

Why judge for Beautiful Scotland?

By Colin Ainsworth

The experience of judging is rewarding in many different ways.

Firstly, you are helping the group(s) that you are visiting to get the recognition they deserve for their achievements and for all their hard work. Secondly you are looking at the work that they are doing and, if appropriate, you will be able to give advice and feedback. This should help them in the future to enhance and improve what they are doing in the community. Thirdly, you are in a privileged position as you are getting to see behind the scenes of many different community projects. Fourthly, (and for me personally, very importantly) you get to meet some truly inspiring people wherever you go. Don't think for a minute that these inspirational people are automatic Gold Medal winners. Some of them may have just started on the Beautiful Scotland journey, but experiencing their enthusiasm for the work they are carrying out in the community is very rewarding.

Judging is not easy. You will travel many miles, evaluating, discussing and debating with your fellow judge the things you have seen. All the time, making sure that all the judging criteria have been covered and remembering, when writing the report, that the individual groups will be seeing what you have written. When you are a judge, you will be visiting the community for only a short time, but the people you will be meeting are there throughout the year, trying their best to enhance the local environment. When you are commenting either verbally or in the written report you must remain, at all times, the 'critical friend'.

At several times during the year all the judges gather together. Firstly at annual training and award events and also at the 'debriefing' day when the judges' decisions are seen for the first time and the medal and trophy winners are finalised. You will be part of a group of experienced people with a wide range of life skills. The debates will be lively but in the end the respect each has for the others comes through. This is a long-winded way of saying you will make new friends. Yes, being a judge is hard work, but it will be one of the most satisfying things you will do (especially if the scones are good!).

