

## **You want to be an It's Your Neighbourhood Assessor....by Robin Millar**

*[see page two for a selection of Robin's images]*



### **So, you always wanted to assess for It's Your Neighbourhood?**

If I am being perfect honest, no I didn't. Being a local Government professional, I was already broadly aware of the scheme. It was during a conversation with a good friend (who also happens to be a Director with Keep Scotland Beautiful) that I was persuaded to apply. So, I thought about all the volunteers who give up their time to make their community a better place to live in. I thought about myself and the fact that whilst I work hard, I give very little back to my own community. I came to the conclusion that it would be nice to make a contribution. So, I applied and was fortunately accepted.

### **What was your first assessment like?**

Surprisingly nerve wracking! I was very fortunate though, I had a very experienced and capable mentor at my side for my first visit. Not only was she encouraging, she was also good enough to vet my first report. That aside, those rather nice people at Keep Scotland Beautiful offer formal training and the Guidance documents for Assessors is excellent. I read them from cover to cover and I recommend that all Assessors are familiar with the guides as well as the wealth of material on Keep Scotland Beautiful's website. To all new Assessors, I strongly recommend you take up the offer of a mentor for those first visits.

### **You mentioned the report, is that a difficult aspect of the Assessment?**

For me it isn't difficult. I am used to that type of reporting in my professional life. However, for some it may be a little bit daunting. Rest assured it is not the most onerous aspect of the Assessment, and these days Keep Scotland Beautiful will provide examples of good reports. Once again, if you have a mentor take advantage of that. If I have any concerns about my reports, a quick phone call or email to Keep Scotland Beautiful usually resolves the issues very quickly.

### **What do you enjoy most about the Assessments?**

Gosh, there is so much I enjoy. I love meeting people. I never cease to be amazed by the enthusiasm and energy of the community groups, often in social and economically challenging environments. The volunteers are singularly and collectively impressive. I also love to see the difference that their projects make in the community. I remember my first visit to a Housing Estate that I expected to be beset with social problems, litter and vandalism. Not a bit of it! That particular community group (of only 12 volunteers) had worked so hard at improving its area, so much so that the whole of the community valued the efforts. The result? Quite beautiful and innovative gardens and litter and vandalism free throughout the estate. I admire that.



### **So, did you make that contribution?**

I hope so. It's Your Neighbourhood is about encouraging community groups to continue and keep going on their stunning projects. I often ask groups about their expectations of the It's Your Neighbourhood Assessment. Often their replies are centred on the importance of external recognition and how that helps motivate the wider volunteer base. If my words of encouragement and reports help the groups do that and continue their excellent work, then I have achieved an important contribution.

**We are looking for a catchphrase to attract new Assessors to the Its Your Neighbourhood campaign. Any offers?**

**BE PREPARED TO BE INSPIRED.**

It sounds a little bit cliché perhaps, but you will be inspired. From multi million pound projects to small community initiatives. Every single one of them are founded by volunteer groups which are determined to make their community a better place to live in. Not only do they succeed, they really do help to keep Scotland beautiful.

**A selection of Robin's images from his assessment visits:**

