**Introduction**

Set amidst beautiful rolling Borders countryside Lauder is situated beside the River Leader on one of the oldest routes between Edinburgh and England. Our town straddles one of the main trunk roads and despite the town’s expansion over recent years it still preserves its original medieval form of a single main street and two back lanes. Lauder’s Common Riding is one of the original and oldest Border Common Ridings, with references to the festival dating back to the 1600s. The Common Riding is now a week long festival which culminates in the Ride Out of hundreds of horses from all over the Borders on the first Saturday in August. Lauder has plenty of leisure activities available including golf, tennis and bowling as well as a network of footpaths with the Southern Upland Way passing through our town. Lauder has a lot to offer with a range of independent shops and places to eat and is growing as a tourist destination. Our town also has an increasing mix of community organisations for all ages. Lauder in Bloom began in 2014 in part at least as a response to a comment that Lauder is a long grey town and nothing much could be done about it! We began by adopting the handful of existing Council beds and neglected planters in the centre of town. Since then we have expanded outwards adopting various unloved areas and working with many other community groups. We currently look after:- 51 planters; 33 hanging baskets; and 34 beds and this number continues to grow each year. In the 2017 Scottish Borders Council Floral Gateway awards we achieved 2nd place in the Large Village category and a Clean & Tidy award for which we received a new litter bin. We describe ourselves as a gradually expanding core group of 14 have-a-go gardeners and we are very fortunate that we have great support from our community.

**Horticultural Achievement**

**Autumn**

- Increased density of planting at the Avenue car park bed to reduce weeding (this can be a difficult area to access) and to provide more colour and interest.
- Altered planting style to succulents, mulched with broken roofing slates, in 2 planters at Crofts Road due to limited access to water.
- For the first time we grew spring bedding (wallflowers and forget-me-nots) from seed to help keep our costs down and to provide our first dedicated spring display in the central Town Hall beds.
- Altered style of planting in the police station bed from annual bedding to more sustainable herbaceous perennials increasing seasonal interest.
- Trimmed hedges at the park and southern entrance to our town as well as the undergrowth alongside one of the footpaths to the school.
- Carried out maintenance pruning of some of the more established trees at Burnmill.
Once the Council had finished cutting the grass for the season we cut areas where we had planted crocus bulbs to enable them to be seen above the grass next spring.

For the first time we were able to choose the bedding plants (from a set list) we receive from the Council. We also met with the hanging basket plant suppliers to discuss different choices following feedback from the previous year. We have also acquired 2 trial baskets with different plant suggestions for 2019.

Added some shrubs and herbaceous perennials, including red oriental poppies, at the war memorial to reduce the amount of annuals required.

Created a small new shady bed, opposite the Lodge House, on one of the main walking routes to the school. It had previously just been a dog toilet area.

**Winter**

We planted daffodils in an old donated Belfast sink in front of the former bank, which closed in October, along with a sign providing a brief history of the institution in Lauder. The summer display in the sink is blue and white to match the former bank’s logo.

**Spring**

Early March we experienced some challenging weather with extensive volumes of snow leading to damage to some of our planters and fences. Several of our painted planters have now been given a fresh coat of paint. We replaced a number of the perennial evergreens in our planters which had been damaged by the weather, the volume of road salt or had outgrown their space and re-homed them where possible.

We were donated hundreds of snowdrops and winter aconites – we have created a snowdrop bank at the Health Centre as well as adding many around a bench near the footpath.

We added more sustainable perennial plants to a highly visible bed in the town centre next to the main road. This bed has very shallow soil. We transplanted various divisions from our existing plant stock to see which suited this site.

Re-sowed the cornfield mixes at the beds at one of the entrances to our town.

After lengthy discussions with Amey and the local Council we added two donated raised beds to a previously grass area next to the bus stop.

We mulched many of our beds with mushroom compost mixed with our own home-made compost.

In time for the historic ‘Picking Night’ – when the Lauder Cornet, the principal man for the Common Riding, for the year is announced – we added planters either side of the Town Hall door adding some yellow and blue (Lauder colours) spring flowering plants.

