

Beautiful Scotland in Bloom 2025: Inverurie Portfolio

Assessment Date 04 August 2025

Medium Town Judges: Wendy Murray and Adrian Miles

Introduction

Inverurie Environmental Improvement Group (IEI) objectives are (1) To promote horticulture in and around Inverurie for the benefit of the public by encouraging the provision of displays of flowers, shrubs, trees and landscaping in places visible to the public; and (2) To advance the education of the public concerning the natural environment through the development of environmental programmes.

Inverurie is a market town in Aberdeenshire at the confluence of the rivers Ury and Don. It is a popular location in which to live and raise a family. Although the High Street faces the same economic challenges as elsewhere it still manages to portray a vibrant town centre with many local independent traders still in business today.

IEI was formed as a horticultural charity in 2002. It has enhanced the appearance of the town with an annual floral display of hanging baskets and tiered planters for the benefit of the local residents and visitors to the town or people passing through the town travelling to other destinations. Although the hanging baskets are mainly planted with summer bedding plants IEI is increasing its use of perennial plants every year as they are more sustainable and will bloom at different stages throughout the year.

The hanging baskets continue to be planted by the service users at the Pitscurry Project, Pitcaple. This is one of the highlights of the year for the service users as they enjoy the activity and take great pride in their work especially when they see the hanging baskets in situ in the town centre.

IEI organises the annual Inverurie Best Garden Competition for residential and non-residential gardens to encourage the local community to get involved in making the town look vibrant whilst receiving the praise and recognition they deserve for their efforts.

IEI works closely with local community groups including Inverurie Rotary, Inverurie Men's Shed, Ury Riverside Park SCIO, Inverurie Community Council and local social enterprises such as Grampian Opportunities, Inverurie Community Partnership, Inspire by Inverurie and Inverurie DAYS (Daily Activities with Support). We also provide compost and plants to sheltered housing complexes and help the residents who are no longer capable of doing physical gardening work.

Section A: Horticultural Achievement

Inverurie Town Centre (all-year-round)

IEI is responsible for 120 hanging baskets, 30 tiered and single planters in Inverurie town centre. There are 6 window troughs on the Town Hall and 8 barrier boxes on the car-park wall at Market Place. Although Aberdeenshire Council have maintained the planting in the Memorial Garden, financial constraints on Council budgets make this maintenance more challenging to carry out in the future. New seating in the Memorial Garden is provided by BID. The aim is to provide an abundance of colour throughout the summer for residents and visitors. Winter bedding plants are bought in to provide a display of colour between November and May in the planters.



St Mary's Church with summer bedding plants being watered by electric vehicle (June 2025)



Former Council bed at Cunninghamhill Road with new planting arrangement (June 2025)



Sponsored planter (June 2025)

Kellands Primary School (All Year Round)

The Kellands Primary School have an allotment for teachers and pupils to learn and have fun in growing their own vegetables. The experience and skills learned at an early age in horticulture can lead to a lifetime hobby of gardening which can be enjoyed at any age. The pupils also continue to be involved at Inverurie Hospital. P6 pupils are active throughout the year helping to maintain and enhance the Donbank Ward Garden.



Kellands Primary P6 Discretionary Award for Donbank Ward Garden (September 2024)

Inverurie Best Garden Competition (Summer)

The Gardening Competition is run annually for residents, commercial, and non-commercial premises. The aim of the Best Garden Award competition is to draw attention to the contribution that Inverurie's many gardeners make to the visual quality of the town and to encourage others to do the same. This is an excellent opportunity for the local community to get involved in making the town look attractive, whilst receiving the praise and recognition they deserve for their efforts in maintaining wonderful gardens. The judge looks for good use of colour and form in the garden as well as imaginative design, a long season of interest, and environmental sensitivity.



