



BEAUTIFUL SCOTLAND PORTFOLIO 2025



Introduction

Earlston has a friendly and growing community. The village is steeped in local history, with a built heritage and High Street hardly changed over the years. It is set in a beautiful landscape overlooked by the Black Hill, with the Leader Water skirting the edge of the village: the surrounding countryside has many well-maintained walks through woodland and rolling hills.

Two major construction projects enhancing village life have been completed, 64 property social housing development and primary school. Earlston in Bloom and the wider community have received much appreciated Community Benefits: the final one being a shed for equipment storage.

Farming has played a major role here for centuries, timber and sawmilling were a major source of employment. In the mid-1800s Earlston was economically important as a main supplier of gingham cloth, with mills powered by the river making linen and wool products. Manufacturing and processing continued into the late 1960s but only a few buildings and names such as "Mill Road" remain.

Residents, old and new, are proud of their community. Our heritage and history are kept alive by Auld Earlston while The Friends of Thomas the Rhymer celebrate not just the fabled bard and prophet Thomas but the link with the great Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov.

Civic Week is held annually, some community organisations run for the full year with activities and interests for all ages e.g. Earlston Paths Group who created and now maintain a network of routes for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. The Secretary's contribution was recognised when awarded the British Empire Medal, presented by His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch.



Earlston in Bloom

One of the key outputs from a major community consultation in 2018 identified a desire for Earlston to be “An attractive, safe and welcoming place to live in and visit”.

Bloom began with a remit to brighten up High Street making it more colourful and put out five planters in 2019 and tackling a large overgrown area owned by a local Housing Association.

The Covid pandemic halted further progress, as restrictions eased volunteers began carrying out badly needed work, demonstrating commitment to making effective change within the community.

After Scottish Borders Council ceased bedding and gardening maintenance across the region Bloom stepped in and took over The Green, agreeing a new layout and planting scheme. The group has taken on various additional public spaces over time.

We gained momentum from 2021 onwards, changing the look and feel of High Street with our planters, made from recycled plastic, refreshed twice a year, “self-watering” hanging baskets are added in summer when volunteers water using Dolly the Trolley and Betty Bowser.

Super summer 2024 saw us awarded Gold and winners of the Large Village category by Beautiful Scotland followed by the local Council’s Greener Gateway’s Silver Award and category trophy. Entering both for the first time, seeing our efforts rewarded was amazing for us and the community.

Later in the year we agreed to step away from being a Community Council sub group and Earlston in Bloom now has our own constitution, office bearers and importantly separate bank account.



The Green is cut by the Council but we do everything else: planting, maintaining beds and borders with perennials, small shrubs and bedding. This year we are trialling two potager beds and have a new herb planter nearby: both free for the community to use.

Main focal points are the War Memorial, armillary sundial commemorating the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, memorials to Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov, a much-loved doctor and a local benefactor.

Blooming public spaces include Church Brae and Huntshaw Triangle, latter brightened by planting a trolley and tubs, making the area more attractive and welcoming. The Kidgate beds have been completely renovated while planted wheelbarrows welcome on the main entrances to the village.

After a fellow Bloomer’s recent death we’ve taken on three areas Geordie maintained, agreed changes to planting have been postponed until autumn as a mark of respect.

We continue enhancing High Street and neglected spaces, engaging and involving our community, schools and businesses. Annual fundraising, gardening sessions, litter picks and meetings are open to everyone but like many groups maintaining volunteer numbers is always a challenge.

Horticultural Achievement

Late Summer/ Autumn 2024

- Participated in Council grass cutting pilot, extended natural areas, provided local feedback.
- Judged and presented prizes to young winners of our sunflower growing competition.
- Supported Earlston Horticultural Show by attending with stand and photo display.
- Continued feeding and watering before clearing bedding, sending it to green recycling.
- Refilled all planters with spring bulbs and winter pansies.



- Upcycled and replanted daffodils, moving them to different spots for spring colour.
- Planted Tete a Tete daffodils donated by residents, “free” from a Kelso Garden Centre.
- Worked to ensure the War Memorial Garden was looking its best for Remembrance Sunday.
- Visited our friends at Keep Duns Blooming Marvelous to learn more about their work and how some ideas might be adapted for Earlston.
- Received donated crocosmia from residents to be overwintered then planted.