Planted up a local shop’s narrow window boxes – standard bedding plants had never done very well here so we experimented with succulent divisions and mulched with broken roofing slates.

We are taking part in the global act of remembrance the ‘Ribbon of Poppies’ to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War and have sown red and purple poppies at the war memorial beds.

A new bed of yellow annuals was created around one of the old blue ploughs as a nod to our local agricultural heritage. We have also repainted the ploughs.
• Continue to add plants at our beds at the park to increase year round interest including forsythia and euphorbias.
• We responded to a request from residents and placed donated Belfast sinks, planted up primarily with divisions of herbaceous perennials, at an entrance to our town.
• We began our watering rota of our planters. Feed is added once the baskets and summer bedding are in.

Summer

• The tulips in the Town Hall beds were lifted, dried and stored ready for re-planting in the autumn. Some of the spring bedding removed from our planters, to make space for our summer displays, was heeled-in at our plot to be re-used for the display next spring. We have also begun sowing wallflowers and forget-me-nots for next year.
• We trimmed the hedges at the Health Centre and at one of the main entrances to our town. We also hand weeded the trees at Burnmill which we planted in 2016.
• In time for the annual vintage car show, which brings approximately 6,000 visitors to our town, we arranged for delivery of our town centre hanging baskets and began to plant up some of our summer bedding. We replaced some of the spent planter compost with fresh material and planted out over 1,300 summer bedding plants.
• Due to local Council cutbacks we have stepped in and have been weeding the pavements as well as cutting some of the grassed areas ourselves.
• We have been working to improve the church corner area and have removed an overgrown shrub allowing for additional planting from divisions.
• We are taking part in the ‘Garden of Gold’ – a worldwide campaign to raise awareness of childhood cancer by planting two of our prominent planters outside the Post Office in a variety of yellow summer flowering blooms.

Environmental Responsibility

• We use a mix of annual and perennial planting with some beds such as those at the Town Hall having predominantly annuals for colourful impact whilst those at the park have mainly perennials. The majority of the plants in the 3 previously un-loved beds at the park are divisions from our own gardens or sown by us from seed.
• We reuse and re-home nearly all of our plastic plant pots and trays. They are especially useful when we run sessions with the various community groups who often take home a pot of bulbs / cuttings etc. We also make plant labels from milk cartons.
• We don’t use pesticides or herbicides and we show our supporters, via our face book group, alternative methods of dealing with common problems.
• We have our own compost bays which we made from old pallets. We use this compost where possible and buy in additional peat-free versions as required.
**Autumn**

- We put our new litter bin next to the war memorial where there had been an on-going problem with rubbish. We were also able to eventually persuade the Council to replace the open wire basket bin at the cemetery car park with a standard version to help reduce the amount of wind-blown rubbish.
- At our Burnmill workday we made bird roosting pouches with willow from the Piggery and we left the prunings from the tree maintenance in heaps to provide shelter for wildlife.
- Some of our hollow teasel stems were used by the School Gardening Club to create a big bee hotel which is now in place in one of our beds at the park.
- The summer bedding plants were added to our compost heaps and overgrown evergreens from our planters were re-homed.

**Winter**

- The stems from the herbaceous perennials in the park beds are left in place over winter providing shelter for insects whilst the seed heads from the teasels are a useful source of food for birds.
- The bunches of Festive Foliage are dismantled with the greenery being taken away for recycling and the ribbons re-used the following year.
- We set up a real Christmas tree recycling service and invited locals to bring us their trees. The chipped trees will be stored for 12 months and then used to mulch our beds at the park.

