.2 New signage

As part of Willaston in Bloom’s celebration of the 2016 Gold Award, we have commissioned and installed two large new signs – one on Mike Heywood Green and the other off the Peacock Roundabout. A local printing company sponsored both signs. These signs will be a constant reminder for residents and visitors of our proud achievement in 2016.



The new sign stands proud on Mike Heywood Green.



Bedding plants can be seen for the first time on the Maze greenspace.

2.3 New municipal planters

As part of an ongoing programme of replacing our wooden barrel planters, we have six new municipal planters in the village. These planters help reduce regular irrigation requirements, encourage deeper rooting and provide a sense of village civic pride with the community coat of arms and 'Gold Award Winners' text on alternate sides.



New orange planters positioned on Green Lane brighten up the area.

2.4 A transition towards more sustainable plantings

An area for improvement identified by judges in 2016 was a gradual move towards perennials and herbaceous perennials. The summer planting for this season therefore includes perennials such as *Lavandulas* and herbaceous perennials including *Heucheras* and *Salvias*.

There are plans for increased perennial plantings on The Spinney and also the introduction a new mixed native hedgerow and tree plantings on the Lettie Spencer Playing Field, with saplings supplied by the Woodland Trust.



Following last year's introduction of wildflowers on The Spinney, a stunning second season display of *Leucanthemum vulgare* can be seen, which also enhances the ecosystem in the immediate area.

2.5 The Big Woolley Weekend

Mike Heywood Green was transformed into a woolly paradise on the 10th June as part of the Big Woolly Weekend. Willaston based Kathryn's Craft Group had spent many months creating the woolly bunting, tree warmers and even Willaston Worms! This attracted a lot of attention from residents who wanted to know what it was all about. After the event the items were taken down and sent to Knit for Peace UK to be made into blankets for victims of conflicts internationally.



Peace dove detailing on the tree warmers and Willaston Worms adorning the Willaston WI sign.



3.0 Horticultural Achievement - Spring



Once again, the spring displays of *Narcissus*, *Hyacinthoides* and *Muscari* bulbs provided vibrant up-lifting colours around the village.



3.1 Spring displays



3.2 Summer displays – Mike Heywood Green



3.3 Summer displays – Wheel Beds



Last year the Wheel beds were restored using locally sourced reclaimed stone. However, the bed’s soil structure was at a very poor quality, which required complete removal. In May this year, both beds were emptied and re-filled with new sterilized topsoil. The old growing media was however relocated locally to minimize the impact on the environment.



3.4 Summer displays – Coppice Road and Cedar Court



Bedding plants in this summer’s schemes around the village include:

- Guninea impatiens*
- Pelargoniums*
- Begonia Non-Stops*
- Begonia Whoppers*
- Bidens*
- Bolero*
- Canna*
- Coleus*
- Felicia*
- Agretum*
- Marigold*
- Isotoma*
- Verbena*
- Sanvitalia*
- Lobelia*
- Lantana*
- Salvia ‘Mystic Spires’*
- Torenia*
- Thunbergia*

3.5 Summer displays - The level crossing



The level crossing in the centre of the village retains its strong character with traditional picket style white fencing giving unobstructed views of passing trains.



3.6 Summer displays – Wybunbury Road



The Municipal planters and a raised bed provide vibrant colourful displays along Wybunbury Road.

4.0 Environmental Responsibility

4.1 Biodiversity

Last year's introduction of a wildflower scheme on The Spinney has produced a second year of interest and ecological habitat. We have once again aimed for reduced mowing on the Spinney and around the boundary of the Playing Fields for benefit of wildlife, resulting in a strengthened local ecosystem. An application has been submitted to the Woodlands trust for several hundred saplings to be planted on Council owned green spaces. If successful this will significantly enhance habitats for a range of mammals and invertebrates. Bat and bird boxes around the village continue to be well used in spring months.

