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| **Standard Marking Sheet** | | | **Name of Entry** Abergavenny Town Council | | | | | | |
| **Judges** John Woods | | | | | | |
| **Date of Assessment**  Wednesday 5th July 2023 | | | | | | |
| **Category**  Town | | | | | | | | | |
| **MAXIMUM OF 10 POINTS PER SUB SECTION** | | | | | | | | | **Total**  **Marks** |
| **A Horticulture 40%** | **A1** | **9** | **A2** | **9** | **A3** | **9** | **A4** | **8** | **35** |
| **B Environment 30%** | **B1** | **8** | **B2** | **9** | **B3** | **9** |  | | **26** |
| **C Community 30%** | **C1** | **9** | **C2** | **8** | **C3** | **8** |  | | **25** |

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| **Total Score out of 100 86/100** | **Medal Awarded GOLD** |
| **Gold, Excellent 85-100 Points Silver Gilt, Very Good 75-84 Points Silver, Good 60-74 Points Bronze, Satisfactory 50-59 Points** | |
| ***Introduction and Overall Impression:***  As always it was a great pleasure to visit Abergavenny as a judge this summer. Thank you for adapting the route timings to allow me to talk to the individual groups that had also entered the ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ category. I was impressed by the way that the individual friends groups, the community orchard group, the children of Our Lady and Saint Michael’s RC Primary School, and the businesses have all come together to produce a very good entry under the leadership of the Town Council.  The competition for the Wales in Bloom Town category was highly competitive again this year. I am delighted to award Abergavenny a GOLD Award. Many congratulations! Llongyfarchiadau lu!  The difference between yourselves and this year’s winner was just ONE point. The category win is without doubt within your reach in 2024… And where was that one point? Well if the window troughs had been on the builders’ merchants as they were for the Britain in Bloom judging I would have had to look again at both yours and the winner’s marks. | |

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| ***Judges Feedback Section A – Horticulture:***  The town centre seasonal floral displays were excellent with a good colour scheme, plant choices, and all important maintenance. Amongst the highlights were the Angel Hotel and the Cibi Walk Shopping Centre.  What can I say about both the Friends of Bailey Park and the Friends of Linda Vista Garden? Both of these groups deserve praise for the way that they are raising the standards of both horticulture interest and maintenance in the public parks and gardens in Abergavenny. Clearly quite extensive plant knowledge is being both gained and shared with others in both groups. The ongoing development of the arboretum at Linda Vista Gardens is also very commendable.  The continuing programme of replanting tired shrub plantings with sustainable pollinator-friendly plantings continues to impress. I was pleased to hear that Alun Griffiths Civil Engineering is helping you with the latest part of the project in bus station.  .  The residential front gardens seen throughout the judging route were generally good, especially 32 Merthyr Road where the owner had achieved so much in so little space. I can reveal now that this garden came a very close runner up for the 2023 Best Front Garden in Wales.  The Chapel Garden was yet another delight on the judging tour. Planting in total harmony with the building and a lovely location for a café.  The use of new technology to both monitor growing medium moisture and thus manage watering better was a first for this judge. Well done on piloting this innovation. I would be interested to hear about your experience with this technology once you’ve had time to assess its benefits. | | | | | |
| ***Judges Feedback Section B – Environment:***  I was impressed by both the understanding and inclusion of environmental responsibility included in the portfolio by the Friends of Bailey Park. It is without doubt an impressive range of projects with the balance between environmental responsibility and delivering the gardening achievements being considered every time.  The Friends of Castle Meadows have a very clear vision and an excellent range of projects that seek to protect and enhance the natural environment for wildlife, whilst encouraging Abergavenny residents and visitors to appreciate what nature has to offer. It was good to both hear and read about your project work with young people.  The creation of a dead hedge for insects and the installation of a hedgehog house for rehomed rescued hedgehogs by the Friends of Linda Vista Gardens is also commendable.  Generally throughout your entry the capture of rainwater, the use of peat free growing media, and the balance between a seasonal splash of colour and sustainable plantings was very good.  The mowing regimes now being adopted in both Castle Meadows and the Laurie Jones Community Orchard are excellent. Well done all!  The introduction of additional public art in Abergavenny really does add to your entry, and more importantly does lift one’s spirit and give you food for thought!  Two years ago I had questioned why the artwork in the bus station had not been included in the judging route? This time you’ve got two murals in the bus station!  I was very impressed by the butterfly and bee murals, and it was great to meet the artist. I look forward to seeing the major mural on the other wall in the park.  The judging tour took place on a very busy weekday morning but there was no litter and no graffiti. Well done the street cleaning team indeed! | | | | | |