**Spring**

- We kept some of the Senecio Cineraria in one of our beds as an edging over winter to reduce the amount of spring bedding required.
- We have installed a water butt, made from an old wheelie bin and we’ve re-used some old guttering at our hut to make access to water here easier.
- We treated the fence around our park beds with a non-toxic environmentally-friendly preservative. We also re-used some decking timber to edge one of our beds instead of buying new wood.
- We launched ‘Waste Aware Lauderdale’, a sub-group of Lauder in Bloom, promoting the good work of local businesses and community groups and encouraging them to take further action e.g. switching to paper straws, glass milk bottles, composting suitable food waste etc as well as inspiring individuals to make simple small changes. We ran sessions with both Cub packs and the Brownies about plastic pollution, possible alternatives to single-use plastics, home recycling as well as composting. We are also working with the local school to help them to achieve the Surfers Against Sewage ‘Plastic Free Schools’ status which included meeting the local Council’s catering manager to discuss ways of reducing waste. We have over 100 followers for our Waste Aware Lauderdale Facebook page.
- We worked with the Lauder Primary School Gardening Club to carry out a lunch time litter pick and survey. The majority of the collected rubbish was snack wrappers which cannot be recycled by the Council. We ran a session creating re-usable snack containers made from plastic bottles as well as installing 2 new recycling bins at the school specifically for biscuit and cracker wrappers which are
We carried out our annual Spring Tidy Up, using compostable bin bags, with over 30 residents attending the litter pick.

We worked with the Lauderdale Scouts to create Waste Warriors from collected rubbish. The Warriors were on public display for several weeks and became a talking point including in the local press and a local MSP submitted a motion to the Scottish Parliament about our work.

Several local restaurants and cafes are now providing materials for our compost heaps instead of adding them to landfill as well as shredded paper from the pharmacy.

At our Spring Event we used compostable corn starch bin bags and sugarcane plates as well as wooden cutlery. We borrowed china mugs and reusable plastic beakers to help reduce our waste. We also ran popular pond dipping and mini beast safaris. We re-used non-recyclable polystyrene packaging for drainage at the bottom of planters.

Inspired by Leithers Don’t Litter we launched our new ‘Lauder’s Litter Lifters’ scheme whereby residents pledge to look after an area of our town and receive a free litter picker. Our new logo was designed by our Duke of Edinburgh Award participant.

Summer

- We have harvested the comfrey and added it to our compost heaps.
- At one of our beds which backs onto a wild grass area we have installed a physical slate barrier along the bottom of the fence instead of spraying with weed killer.
- We have added a compost bin, made from an old pallet, to the Scout Hall Garden so that all hall users including the playgroup can recycle suitable waste and reduce the amount going to landfill.

Community Engagement

- We have been fortunate enough to have another Duke of Edinburgh participant volunteering with us for her Bronze level.
- We are pleased to be continuing to support the Space to Grow project at our local mental health inpatient unit. We responded to their plea for an old loo for them to plant up as well as swapping plants with them. We hope to develop this relationship further next year.
• We have a very active face book group – currently 407 members and growing all the time. It is a really useful online notice board and provides a good place for discussion. We also have a useful suggestion box at our events. We provide regular articles in the Lauderdale News – a free quarterly newspaper which is delivered to 1,450 local households. We maintain the community notice board and we regularly send out emails.

• This year we decided to invest in ‘self-watering’ hanging baskets in the hope that they will reduce our watering work-load. This was a big financial commitment and we have run 7 fundraising events to help to cover the costs.

• During the fancy dress parade at the annual Common Riding festivities the Lauder in Bloom theme remains topical and appeared in several entries.

Autumn

• Following requests we added a butterfly identification sign to our beds at the park.

• We were approached by local residents to help them start their own small community garden in their housing estate, Old School Place. We ran a workday to help them to create their new garden spaces for them to maintain. We had a zero budget and up-cycled some old crates into planters lined with old coffee sacks and compost bags. The top soil was acquired from a building site and the compost was home-made. Plants were divisions from our own gardens. We were also able to donate some surplus gardening tools. Two of the residents now maintain our Community Herb Garden, have become part of our Team and regularly attend our workdays.

• We have created a new annual award for the School Gardening Club’s ‘Gardener of the Year’ which is awarded to the child who has shown the most enthusiasm and knowledge throughout the previous year.

• We started a community plant exchange near the Herb Gardens so that anyone with surplus plants could leave them there for anyone else to help themselves. We also encourage locals to offer up any unwanted plants, surplus landscaping materials etc on or face book page.

