



Bexhill in Bloom



Judges Briefing Notes

2021

Introduction:

Bexhill in Bloom started 31 years ago with Rother District Council. Shortly after, Rother District Council contacted the Chamber of Commerce to ask if they would take it over and run it. After consultation with the committee, the Chamber agreed and Sandy Melvin, who was President of the Chamber at the time, was made Chairman and ran it until the AGM in December 2018. Sandy entered various Bloom competitions and won many awards and winners plaques can be seen in locations around Bexhill and area



✚ **Our Community Profile information has been placed in Appendix 1**

Structure:

The committee agreed to look at the structure of the organisation and undertook a full review in 2018 and agreed and implemented a constitution with charitable objectives. This was agreed and implemented from December 2018.

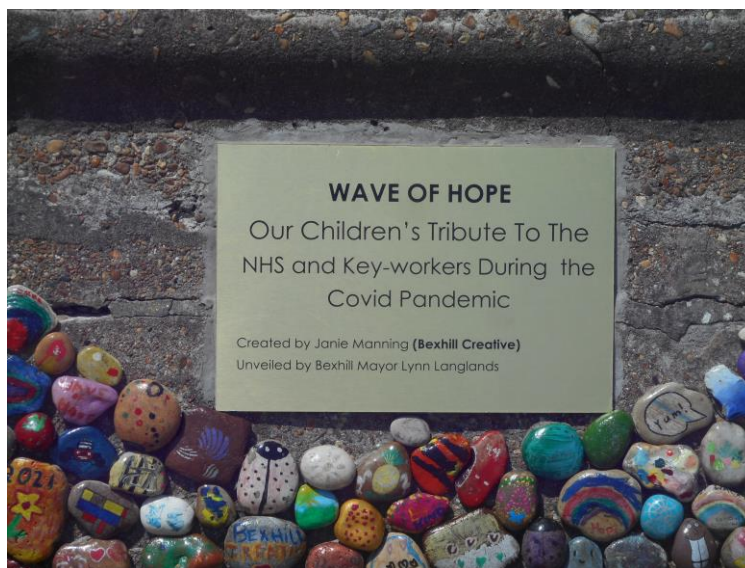
We are a small committee, we love Bexhill, and we want it to be known for the beautiful place that it is. In fact, you could say we are quite passionate about it! **We aim to grow!** We are so fortunate to have had the support of Officers from Rother District Council's Neighbourhood Services, who we have involved in the process from the beginning. Rebecca Owen and Brian Griffiths have been absolutely marvellous. We can't thank them enough.

Review of the year: Bexhill in Bloom – 2020/21

It has been a difficult year for everyone with the pandemic lockdown beginning in March 2020.

Right at the beginning of this review, I take this opportunity to give thanks to Bexhill and Rother Officers and Councillors who have worked tirelessly through the pandemic to ensure that Rother residents who needed support through the lockdown were ably supported. Some are having a well-deserved break and some still keep on going! Our sincere thanks to you all. You went well over and above what you needed to do. Know that we are grateful.

- ✚ Two areas have been dedicated to remembering loved ones who died in the pandemic, one are the pebbles (below) and the tree of remembrance which you will see on the judging route.



As with most companies, IdVerde, Rother District Council (RDC) contractor furloughed its garden maintenance crews during the first Covid lockdown which coincided with the start of the growing season, so some of our green spaces were left unmaintained for a considerable time and recovering the situation was challenging. At around the same time, there was a growing movement from elected Members for RDC to contribute more to the biodiversity and carbon reduction agenda in response to the Climate Emergency and an appointment of an Environment and Policy Manager at RDC to take forward a new corporate Environmental Strategy. This has resulted in a more meadow like feel to some of our green spaces, which has benefitted wildlife and insects.



Spring in Manor Gardens

Quite recently, Bexhill Town Council has been formed and elected, it is anticipated that this body will take over Parks and Gardens in Bexhill. We are currently unsure if any funding for Bexhill in Bloom will be available in future years.

