

Beautiful Scotland in Bloom 2023: Inverurie Portfolio

Assessment Date 09 August 2023

Medium Town Judges: Terry Stott and Penny Wright

Introduction

Inverurie Environmental Improvement Group (IEI) objectives are (1) To promote horticulture in and around Inverurie for the benefit of the public by providing or encouraging the provision of displays of flowers, shrubs, trees and landscapes 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 which is facing many challenges, one of which is due to the impact of the current high rate of inflation on the cost of living. Competition from Aberdeen City shopping centres and internet shopping has also put pressure on traders in the High Street whereby a number of local family businesses have closed in recent years.

‘We Are INverurie’ Business Improvement District (BID) was formed in 2017 and renewed its mandate last year to represent the business interests of the town for a further five years. BID’s Business Plan (2023–2027) provides IEI with an annual grant of £10,000 to maintain and enhance existing floral arrangements in the town centre. This grant replaced the previous system whereby individual businesses sponsored individual hanging baskets on their premises.

For the past twenty-one years IEI has enhanced the town centre with a display of hanging baskets. We have extended this sea of colour with tiered planters and barrier boxes placed around the town which have all-year-round floral displays of summer and winter bedding plants with a mix of perennials and cornflowers for sustainable planting.

The summer bedding plants are planted in the hanging baskets by service users at Pitscurry. This gives valuable experience to people with learning difficulties and they take great pride in being part of this horticultural project and contributing to their local community. IEI gives an annual donation of £1,000 to the Pitscurry Project. The trailing surfinia plants are grown within a mile of Pitscurry by local grower Charlie Esson.

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 and local social enterprises such as Grampian Opportunities, 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)

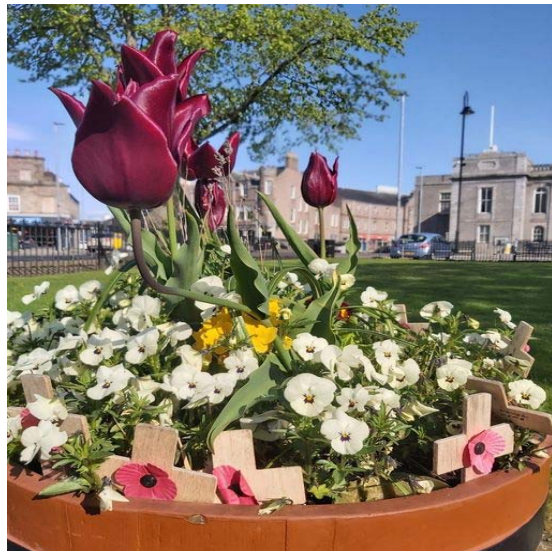
IEI are responsible for 120 hanging baskets, 25 tiered and single planters in Inverurie town centre. There are 6 window troughs on the Town Hall and 8 barrier boxes on the car-park wall at Market Place. Although Aberdeenshire Council maintain the planting in the Memorial Garden, this complements the work done by IEI in the Town Centre. 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.



Mixed planting in former Council street furniture (June 2023)



DAYS service users planting (July 2022)



Memorial Garden & Town Hall (May 2023)

Kellands Primary School

Kellands Primary P6GS are working to help enhance Donbank Ward garden at Inverurie Hospital for the patients to enjoy. The class have been carving pumpkins to bring a smile to the patients and using their new garden trolley donated by IEI. It's good to be part of another project that helps the pupils upgrade the hospital garden.



Kellands Primary P6GS Pumpkins at Donbank Ward (October 2022)

Inverurie Community Campus proposed Eco-gardening Club

Pre Covid-19 the Eco-school Committee was established in 2019 when a group of S2 pupils felt there needed to be a more coordinated approach from Inverurie Academy regarding environmental issues and helped IEI with planting as per the photo below. Post Covid-19, the Guidance Teacher at the new Inverurie Community Campus has recently asked IEI for support in starting a new eco-gardening club at the Academy.



Eco-school S2 pupils with summer bedding plants (June 2019 Pre-Covid)

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 vibrant, whilst receiving the praise and recognition they deserve for their efforts in maintaining wonderful front gardens. The judge looks for the good use of colour and form in the garden as well as imaginative design, a long season of interest and environmental sensitivity.



Best Large Garden and Overall Winner 2022 (Archive Photo)

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 40 bags of compost to sheltered housing residents in the Spring to enable them to grow their own seeds and plants.



Ury House residents are keen gardeners (Archive Photo)

Section B: Environmental Responsibility

Tree Planting

IEI have been out and about Inverurie planting trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy project. Thanks to all the volunteers who came out to help and especially to Deputy Lord Lieutenant Joanna, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council Provost Judy Whyte who planted two trees at the Market Square.



The Queen's Green Canopy project (February 2023)



Inverurie Community Council and Rotary Club of Inverurie supported local families and residents in joining in the planting of many trees around Inverurie.



Community tree planting at Kellands Park (March 2023)

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.