• We worked with the Scouts to design and create a new campfire-themed garden at the Scout Hall. This was achieved on a zero budget due to generous donations. We ran a work day with the Scout
Group and all the flowers are red, yellow or orange throughout the year and include sunflowers grown by the Beavers, red hot pokers, a smoke bush, rhubarb, and rainbow chard.

- We created a ‘Tulip Wall’ where locals were invited to sponsor a handful of tulips and add their name to the wall in our local fruit & veg shop.

- We held 2 community workdays where we made roosting pouches, trimmed the route of the junior cross country route and worked on reinstating a hand-rail and steps past the old Lauder quarry. As a result of these work days we have restarted the Lauderdale Path Network Group.

- Held our annual Wild About Gardens community event. This year it was a bee theme. We helped residents to plant up pots of spring bulb lasagne, we invited the School Gardening Club who produced a brilliant display which counted towards their Level 5 RHS School Gardening Award (the first in the Borders). We also used some of our Lauder lavender to help locals to make lavender-filled felt bees as well as decorating bee-towers with holes of varying sizes to accommodate different species of solitary bees as well as selling our popular knitted animals (kindly created by our supporters). Three bee towers are now in place in our pollinators patch at the park with a fourth one being gifted to the School Gardening Club.

- For the first time we worked with the local private children’s nursery to plant spring flowering plants in the railing planters at the pedestrian crossing. The nursery doesn’t have it’s own outside space but these planters are just outside their window.

- For Remembrance this year we invited locals to knit/crochet woolly poppies for us to display in our beds and planters along the route of the parade. Various community groups joined in including the local crafting group, sheltered housing residents, the WRI and the Guides (which helped them towards their annual Challenge Badge). We were overwhelmed by the response and had 698 poppies for the parade. These have now been dried and stored to be re-displayed this year for the centenary of WWI with additional flowers being made.

- Launched a new ‘Friends of Lauder in Bloom’ scheme to provide an additional opportunity to support our work. Supporters pay an annual membership fee and in return receive a quarterly newsletter and are entered into a prize draw.
• We planted up old trainers to decorate the fence outside the Sports Pavilion for the Lauder leg of the Borders Cross Country series.
• From further afield we responded to a plea from a communal garden in Wester Hailes and provided various divisions of herbaceous perennials as well as surplus shrubs and small trees to help to get them started.
• We provided the catering for the Community Bonfire. This was well received by locals.

Winter

• We made willow wreath frames for the School Gardening Club to decorate and sell to raise funds for their new garden shed.
• Ran a session with the School Nursery and planted a Victoria Plum and an autumn fruiting raspberry both chosen for low maintenance and to fruit after the school’s long summer break. We also celebrated National Tree Dressing Day with them and helped them to decorate their existing trees.

[Image: Tree Dressing with the School Nursery - December 2018]

• Once again we teamed up with the Lauder Christmas Lights Group and held our annual Festive Foliage community event as well as running a session at the school. We encouraged locals to ‘make one and take one away’. We created well over 150 bunches of evergreen foliage which we decorated all of the lamp posts from one end of Lauder to the other. We also transformed an old chair into Santa’s throne and helped to create a foliage-clad grotto for his visit to Lauder.
• Again this year we designed and sent out nearly 100 Christmas cards to all of our volunteers and supporters to thank them for their invaluable help. We also worked with the Scouts to create willow stars to decorate the base of the community Christmas tree. We used willow from the Piggery.
• We ran our annual Willow Harvest & Take Away session. We also created a low willow fence around the Quiet Garden at the school (we look after this garden for the school) and helped the residents at Old School Place create one in their communal garden.
• We held a bake sale at our local hospital and a fundraising quiz and raised over £700 towards our new hanging baskets.
Spring