Some of our successes:



Poppies in the park

- ✚ We had already planned the information for our local annual schools, Fnurseries, shops and garden competitions but obviously couldn't implement it. That will go forward to 2022 when, Covid permitting, we can have our usual competitions.
- ✚ Successfully applied for lottery funding for tools and other equipment this has enabled us to ensure we have enough equipment for our volunteers.
- ✚ We had recruited new volunteers to undertake gardening projects
- ✚ Started working along the West Promenade, when lockdown began. We were unable to continue. Instead we started planning what we could achieve when lockdown ended.
- ✚ Now, in 2021, with RDC, identified a new project area to work on (you will see this on the tour). <https://1drv.ms/a/s!AhQjnDhDuokfhyM-AnSssksStRiq> gives an indication of work carried out so far. *****Please note that this link requires you to open it on a desktop computer running Windows 10. Please scroll down.***
- ✚ Bringing in further new volunteers and joining with other voluntary organisations to make Bexhill Better! Many voluntary organisations have been busy during the pandemic working to ensure that the environment can flourish.
- ✚ The Bexhill Observer has been our main vehicle for publicity. We also have a Facebook page and are looking for a volunteer to update our website.
- ✚ Little Common Business Community – Annual flowers in baskets purchased and maintained by residents and businesses
- ✚ Joint working by Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardens and Bexhill in Bloom to enhance town planters
- ✚ Liaising with Allotment Groups; allotments very busy as people want to 'grow their own'.
- ✚ Linking in with new projects – Groundwork South, Greener Futures coming on stream later in the year. Exciting times ahead!

- ✚ **Linking in with Bexhill Rotary volunteers** – we have been so fortunate to link in with Bexhill Rotary. They have provided a team of volunteers to undertake significant weed clearance in our new project area. We can't thank them enough.
- ✚ **Taking home** free Munstead and Hidcote lavender plug plants to grow on!

Horticultural Achievements:

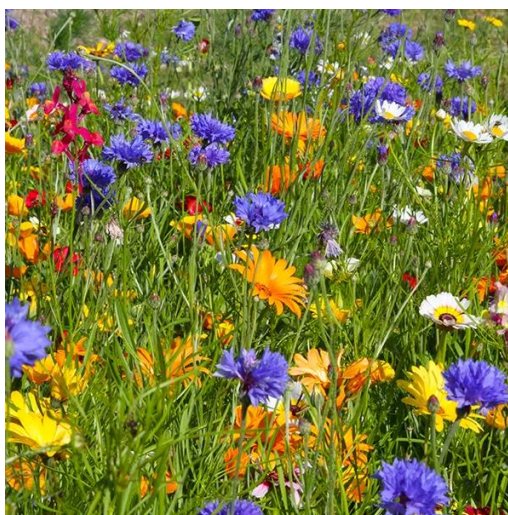
A1: Overall Impression:

Ah well, maybe not as good as in last years as we haven't been able to get local authorities to weed roadway areas.

- ✚ **Last year's 3D carpet bedding car** on Bexhill seafront was very popular and is this year being provided free of charge by RDC's grounds maintenance contractor idVerde. (The car was also used for commemorative poppies last November which was a huge hit and an added attraction on the seafront.)
- ✚ **This year, RDC** are providing floral containers once again on the seafront as an alternative to low level bedding. These can be seen from a greater distance. The containers have reservoirs storing water which means reduces the time spent on maintenance.

A2: maintenance of planted areas; ongoing and getting better as volunteers take the strain and help with work.

A3: Plant Selection



- ✚ **Pictorial Meadows Sundance seed mix** as an alternative to bedding plants at Egerton Park. No plastic, no road transport, no use of resources in production

A4: Plant quality

- ✚ **Plants are selected** to be suitable for their growing environment so that they grow well with minimum intervention. E.g. West Parade planting.



