



Standard Marking Sheet

Name of Entry South Swindon

Judges Martyn Davis and Ian Murphy

Date of Assessment 6 July 2022

Category: Village / Large Village / Small Town / Town / Large Town / Small City / **Pennant** / Small Coastal / Large Coastal. (Indicate category).

MAXIMUM OF 10 POINTS PER SUB SECTION

MAXIMUM OF 10 POINTS PER SUB SECTION								Total marks awarded in sections A, B & C	Medal level awarded in sections A, B & C
A Horticulture 40%	A1		A2		A3		A4		GOLD
B Environment 30%	B1		B2		B3				SILVER GILT
C Community 30%	C1		C2		C3				SILVER GILT
Total Score out of 100					Overall Medal Awarded: SILVER GILT				

Medal Guide: Gold, Excellent 85-100 Points; Silver Gilt, Very Good 75-84 Points; Silver, Good 60-74 Points; Bronze, Satisfactory 50-59 Points. 49 Points and below – certificate of participation.

Introduction and Overall Impression: (Please expand space as required to fit judging comments).

Neither of us knew the area or had any preconceptions of what to expect on our judging tour but we were both very impressed by what we saw. We saw three lovely parks and smaller areas within the town very well kept by volunteer groups.

South Swindon is a very large area to present to In Bloom judges. The decision this year to concentrate the focus of the tour on a limited area of the Old Town was an excellent idea and can perhaps be developed further in future years.

The In Bloom group which is given a strong lead and support by the Parish Council maintains contact with the various volunteer groups and each of those groups has its own timescales for periodic meetings to get together and carry out their work.

The parks are really hidden treasures, all maintained to excellent standards they provide lovely places for the public to enjoy very close to the centre of the busy town. The South Swindon Green Trail has recently been opened, encouraging residents to explore the town and its historical and natural heritage; It is very well set out with good signage and information boards.

We saw the Cambria Bridge Community Garden which apparently is a transformation of a previously run-down area and now gives a very attractive open space which is well used by local residents. This improvement has been achieved by a small group of highly motivated individuals. The area now

contains well planted beds of perennials, a currant garden, and a vegetable garden which is being organised to encourage interest in gardening. All of the beds in this area have been raised due to the tarmac surface which covers the whole area – everything seems to be growing very well.

We saw groups of volunteers, associated with the Old Town Residents' Association, at various other sites working to improve their areas with small patches of gardening. All of the plantings used sustainable herbaceous and perennial plants.

We saw lots of pieces of sculpture and murals during the tour. These provide interest and it was very encouraging to see that the murals have suffered only small amounts of vandalism even though they are in areas where this might have been expected; it is good to see the respect shown for features in the environment when they have been provided to improve an area. The plans to restore the Bowl in the Town Gardens are very good, ensuring this important piece of local heritage can continue to be used safely.

We were pleased to see several of the suggestions made by the previous year's judge had been implemented, such as rainwater harvesting and local composting.

The portfolio was very informative and gave a very good overview prior to our visit. We would suggest reducing the amount of text and adding more photographs throughout, focusing on activities through the year and areas that won't be included in the tour (apart from before/after photos).

We strongly recommend South Swindon enters the main competition next year. The category the parish would be in (based on electoral roll numbers) allows a four hour tour (plus 30 minutes for three IYNs), which would give more time to show other areas.

Judges Feedback Section A – Horticulture: (Please expand space as required to fit judging comments).

The parks are maintained to excellent standards by the Parish Council's well motivated teams of gardeners. The gardeners seek to make continuing improvements. The programme of refurbishment of rose beds in Town Gardens is well planned and executed and is making a real improvement. The planting of the island beds is well thought out with suitable plants; consideration could be given as to whether a more pleasing overall effect might be achieved with a clearer colour scheme or possibly a repetition of colours in the separate beds within an overall pattern.

The restoration of the wrought iron gates at the entrances to Town Gardens has been completed to a very high standard and these make a very imposing feature. Tiered planters within the park would have much more impact if more use was made of trailing plants which would drop down and cover the plastic containers.

A new polytunnel in Town Gardens will provide increased scope for over-wintering and propagating plants. Action has been taken to provide some rainwater collection but there might be opportunities for more in the future.

A considerable programme of work is to be carried out in GWR park over the next few years. This appears to be all well considered, planned and managed. Work has started on improvements within the park with the design of new beds being carried out by trainee gardeners who appear to be appreciating the challenge.

The plans for refurbishment of the mesothelioma garden in Queen's Park has been well designed and will bring about real improvements in this area with links, perhaps unfortunately, to local industrial past.

Areas of garden within the town maintained by the Old Town Residents' Association and other volunteers have been maintained to a very high standard. Suitable plants have been used and the work is done in an excellent friendly spirit.

Judges Feedback Section B – Environment: *(Please expand space as required to fit judging comments)*

There are many examples of sculpture and art in the town. All help to provide a sense of local heritage. There are also several very good examples of street art, which are unaffected by graffiti. Open spaces are generally clean and tidy and weed free. The fact that spaces are maintained and improved seems to have encouraged respect and there were very few instances of vandalism.

The South Swindon Green Trail provides a very valuable means for residents and visitors to enjoy their surroundings and learn about the town's industrial and natural heritage. The signage and information boards are all very professionally produced, and information is also available electronically.

We were provided with information on Tiny Forest initiatives, rewilding measures and actions to improve sustainability. All of this is to be encouraged. The installation by volunteers of bird boxes for various species in a number of locations is also very good.

We were impressed by the creation of a really nice area at Cambria Bridge which provides facilities for residents of all ages. It has been achieved by a small group of highly motivated volunteers driven by a desire to improve the area. They have certainly succeeded.

We saw a community vegetable bed which has been planted on the tow path. Sensibly this has been raised above the surrounding soil level to avoid the possibility of digging work damaging underground services. The plants are doing well and are well looked after.

Judges Feedback Section C – Community: *(Please expand space as required to fit judging comments)*

The In Bloom group is well led and motivated and well placed to bring about further improvements in the parish. We have noted comments in the portfolio that the Council is seeking ways of developing a greater involvement of volunteers and businesses working in partnership with the Council. We think this is a very appropriate means of spreading interest within the community.

All of the group's plans for improvements are developed and managed very professionally, giving confidence that chosen initiatives will be implemented properly to achieve the desired intent.

There was what appeared to be a genuine interest in the In Bloom activity amongst the media representatives invited to the lunch which suggests that they have been kept informed of the group's activities. Their interest is encouraging as they are probably reflecting an interest shown by the local community.