- Created Burnmill Nature Trails in response to a community request from the Community Council’s Big Question. A local supporter made 11 woodland sprite doors for us from old pallets. Each door has been placed on a tree with the name of the resident corresponding to the species of tree. This has been a huge success. We have also created a longer trail with wildlife rubbing plaques. The plaques were funded by Scottish Borders Council and the Community Council have paid for the leaflets.
- At our Spring Event we held our annual hanging basket workshop with plants subsidised by us to encourage locals to increase the planting around their own homes.
- We ran a session with Lauder Rainbows including creating a flower ‘bed’ filled with rainbow coloured flowers, potting up herbs for them to take home as well as taking them on a nature walk to spot signs of spring.
- The Leisure Centre contacted us asking for help. We were able to plant up their planters as well as provide advice and suggestions for other areas in their grounds.
- We worked with the School Gardening Club to create a wildlife garden, complete with a baby bath pond, at the sheltered housing complex. We also persuaded the Club to enter It’s Your Neighbourhood for the first time.
- We created a new display this year to show our support for the annual Tour de Lauder charity cycle event. For the first time they have a Community Fund and we were one of the local community groups to benefit.

Tour de Lauder display – April 2018

- Following a plea for help we have been very fortunate to be able to recruit extra helpers for our watering rotas as well as willing volunteers to help us to maintain some of the grassy areas in our town now that the local Council has reduced their grass cutting schedule to only once every 20 working days. Making the most of the longer grass we are helping to create a temporary grass maze at the school.
- We worked with the Brownies to create a poppy bed where they meet at the school as part of the global ‘Ribbon of Poppies’ and the Cubs painted some poppy stones for us to edge the war memorial beds.

Summer

- We worked with the School Gardening Club to create jam jar posies of flowers to decorate the church. They created personalised labels for the jars. After the service they were distributed to house-bound residents.
• Two local residents annually do a long distance sponsored walk and this year we are delighted that they have chosen Lauder in Bloom as the recipient group.
• Lauder Guides have adopted one of our planters next to the hall where they meet. We helped them to source pollinator-friendly plants and this has helped them work towards their Keep Scotland Beautiful badge.
• We ran a pond-dipping, river pollution survey and tree identification session with the Cubs. This helped them to work towards their Naturalist badge.
• Following some challenging weather with Storm Hector we harvested some of our fallen blooms and offered them to residents.
• Following on from last year’s success we did our Good Garden Awards again. They are non-competitive and are awarded to any resident who has made any positive impact visible from the street. The certificate was designed by the primary school Gardening Club and printed by the local Council.
• We continue to support our local Flower Show and sponsor the Junior Grow-to-Show trophy. We also take part in the annual scarecrow competition – we came 3rd last year with our ‘Poison Ivy’ superhero.

Finance & Support

• We have a good working relationship with Scottish Borders Council. We have adopted the 3 former Council beds and they provided us with over 1,090 summer, and 640 spring bedding plants. Unfortunately this is the last year that they are able to provide this service. As their grass cutting and street cleaning services have also been reduced we are looking at ways in which we can assist to fill the gap.
• We started off as a sub-group of Lauderdale Community Council and we continue to have a really good relationship with them also. We have a good working relationship with the School Gardening Club.
• We have worked hard this year to cover the costs (£1,013) of our new hanging baskets. The cost of the plants in the baskets is covered by the businesses / residents where the baskets are hung. In the past 12 months we have run 7 fundraising events raising £2,443. In the past year we have been very fortunate to have received £715 in donations (£165 from our collection tin, £250 from Skene Construction Ltd and £300 from the Tour de Lauder Community Fund) as well as our ongoing sponsorship renewals for our 38 sponsored planters which also bring in £1,200 annually.

Plans for the future

• Continue to work with different community groups to bring them together – in particular cross-generational activities. Including the soon-to-be-established Lauder Men’s Shed.
• Continue to grow the group and encourage additional regular volunteers.
• Continue ongoing discussions with the various authorities regarding the landscaping along Edinburgh Road including the removal of a couple of unsightly semi-dead evergreen trees as
requested by many locals. Also to investigate the possibility of adopting some areas of no-man’s land next to a social housing estate.

- Our biggest challenge moving forward will be finding a financially sustainable way of obtaining spring and summer bedding to enable us to continue to provide a colourful impact in our town centre despite the Council cutbacks.

**Appendix**

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**Lauder wins national prize on award debut**

The volunteers responsible for keeping Lauder clean, tidy and blooming all year round were rewarded with their first-ever national award last week.

Lauder in Bloom was named winner in the large village category of this year’s Beautiful Scotland Awards, and it went on to take home the new entrant trophy too.