New Entrants Mr & Mrs Morrison: winners of best low-maintenance garden (Sept 2024)



Douglas Paterson, Winner Best Garden Competition 2024



Elsie Thomson, Winner Best Garden Competition 2024

Providing assistance to Sheltered Housing Residents (Spring, Summer & Autumn)

IEI provides assistance to Sheltered Housing residents who are no longer able to maintain the garden areas surrounding their homes. IEI distributed 20 bags of compost to sheltered housing residents in Spring 2025 to enable them to grow their own seeds and plants.



Ury House, Overall Winner Garden Competition 2024 (Judging Archive Photo 2022)

Memorial Garden

IEI continue to support volunteers who maintain the War Memorial Garden with perennial planting along the borders and new planters with sustainable planting and herbs. Inverurie BID have provided new benches to encourage residents and visitors to spend time reflecting on those being remembered for the sacrifice they have made so others can live in peace.



Business Improvement District (Inverurie BID) providing financial support to IEI

The Business Improvement District (BID) is now in its eight year and it continues to represent and support the local business community within its remit area. A new initiative this year is the Garioch Pipe Band Championships held on the 29 June. The ‘Taste of Garioch’ event will take place on the 31 August and it showcases the various local food & drink producers and street-food vendors to the public. There is also a monthly Farmers Market held in the Town Square carpark. These well organised events by BID attract the local residents and visitors to come into the Town Centre.



KSB Judges' in conversation with BID Manager Derek Ritchie (August 2024)

Section B: Environmental Responsibility

Composting:

At the end of the season the plants from the hanging baskets and planters are composted by the service users at Pitscurry with the compost used within the Pitscurry site. The wildflower terraced garden below the Buzzard Café is an example of on-site composting being put to good effect,



Recycling timber pallets

Companies donate surplus pallets which are broken up and turned into kindling. The kindling is bound into bunches and sold to the public as firewood. This is an activity that can take place with the service users in the workshop during inclement weather.

The Buzzard Café: from garden to plate!

The service users grow their own vegetables, herbs and fruit which is used in their own kitchen and also served to the public in the Buzzard Café. The Buzzard Café also provides a working environment for service users to learn and develop new skills.

Unfortunately a decision has been made by the Integration Joint Board (The Health Board & Local Authority) to close the Buzzard Café and decommission the building as part of the review of in-house learning disability day services and roll out of Learning Disability Strategy 'Be All You Can Be'. Such are the challenges facing many organisations, social enterprises and charities with changes to funding models and demands on limited resources.

Ury Riverside Park:

Ury Riverside Park is a 138-acre community park for people and wildlife to enjoy together. The Park is being developed by the community for the community from former arable farmland on the floodplain of the River Ury. The park is being developed with a high-quality path network with good connectivity to the town centre and surrounding housing estates. The park is part of the Parkrun UK network of weekly 5k community running / walking events.

There are areas of semi-natural wetland, riparian habitats, new native woodlands, wildflower meadows and amenity grassland. The park supports breeding skylarks, common partridge, reed buntings, yellowhammers, and sedge warblers. Otters and trout live in the river along with a range of dragonflies and damselflies. The wildflower meadows attract a range of pollinators such as butterflies, bees, hoverflies etc.



Ground-nesting skylarks and wildflower meadows

The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) is an ambitious partnership project set up to tackle invasive non-native species alongside rivers and watercourses in Northern Scotland. The River Ury is the biggest tributary of the River Don. Jan Simpson, Officer River Dee Trust, has employed contractors to provide continuous treatment for a number of years to clear the infestation of giant hogweed along the length of the Ury. The long-term aim is for landowners to take responsibility for treating any infestation on their own land. The Trustees of the Ury Riverside Park SCIO already spray their area and also use a herd of sheep to graze an enclosed fenced-off area. Due to a pigment in their skin, the sheep are not affected by the giant hogweed.