Baskets waiting to be composted at Pitscurry



Compost bins (Archive Photos)

Ury Riverside Park:

Aberdeenshire Council and Ury Riverside Park SCIO are trying to control the giant hogweed that is growing within the park. Spraying the plants and mowing have been effective in some areas, but this is not always practical. Sheep have been shown to be highly effective by eating seedlings and small plants, and also pushing over and eating large plants. This helps stop the giant hogweed flowering and setting seed.



Herd of sheep controlling giant hogweed at Ury Riverside Park (May 2023)

- Ury Riverside Park has been awarded the RSPB Nature of Scotland 2022 Community Initiative Award. These are Scotland's most prestigious nature conservation awards.
- It also received the It's Your Neighbourhood Level 5 (Thriving) Certificate as well as the Parks and Green Spaces Discretionary Award 2022.
- The Park was recently assessed for the Community Green Flag Award and awaits the result to see if the Park has achieved the required standards.

The Howe Community Farm

Inverurie Men's Shed have utilised a 2-acre field in the River Ury floodplain as a seasonal community farm whereby local families come together as a co-operative to grow vegetables and soft fruit for their households. This is an environmentally friendly way of re-using fallow farmland during the non-flooding seasons. 'Elvis' the 1952 grey Fergie has a tattie planting plough attachment bought with an IEI donation of £1,000 in 2022.



Howe Community Farm tattie planting (May 2023)

Litter Picks

IEI supports regular community litter picks in the Town Centre. These also include organised litter picks along the River Don 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.



Community Council monthly litter picking (May 2023)

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 planting the hanging baskets (June 2022)

There has been great progress so far on the service users' 'Butterfly Garden' in front of the Buzzard café at Pitscurry, hopefully you will see some beautiful blooms come summer, and lots of pollinators coming to visit! Huge thanks to Pitscurry's team of volunteers as well as everyone on site, and to Action Earth for help with funding.



Service users planting pollinators at the Buzzard Café (May 2023)

Pride of Inverurie Awards 2022

Delighted that IEI Vice-chair Ian Mitchell won the Pride of Inverurie 'Unsung Hero' Award 2022 for his passion and commitment to his local community. As an Inverurie loon Ian takes great pride in the appearance and wellbeing of the Town.



Ian Mitchell IEI Vice-chair

Rotary Club of Inverurie

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



Team from Inverurie Rotary Club putting up the hanging baskets (July 2023)

Inverurie Men's Shed

In only its second year of operating the Community Allotments and Howe Co-operative Community Farm Inverurie Men's Shed have achieved its aim of providing a facility for the wellbeing of the allotment holders and their families. Another community benefit is the donation of surplus vegetables and soft-fruit to the Community Kitchen and to the Grampian Opportunities Community Larder.



Peter, Graeme & Henry with vegetables for the Community Kitchen (September 2022)

St. Andrews School

Great volunteering from the St. Andrews School pupils undertaking their DofE Awards and for helping out in the community. Their new garden trolley is donated by IEI. The UNCRC article 29 highlights the importance of children learning about their environment and how to look after it. 'What a beautiful job the St. Andrew's pupils have made weeding and tidying up outside the clinic at 1 High Street today. Thank you to Ian Mitchell and Inverurie Environmental Improvement for arranging this, and it was lovely seeing the pupils outside in the sunshine this morning' (Clnetix Grampian).



1 High Street (May 2023)

Inverurie West Church Community Garden

The Community Garden was developed on waste ground behind the West Church Hall by Church Officer Kenneth Gray. The garden provides vegetables and herbs for the kitchen in the Acorn Centre 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. A group of Syrian women from the Al-Amal & Friends Project spray painted old tyres to make giant 'teacup' planters so IEI donated trays of small begonias and trays of tall nemesias to be used in the planters.



Al-Amal group planting 'teacup' planters (June 2023)



Inspire service users in the Community Garden (June 2023)

IEI will encourage the above service user providers to look at joining The Caley Awards 'Grow and Learn' scheme to enhance their gardening experience.

Finance

- The Board of Directors of BID have committed to funding IEI activities to the tune of £10,000 per annum for the next 5 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.
- IEI have successfully reclaimed the outlay on new planters purchased in 2022 from BID. These will be used for enhancing the Town Centre, Railway Station and other areas requiring an upgrade.
- The accounts for the year end 31 March 2022 show Receipts of £10,500 and Expenditure of £10,014. The Balance Sheet Reserves were £14,223 at the year end.

Future Plans

- Continue to support residents at Sheltered Housing Complexes
- Provide assistance and support to other community groups and community initiatives
- Create a patio area and footpaths within the grounds of Inverurie Day Centre for improved access and mobility for the service users of Inverurie DAYS.
- Put new planters at the Railway Station
- Replace the watering truck (2006) with a new electric vehicle.



Inverurie Town Hall and War Memorial garden as part of the Coronation Weekend celebrations including the Lighting Up the Nation Project. (7 May 2023)