4.2 Sustainability

Six new municipal planters have been purchased to reduce regular irrigation and maintenance requirements. In early May the winter display of *Primulas* from Mike Heywood Green were removed to make way for the summer schemes. In an effort to reduce wastage, these plants were donated to elderly residents in Cedar Court and Colleys Lane. All bedding and perennial plants have been sourced locally from Willaston's Crewe Road Nurseries, limiting transportation costs whilst also supporting local business.

4.3 Green Infrastructure assessment

Between March and June 2017, landscape architecture students from the University Centre Reaseheath carried out a detailed analysis of the greenspace assets in Willaston to determine their quality and value. The assessment was followed by outline enhancement proposals for the Lettie Spencer Playing Fields, which aims to increase the socio-cultural and ecological benefits of the space.

4.4 Litter management and anti dog fouling

Parish Council continues to promote its policy in encouraging local residents to be diligent in removing litter on a day-to-day basis in areas around properties and also on community green spaces where litterbins are located. The anti dog-fouling scheme continues to be successful.

5.0 Community Participation

5.1 Remembrance Sunday



At 1:00pm on Remembrance Sunday the community came together to honour the fallen from two world wars. Willaston Scouts led the laying of crosses - one for each named on the war memorial, followed by wreaths laid by civic leaders and local residents.

5.2 Willaston in Bloom Awards Evening

In July 2016 experienced Willaston in Bloom team members commenced judging residents gardens to identify Willaston's best private gardens, commercial premises and the best allotment plot.

The winners were announced at an awards ceremony held in Willaston Social Club on 23rd November 2016, at which approximately 60 residents attended. The awards evening was also the first time the Gold Award was on display for the community to share in their momentous achievement.



5.3 The World Worm Charming Championships

Every June since 1980, Willaston has held the unique World Worm Charming Championships at Willaston Primary Academy. The event aims to raise funds for the Friends of the Academy and other good causes. Attracting hundreds of spectators and competitors from all over the UK and internationally, this year's Championships took place on the afternoon of Saturday 24th July.



Chief Wormer, Mike Forster and Rose Queen Isabella Yates officially starting the Championships.



Using a range of different vibration techniques, competitors all fighting to charm the most worms from there 3x3m plots in 30 minutes.

5.4 Willaston Primary Academy

The 2017 report from our local school detailing their environmental and horticultural activities over the past year. This year’s report was written by Year 5 pupils.



Here at Willaston in Gardening Club we like to make sure that our plants are well presented and look good in the school gardens.



Our gardeners this year have planted various different plants, they have watered them and kept the school grounds clean. Mike Horan has donated wonderful plants to help our Willaston garden. Pupils at Willaston have been eager to water our plants in their break and lunch times.

5.4 Willaston Primary Academy



As you can see on the pictures we love to decorate the school grounds with environmentally friendly decorations. When Year 5 pupils return from a trip to Conwy, they often bring home some amazing art such as weavings. Some families offer to make decorations for the grounds.

5.4 Willaston Primary Academy



We also have chickens in the school gardens and have chicken monitors to look after them. Our families are also on a 'chicken rota' to look after the chickens in holidays and at the weekend.



We have 2 lovely chickens, Benny and Scotty who live next to our old rabbit's cage, whose name was Muffin but he sadly passed away on Easter Sunday. The chickens get well fed daily and their pen gets cleaned out as well. There is a chicken rota for special families who take care of them on the weekend. These families include the Caldwell family, the Heafey family and the Hopkins family.



We would like to say a big thank you to the following Willaston businesses and organisations that have provided sponsorship for this year's displays:

**Advantage Autos
Can Gas Training
Crewe Road Nurseries
Holiday Club
Johnson's Printers
Masonic Lodge
Mick the Chips Fish Bar
Pebbles Tile and Stone
Scanlans
SC Autos
Store AllSelf - Storage Solutions
Willaston Parish Council
Willaston Social Club**

This portfolio brochure was designed and produced by Cllr Craig Bailey MCI Hort on behalf of Willaston Parish Council and Willaston in Bloom.