Sheep grazing to control spread of giant hogweed (June 2024)

Some local provenance wet meadow perennial wildflower seed was planted in some of the areas of bare soil which will help stabilise the soil and in time some of the perennial wildflower plants will replace the giant hogweed where the sheep are grazing.

The Ury Riverside Park SCIO have received the following awards:

- The Green Flag Community Award in 2023 and 2024
- It's Your Neighbourhood 2024 Level 5 Outstanding with a Certificate of Distinction
- Keep Scotland Beautiful 2024 Garden of Life Biodiversity Award



The Howe Community Farm

After the success of setting up community allotments in 2021, Inverurie & District Men's Shed (IDMS) still had a 1.5 acre field but couldn't have allotments on it as it was on the River Ury flood plain. It was the best of agricultural land. A community cooperative farm was set up with seven families joining. The community farm grows potatoes, turnips, strawberries, beetroot, cabbage, carrots, Brussel sprouts, leeks and cauliflower. They have also created an orchard with apple and plum trees.



Howe Farm - Tattie Planting (May 2023)



Howe Farm - Tattie Picking (October 2023)



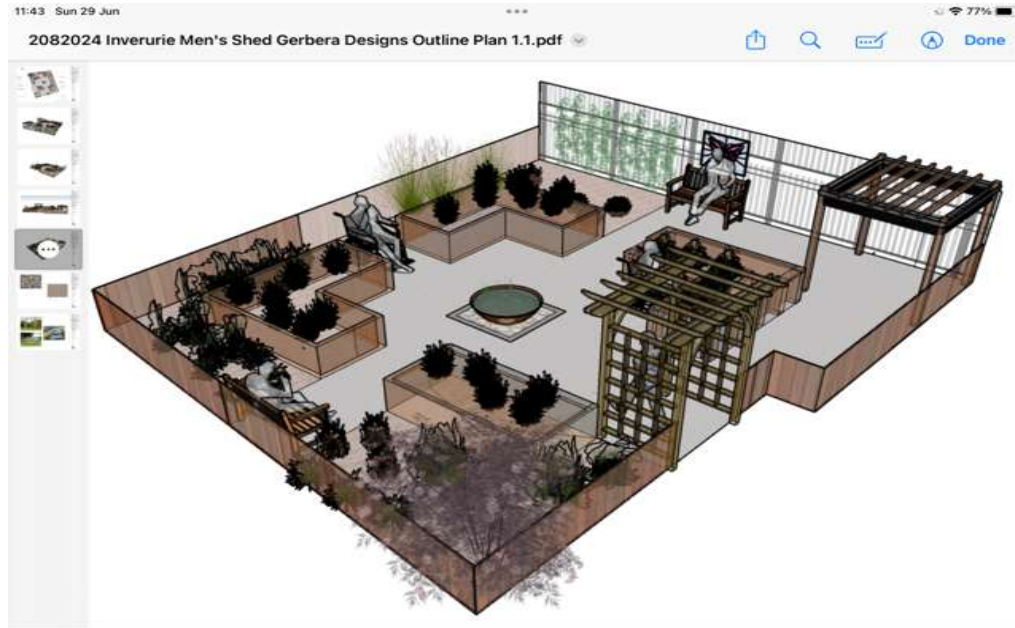
Kellands School Allotment for pupils & teachers



IDMS Stall at Farmers Market (2024)

Development of Sensory Garden at the Allotments

Inverurie resident Phyllis Smith and her son David uncovered the need for a ‘Therapeutic Garden’ or similar in Inverurie, whilst working with families whose children were physically disabled and/or autistic. To date, the project has the support of Inverurie Men’s Shed, Inspire by Inverurie, The Garioch Kitchen, the local CHAS group, direct funding from Helix (oil company) and funding in-kind from Trellis, who are funding the design process plans. IEI has donated the slabs, sand and cement to allow the project to get off the ground.