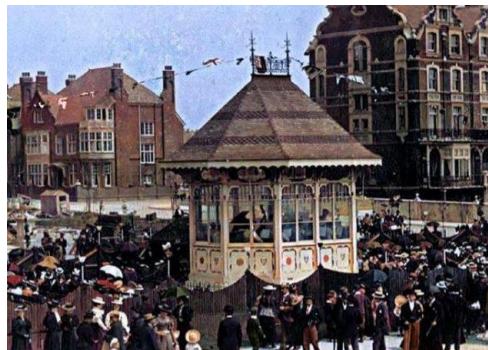
Wisteria at Manor Gardens Spring 2021

- ✚ **Bedding plants are grown to order for Rother DC in peat free compost.**

Environment

B1: Local identity and pride of place:

- ✚ **Renovation of listed Shelters on Promenade by Bexhill Heritage volunteers.**



- ✚ **Celebrating the installation of shelters in the 1900's**

- ✚ **Tree planting by RDC including semi-mature trees around Egerton Park main lawn.**
- ✚ **Weeding and planting at Glyne Gap**
- ✚ **Beach Clean**

B2: Natural environment

- ✚ **Tree planting and wildflower seed sowing on Downs by BEG in conjunction with RDC December 2020.**



- ✚ **Introduction of more uncut grass areas** in various public parks and green spaces throughout Bexhill in order to provide habitat and a food source for insects. This can also have aesthetic benefits breaking up expanses of mown grass.



Orchids at Bexhill Cemetery Spring 2021

- ✚ **Piloting of longer grass on verges** by ESCC in order to contribute to biodiversity targets.

- ✚ ESCC, Bexhill Wildlife verge sites / year of designation
- ✚ The Fairway – new 2021
- ✚ Tanglewood Coppice – 2021
- ✚ HASTINGS ROAD 90m length - 1999
- ✚ HUNTING CLOSE, BELLE HILL 90m length – 1999
- ✚ WRESTWOOD ROAD TBC.
- ✚ RDC is initiating the Bexhill i-tree project and is recruiting volunteers throughout Bexhill to assist with tree surveying to understand and promote the value of trees in terms of their contribution towards slowing climate change.
See: <https://www.rother.gov.uk/news/bexhill-i-tree-study-and-a-tree-planting-strategy/>

B3: Environmental quality and resources

Recycling:

- ✚ RDC continue to require the grounds maintenance contractor to hand weed at specific sites rather than managing weeds through the use of herbicides.
- ✚ All of the green waste from RDC's grounds maintenance contract is composted through FGS Organics based in Kent.

Volunteers, particularly BEG support RDC in litter management both in public green spaces such as Bexhill Down and Sidley Recreation Ground and on the beach. <https://www.bexhillenvironmentalgroup.org.uk/>

- ✚ **Waste Contract, Waste & Recycling Summary**
The overall number of missed bins for waste collections has continued to reduce in quarter 3 and, other than a slight increase in early January 2021 following the Christmas and New Year rescheduling period, the number per 100,000 remains lower than the target of 120
- ✚ **Contractor waste reused**, composted and recycled overall for Q3 is 47.4%, against 50.8% for Q2. This is the expected drop in percentage due to the seasonal reduction in garden waste. The recycling rate is heavily influenced by garden waste volumes, which in turn is subject to seasonal variations, weather patterns and numbers of garden waste subscribers. Officers have focused on increasing the number of garden waste subscribers to achieve a minimum of 20,000 households registered as of 31 March 2021.
- ✚ Full details of what can be recycled can be found at <https://www.rother.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/>
- ✚ **In September 2019, Rother District Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030.** Since

then work has been underway to develop a draft Environment Strategy and action plan, which sets out how we will deliver on our commitment to reach this target and reduce our impact on the environment.

See more at <https://www.rother.gov.uk/strategies-policies-and-plans/environment-strategy/>

- ✚ **Rother DC have had a trial of Foamstream** as an alternative to Glyphosate for weed control and will continue to evaluate other options. Foamstream is a mixture of hot water insulated by a biodegradable foam made from natural, sustainable plant oils and sugars which can be precisely applied to weeds using the Weedingtech machinery. See: <https://www.weedingtech.com/distributors/distributors-resources/foamstream/>

Community

C1: Year round activity and future commitment:

- ✚ Working on plans with RDC to bid for funding next year for further funding for new project areas.
- ✚ Working with Bexhill Rotary to extend the reach of our current project.