Winter

- Cleared down and stored all summer equipment in our shed on the High School campus.
- Finally finished planting spring bulbs of daffodils around the village.
- Worked with Council who added long awaited (and nagged about) top soil and grass seed to The Green, provided more High Street seating and repaired others.
- Celebrated Bloom success and hard work with a shop window display of Awards and photographs, on social media, in local newspapers.



- Enjoyed Thank You get together with colleagues and sponsors – golden cupcake tower!
- Gathered mixed foliage including variegated hollies, held workshop with Primary School to make bundles with recyclable ribbon that were then tied onto lampposts.
- Met informally until first open meeting in February, when 2025 planning started in earnest.
- Enjoyed early season, donated snowdrops and planted even more for next year.
- Attended first session at Primary School looking to create a garden on new campus.



Spring

- Began monthly meetings to focus on and deliver plans for the year.
- Reviewed success and failures in 2024 with future planting in mind.
- Advertised for volunteers, restarted gardening and litter picks.
- Used five large bags of Caledonian Horticulture soil improver to feed beds and borders.



- Took over poorly maintained herb planter and revitalised, replanted with a variety of herbs for the community to cut and come again.
- Removed tired lavender plants from two beds and introduced temporary vegetable planting for Easter, sadly enjoyed by our nemesis - the bunny bums – and the local kids!
- Welcomed Keep Duns Blooming Marvelous for more networking and sharing ideas.
- Finally found homes for a compost bin and water butt, thanks to Civic Week Committee.



Summer

- Increased number of formal and ad hoc work sessions to catch up.
- Worked with Earlston Rugby club to protect The Green during annual tournament.
- Reviewed, moved, upcycled planting at all public spaces including War Memorial Garden by removing invasive hypericum with compact hydrangea paniculata.
- Emptied and refilled planters, installed hanging baskets, all funded by donations.
- Created themed planters to commemorate VE and VJ anniversaries, Earlston's colours supporting Civic Week, silver cineraria for Beautiful Scotland's 25th.
- Planned and started 3-day summer watering rota plan and regular feeding.



- Began working with Olivia and Abbie volunteering as part of the Silver DofE Award, weeding pavements and borders, planting bedding, fighting mare's tail with us at Church Brae.
- Completely renovated Kidgate borders starting with help from local farmer to remove large old shrubs and move soil improver on site.
- Scraped and weeded pavements on High Street.
- Adopted Geordie's planters and border after his death: great friend and fellow Bloomer.



Continue preparing for Beautiful Scotland visit, eat cakes, drink coffee.

Environmental Responsibility

Late Summer/ Autumn 2024

- Continued searching for potential sites for compost storage with almost no options available.
- Cleared baskets, planters, public spaces and sent waste to Council Green site.
- Continued to search accessible sites for collection of rainwater and butts.
- Removed and saved bedding e.g. geraniums to overwinter and replant.



- Replaced planter bedding with mainly dwarf daffs and grape hyacinth and pansies.
- Organised walkabout, discussion, plans, actions with Officers and Ward Councillors.
- Left unmown, plants in the park's grassland, managed for wildlife are able to mature to flowering. Grass heads produce seeds for birds and small mammals, while plants e.g. clover, daisy, yarrow, knapweed, red campion and bedstraw flower and provide nectar for insects like bees and butterflies, seeds later providing more food.

Vegetation left at the end of the growing season provide habitat for overwintering insects and cover for small mammals such as field mice and voles.

Winter

- Used donated plant material to create lamppost decorations, kept reusable ties for 2025.
- Gave perennials and shrubs a light tidy but left for winter nourishment.
- Received donation of Bloomer's late father and grandmother wheelbarrows to renovate.
- Went litter picking in cold weather.



- Added Nature Scot signs to area uncut for nature and biodiversity, as agreed with Council.
- Visited the new Primary School to meet with teacher and the Outdoor Learning group of pupils, Head Teacher keen to introduce responsible gardening.

Spring

- Organised annual Spring Clean Scotland Event.
- Bought 5 discounted dumpy bags of Caledonian Horticulture Green Goodness via Council scheme to improve soil including before potager planting.
- Planted more donated, naturalised snow drops in new locations.



- Reintroduced wildlife and cabbages for Easter, introduced short term natural planting.



- Litter picked with primary school pupils learning about the importance of not dropping it!
- Worked with community to created environmentally friendly planting celebrating, commemorating and remembering the 80th anniversary of VE Day at the War Memorial.