Sensory Garden Plan by Gerbera Designs, (design plan funded by Trellis May 2025)

Garioch Heritage Centre

The Aberdeenshire Canal boat used for inspection & ice breaking in the early 1800s, has been restored and is now on display in the Garioch Heritage Museum.



Canal inspection boat reclaimed and renovated (2024)

Litter Picks

IEI and Inverurie Rotary support regular community litter picks in the town centre organised by Inverurie Community Council (ICC). These also include organised litter picks along the River Don, Inverurie Town Centre, Port Elphinstone and Ury Riverside Park. The Aberdeenshire Litter Initiative encourages residents to become registered litter pickers and collect litter in their own streets on a regular basis.



ICC Volunteers meet for their monthly litter-picking session (June 2025)

KSB Upstream Battle Initiative

Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) initiated a national campaign to tackle marine litter from its source by changing behaviour and preventing litter from reaching waterways and having impacts on wildlife and biodiversity.



IEI supporting and raising awareness of the KSB Upstream Battle Campaign

Section C: Community Participation

Pitscurry Project

The service users put new wicks, mats and compost into the baskets before planting them. They do a fantastic job every year and take great pride in seeing the hanging baskets in Inverurie town centre and the pleasure they bring to residents and visitors to the town.



Pitscurry service users Ammar, Mark and David planting and watering the Town Hall window troughs & the hanging baskets for Inverurie town centre (June 2024).

Meldrum Academy – The Youth & Philanthropy Initiative Scotland (YPI)

The Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) is the biggest independent programme being delivered through Scottish education, empowering tens of thousands of young people each year to make a difference in their communities. Through teamwork, research, and competition, young people advocate for social issues in their communities in a bid to secure their school's £3,000 grant. Young people are asked to independently identify social issues impacting their community and a local charity addressing this need.

In December 2024 Pupils in S2 at Meldrum Academy chose to meet and interview IEI to learn more about its services and impact. The S2 team then delivered their presentation to a panel of judges in a bid to secure their school's £3,000 grant to be given to their chosen charity. The whole process was rewarding for the pupils in developing new skills. An interesting anecdote, when IEI were asked 'How does your charity IEI measure the impact of its work?' the answer given was that IEI uses the Beautiful Scotland Judges Marking Sheet and Feedback Report as a measure of the impact of its work.

Rotary Club of Inverurie

Inverurie Rotary Club members provide support to IEI with putting up and taking down the hanging baskets. Rotary are involved with many other community projects as well.



Team from Inverurie Rotary Club taking down the hanging baskets (October 2024)

Inverurie West Church Community Garden

The Community Garden was developed on waste ground behind West Church Hall. The garden provides vegetables and herbs for the kitchen in the Acorn Centre Cafe and cut flowers to make small flower posies for the cafe tables. The garden also provides horticultural activity space for service users from Grampian Opportunities and Inspire by Inverurie to carry out gardening projects with people who need support. IEI will donate plants to the Inspire clients as they have been allocated a few raised beds and pots. A group of Syrian women from the Al-Amal & Friends Project also participate in the gardening activities.



Jane Rennie receiving the Highly Commended Certificate for the West Church Community Garden on behalf of Inspire by Inverurie (September 2024)

Finance

- The Board of Directors of BID has committed to funding IEI activities to the tune of £10,000 per annum for the next 3 years. This replaces the individual sponsorship of hanging baskets by the business community which ended in 2017. This initiative provides certainty of funding for IEI for the foreseeable future.
- The accounts for the year end 31 March 2024 show Receipts of £32,451 and Expenditure of £37,688. The Balance Sheet Reserves were £7,120 at the financial year end.

Future Plans

- Continue to support residents at Sheltered Housing Complexes
- Provide support to other community groups and community initiatives
- Create a hub of IYN communities in nearby towns for mutual support
- Encourage a wider base of volunteers to call upon to help out as required
- Succession planning for IEI office bearers and committee members



Ury Riverside Park Floodplain (Archive Photo by Ian Talboys December 2022)