| ***Judges Feedback Section C – Community:***  The school garden at Our Lady and Saint Michael’s RC Primary School has developed considerably since my last visit. Well done all! And well done for contributing to the Wales in Bloom judging tour route. It was great to meet the very knowledgeable pupils and head teacher.    The Laurie Jones Community Orchard is without doubt a brilliant asset in Abergavenny. I was very impressed to hear about the opportunities for volunteers to engage in hedge laying, the Wassail activity, gathering the hay crop, apple juicing, and the pruning and grafting workshops. Very well done!  The Friends of Bailey Park are creating opportunities for volunteers to participate in a range of community outreach projects that seek to encourage interest in the park from throughout the community. Very well done again!  The Friends of Linda Vista Gardens are also creating opportunities for volunteers to participate in a range of community outreach projects that seek to encourage interest in the gardens from throughout the community. I was delighted to hear that the number of volunteers engaged in the restoration and maintenance of the gardens has increased since my last visit. The bletting of the medlars was certainly a first for this judge in 20 years of judging. Excellent!  And it was great to see the Ambika Café establishing itself and helping to attract visitors to the gardens.  The Friends of Castle Meadows are to be commended for their work with young people which will I’m sure will help to secure the long term future of the habitat.  I was pleased to hear that Abergavenny and District Civic Society have been supporting the native and pollinator friendly species beds, and the installation of the bee mural.  It was great to see that the 7 Corners Project offers opportunities for young people to express themselves through art.  Abergavenny is indeed fortunate with a number of other active environmental projects and groups including Gwent Green Grid’s ‘Pollinator Friendly Gwent’, and the Abergavenny Community Centre Urban Nature Garden weekly gardening group all providing yet further opportunities for people to get involved.  I was also pleased to hear that Abergavenny WI / Sefydliad y Merched Y Fenni are maintaining the newly installed sustainable planting boxes on the railway station platforms. This was one of three stations featuring in Wales in Bloom entries this year that had received new planters sponsored by Transport for Wales  The ongoing maintenance of the modern planters and raised beds located across the town was yet another good example where the business community can make a valuable contribution to the life of the town.  As mentioned earlier the business support from the Angel Hotel, the businesses in Cibi Walk, and Alun Griffiths Civil Engineering in the bus station is excellent.  The quality of your portfolio was excellent. Succinct but both informative and colourful, and with an excellent closing message complete with photograph that leaves the reader with clear food for thought… Well done the author! | | | | | |
|  |  | **Gold 10-9** | **Silver Gilt 8** | **Silver 7-6** | **Bronze 5** |
| **A1** | **Overall Impression**  Are the overall design and materials used within the entry appropriate to the location and do they generate a positive image? | High impact with **excellent** attention to detail delivering the desired results in a most consistent and appropriate manner. | Most areas have high impact and **very good** attention to detail though a few are not compatible. The entry is generally very good. | **Good** overall effect although not always balanced. Some areas make an impact others need to be more vibrant and embrace better design. | Although **satisfactory** more attention to detail is required in order to create more impact and a more consistent design. |
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| **A2** | **Maintenance of Planted Areas**  Are areas maintained to an appropriate standard including cultivation, weeding, feeding, pruning, grass maintenance, tree management and maintenance? | **Excellent** standards of cultivation. Very consistent throughout. Horticultural maintenance and general care is outstanding in all areas. | Standards are **very good** with few exceptions. Horticultural maintenance is managed very well and the results are very consistent. | Standards of horticultural maintenance are **good** and fairly consistent. There are a few exceptions where further attention is required. | Standards of horticultural maintenance are generally **satisfactory**. However, the maintenance programme requires further attention to detail in some areas. |
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| **A1** | **Plant Selection**  Are the plants used in the planting schemes suited to their growing conditions and location and is there year round interest (where appropriate)? | **Excellen**t plant selection with extensive year round interest, and almost no exceptions. | Plant selection is **very good** overall with only a few exceptions and ample year round interest. | Plant selection is generally **good.** There is room for improvement in some areas in order to extend year round interest. | Plant selection is **satisfactory** however it requires further consideration in order to extend the season and maintain interest. |
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| **A2** | **Plant Quality**  Are the plants vibrant and grown to their full potential? Are they free of all pests and diseases? | Plant quality is **excellent** and grown to full potential with no evidence of pests and diseases. | Plant quality is **very good** with few exceptions. There are minimal signs of pests and disease present. | Generally plant quality is **good** but not consistent. Pest and diseases are present in a few locations. Lack of vigour in some areas. | Plant health and vigour could be improved but are generally **satisfactory**. Pests and diseases are present in certain areas. |