Summer

- Protecting extended signed biodiversity areas at the park where e.g. Red Campion, Yarrow, Field Geranium, Purple Vetch and Cow Parsley grow, great for pollinators, seeds for birds.
- Feeding our plants and public spaces naturally, not with chemicals.
- Begun summer watering, using solar powered batteries and watering pump on trolleys.
- Finally taken ownership of Community Benefits shed, located at Primary campus, now need to decant equipment and tools from High School campus, add guttering for a water butt.
- Organic plants donated by owner Kevin from The Plot Thickens for our trial potager beds: lots of food varieties for the community plus cosmos, sunflowers for our pollinators.
- Water fed with comfrey available and use of Black Bull's water supply from their four butts.
- Bedding supplied by local nursery, hanging baskets filled and brought on elsewhere.



- Planned major project completed to empty the majority of planting and all the stones from the Kidgate beds, helped by serious machinery and brute strength followed by rotovating by local business. Back in with some old, some new and some donated planting.



Community Participation

Late Summer/ Autumn 2024

- Took part in Earlston Horticultural Show by sharing our display, pre competition successes.
- Continued watering with help from all our volunteers.
- Awarded prizes to nursery and primary children for tallest sunflowers in our competition.
- Visited Earlston's oldest resident, Bunty Mason, sharing our success
- Supported by residents who donated "free" Tet a Tete bulbs from garden centre promotion.



- Created and introduced a mixed display of poppies at The Green for Remembrance Sunday, upcycling crochet ones organised by the church in 2019 and also helping local Poppy Scotland representative with wider recognition for future participation.



Winter

- Bloom organised committee, bank account and planned new branding for public recognition.
- Hosted get together for volunteers, sponsors, businesses, Ward Councillors, Council officers with surplus cake donated to residents at Hanover, sheltered housing.
- Held workshops with the primary school, making High Street Christmas decorations.
- Planted more donated snowdrops for the community's future enjoyment.



Spring

- Supported Lauder in Bloom by attending but not winning their fundraising quiz.
- Started up open gardening and tidy up sessions.
- Involved Primary and both nursery in colouring in Easter eggs templates that were laminated and decorated High Street, held a competition to find Easter bunnies in windows and “decorated” Green with carrots, easter bonnet, suncatchers there and in Hanover windows.



Summer

- Advertised for community volunteers and began summer watering again.
- Raised over £3K donated by residents and businesses to support our work.
- Discussed works to enhance public spaces with Community Council and Ward Councillors.
- Installed new bug hotels to encourage Bee conversations beside our herb planter.
- Spoke with residents and visitors enjoying our herbs and edibles.
- Took part in official opening of the new primary school and the community celebration.
- Visited the primary and jointly planted their first bedding while landscaping work continues.
- Publicised local organic market garden that supplied potager plants and advice.
- Celebrated arrival of community Blooming shed.



Finance and Support

We raise money by holding a well supported annual fundraising exercise. Each year volunteers deliver letters to all the households and we engage with as many businesses as possible. It is this financial support that underpins our work, no matter however large or small the donation.

We also receive support “in kind” from some businesses during the year, helping with more physical tasks that we just can’t manage.

It is still all very new but as Earlston in Bloom is no longer a Community Council sub group full responsibility for funds and may mean more formal access to Ward Councillors and Officers. We don’t know yet.

The financial report covers the period since we opened our own bank account.

1st March to 30th June 2025

Opening Balance: £5186.33

Closing Balance: £5720.83

Income:

Fundraising £3516.77

Bloomers and Misc £269.12

Expenditure:

Equipment and Plants £1177.89

Compost and fertilizer £150

Start Up £619.05

Misc £1035.33

The Future

- Retain current members and expand volunteer base if possible find younger volunteers.
- Review what we do and how we do it after receiving feedback from Beautiful Scotland.
- Continue planting, maintaining our spaces with emphasis on nature and pollinators.
- Introduce more sustainable planting, reducing seasonal bedding.
- Continue to explore natural feeds and compost where possible.
- Extend our work and partnerships with schools and nurseries.
- Continue to promote our work to as wide an audience and as often as possible.
- Work with other community groups to promote our history, heritage, nature, tourism by exploring funding and resources e.g. interpretation boards.
- Look to source more funds in future through our own initiatives.
- Continue working with Council to meet local needs whenever possible.

Earlston in Bloom – we love a sneaky photo!