C2: Communication, Education and Awareness:

- ✚ Improving our on-line presence to make our messages accessible to a wider audience.
- ✚ Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardeners: Planted vegetables and herbs amongst permanent ornamental planting in the garden by Bexhill Museum so children can learn about them from worksheets
- ✚ BiB 2022 plan to work on growing plants with young children who are using the park.
- ✚ Working with Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardeners on a version of an Incredible Edible Project

C3: Support and Funding

- ✚ Building and strengthening links with other organisations, individuals and elected Members involved in related community initiatives including Bexhill Environmental Group (BEG) and Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardeners. Exploring ways of working together including sharing volunteers.
- ✚ Successfully linking up with Bexhill Rotary Club whose members have supported our volunteer work. The Club has links with local businesses and influential members of the community which we hope will help our cause.

- ✚ Maintaining a good working relationship with RDC and making a case for our annual grant to be continued.

In Your Neighbourhood



St Mary's Wood was a neglected piece of woodland at the corner of Turkey Road. A group of residents got together to take over the area, making it a great area for visitors and residents to enjoy. Bird nesting boxes have been erected as well as dog bins sited.

Sponsors, Supporters and Groups we are working with:

Bexhill Environmental Group

Bexhill Neighbourhood Gardens – Ingram's Allotments

BLODS

Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society

Little Common Business Community

St Marys Wood

Rother District Council

Conclusion



From small acorns! Building on past achievements our main focus has been ensuring that we had all the information we needed to show Bexhill off to its best advantage. We have made sure that more people know about Bexhill in Bloom than they did before!

It's surprising just how many 'In-comers' there are in Bexhill, more and more families are coming to live in the area. That's so good! The older folk keep up standards and pass knowledge on to younger ones. That's how it should be. We can't wait to welcome you to 'Our' Bexhill!

The Bexhill in Bloom Committee

APPENDIX 1 – COMMUNITY PROFILE

We are waiting for the statistical outcomes from the 2021 Census. Our Community Profile is as follows: Characteristically a small seaside town, Bexhill has a significant portion (**43,478**) of the Rother population (**92,908**) within its boundary; the remaining 49,430 are scattered across the rural areas of the District. Once considered an affluent area, deprivation has increased in Bexhill and Rother since 2007.

- ✚ Rother has seen a significant fall in the IMD ranking since 2007 when it was in 163rd place. The downward trend continued from the 2010 score of 132 with the overall 2017 rank for Rother of 91st of 326¹ English local authorities, with the most deprived local authority ranked as 1. Of particular concern are the wards of Bexhill Sidley; which is ranked in the worst 5% in the country: Bexhill Central and Rye in the worst 20% nationally. Sidley ward in particular has a significant proportion of Social Housing and Rented accommodation contained in this ward.
- ✚ The economy is weak relative to the region as a whole and average local incomes correspondingly low with the district ranking in the bottom 20% of

¹ Source Wikipedia 2017

districts nationally. Average gross weekly earnings in Rother are low in comparison to the rest of the county.

- ✚ Rother has the oldest age profile of East Sussex districts/boroughs with significantly lower percentages of the population aged under 65 years and significantly higher for older people. It is the district/borough with the highest percentages of residents aged 65 years and over and 85 years and over. Bexhill Sidley has one of the highest percentages of its population aged under 20 years of all East Sussex wards. Bexhill Central has a significantly higher working age population (20-64 years) compared to East Sussex. Bexhill Sackville, Collington, Kewhurst and St Marks are amongst the wards in East Sussex with the oldest age profiles. In Collington (48%) almost half of residents are aged 65 years and over and in Sackville more than 1 in 10 (12%) are aged 85 years and over, the highest ward values in East Sussex.²
- ✚ Other changes to take into consideration introduction of Universal Credit, other benefit changes and increased use of the Food Bank.
- ✚ Mental Health is becoming a real issue for those people living in Central Bexhill and older people in general. This has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

² Area Summary for Rother District, March 2016