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|  |  | **Gold 10-9** | **Silver Gilt 8** | **Silver 7-6** | **Bronze 5** |
| **B1** | **Local Identity**  Is there a sense of place, with appropriate sense of heritage, art in the landscape, signage and interpretation? | Extensive evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. An **excellent** impression made about what makes the area unique. | Considerable evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. A **very good** impression made about what makes the area unique. | Some evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. A **good** impression made about what makes the area unique. | Little evidence of efforts to highlight/enhance local identity. A **satisfactory** impression made about what makes the area unique. |
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| **B2** | **Natural Environment**  Biodiversity including the protection and conservation of the natural environment and wildlife habitat. The provision of appropriate wildflower areas, aquatic and if applicable marine conservation sites, bat and bird boxes as well as insect hotels. | The natural environment is managed to an **excellent** standard supporting a wide range of flora and fauna, with little improvement required. | The natural environment is managed to a **very good** standard supporting a wide range of flora and fauna; very little effort would lift it to excellent. | The natural environment is managed to a **good** standard supporting a wide range of flora and fauna. Requires further work to improve it in places. | The natural environment is managed to a **satisfactory** standard supporting a wide range of flora and fauna. Needs significant improvement in places. |
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| **B3** | **Hard Surfaces and Open Grass Areas** (Including streets, open spaces and beaches if appropriate).  To include cleanliness, absence of litter, street weeds, graffiti, flyposting and chewing gum, water conservation and recycling initiatives, hard landscape, open spaces and street furniture maintenance and effective dog fouling control measures. | All areas are cleaned to an excellent standard. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in **excellent** condition. There is effective control of street weeds, no graffiti and flyposting. Excellent evidence of recycling initiatives. | All areas are cleaned to a very good standard. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in **very good** condition. There is very good control of street weeds, very little graffiti and flyposting. Very good evidence of recycling initiatives. | All areas are cleaned to a good standard. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in **good** condition. There is generally good control of street weeds, but evidence of some graffiti and flyposting. Reasonable evidence of recycling initiatives. | All areas are cleaned to a **satisfactory** standard. Street furniture including litter bins and seating is in variable condition. There is a lack control of street weeds, and evidence of considerable graffiti and flyposting. Little evidence of recycling initiatives. |
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|  |  | **Gold 10-9** | **Silver Gilt 8** | **Silver 7-6** | **Bronze 5** |
| **C1** | **Year Round Activity and On-Going Planning**  Evidence of forward planning and year round activity highlighting any events that makes this entry unique and demonstrates the present strengths of the entry. | **Excellent** evidence of all activity taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning. The annual programme of activity is exceptional. | **Very good** evidence of all activity taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning giving this entry a real strength. | **Good** evidence of all activity taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning. | **Satisfactory** evidence of all activity taking place throughout the year and of advanced planning. |
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| **C2** | **Communication and Awareness**  Within the immediate area through local and regional marketing, involving all sections of the community. Communication and media involvement evidenced. Use of suitable interpretation, enabling learning and a greater understanding. | Communication extremely well covered. Community involvement and public awareness is **excellent.** | Communication very well covered. **Very good** community involvement leading to very good public awareness. | Communications **good**. Community involvement leading to public awareness of a good standard. A few missed opportunities. | Communications and public awareness is **satisfactory**. Community involvement is limited. Overall there is room for improvement |
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| **C3** | **Funding and Support**  Fundraising and on-going support from a range of businesses and organisations appropriate to the size of the entry making it viable and able to continue moving forward. | **Excellent** level of funding that ensures the viability of the entry into the future. Support in all areas is outstanding and a real strength to the entry. | **Very good** level of funding that ensures the viability of the entry. Support in all areas is very good and will be sustainable over time. | **Good** level of funding that ensures the viability of the entry and sustains present projects. Support in all areas is good and, with effort, will be sustainable over time. | **Satisfactory** level of funding that ensures the viability of the entry and sustains present projects. Support in all areas is satisfactory and fairly sustainable over time. |
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