Its members gathered alongside other community groups, local authorities and businesses from across Scotland in Dunfermline last Thursday for the annual ceremony, organised by the charity Keep Scotland Beautiful.

The team, formed only three years ago, was praised for its efforts in bringing colour to Lauder and transforming a number of parts of the town by working with local businesses and other community groups.

Lauder in Bloom secretary Ray Theedam Parry said: “It’s the first time we have entered, so we were absolutely over the moon to be awarded gold environmental responsibility and are non-competitive.

“We really like that they are non-competitive,” Ray added. “You learn a lot from other groups which is really inspiring. We are already planning for the next year and hope for more of the same and beyond.”

Carole Noble, operations director of Keep Scotland Beautiful, added: “Lauder volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure that the local spaces and places that they treasure are maintained to excellent standards. I would like to commend them on their efforts.”

The group holds its annual meeting next Monday, September 18th, in the Lauderdale Hotel at 7pm. New volunteers are welcome to attend.
Dear Ray,

I wish to congratulate yourself and the rest of Lauder in Bloom for being awarded by Keep Scotland Beautiful as winners of the Large Village category at the Beautiful Scotland Awards.

I would also like to congratulate you on winning the Clean & Tidy award and for coming second in the Large Village category in the Floral Gateway competition.

Winning all of these shows the hard work and dedication of Lauder in Bloom pays off. I hope the new litter and dog waste bins is put to good use in continuing to keep Lauder looking great. Please pass on my congratulations to all involved.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

John Lamont

John Lamont MP
Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk

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Lauder paid its respects to the fallen on Remembrance weekend with a sea of poppies. Ray Theddam, Chair of Lauder in Bloom said: “Grateful thanks to everyone who took the time to create the 698 woolly poppies for our Lauder in Bloom Remembrance parade display. They looked wonderful.”

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Lauder, 19/11/14.

To the Lauder in Bloom fantastic gardeners.

Thank you all for making our wee town look so bonne all year. Last weeks Poppy display was just beautiful. We are both over 90 years old, so meant a great deal.

Put the enclosed £10 in your fund for next year. Have a happy, peaceful Christmas & New Year.

All good wishes.

Elsie John Macson.
Waste Warriors take to the streets of Lauder

Lauderdale Cubs and Scouts have created model reminders of the damage being done to the planet by single-use plastics.

Following a recent litter pick around the Royal Burgh the youngsters created striking figures from the discarded rubbish.

The litter pick was part of the Lauder in Bloom event which is promoting Lauderdale’s efforts to promote eco-friendly practices.

Boy Scout Barry from Lauderdale said in “Waste Aware Lauderdale was set up following the growing public awareness of the issue of waste in the wake of the Blue Planet television series.

“We are currently visiting local businesses to promote the environmentally friendly actions they are already taking and also looking into what further steps they could take.

“We are also working with various community groups to raise awareness of waste and what they can do to help to reduce it.

“Within the Scouting movement we have a strong ethos and we are currently working with Lauderdale Cubs and Scouts focusing on the alternatives to single use plastic and the growing issue of litter in our town and it’s impact on our environment.”
I am writing to commend your Cubs and Scouts on their recent work as ‘Waste Warriors’. Their involvement in the Lauderdale litter pick and their work to promote eco-friendly practices within the community is something that should be congratulated. The work they have done is admirable and I hope they will continue to be environmentally conscious and promote environmentally friendly practices. In recognition of their efforts, I have submitted a motion in the Scottish Parliament which reads as follows:

That the Parliament commends Lauderdale Cub and Scout groups on their recent efforts to reduce waste and draw attention to the damage that is being done to the planet by single use plastics; recognises that the youngsters took part in a recent litter pick up around the royal burgh, as part of the Launder in Bloom sub-committee, Waste Aware Lauderdale’s efforts to promote eco-friendly practices, and understands that, using the single-use plastics that they found on the litter-pick, the groups created models to remind people of the damage being done to the environment, encourage people to use alternatives to single-use plastics and to draw attention to the growing issue of litter in Lauderdale.

If you would be happy for me to do so, I would be delighted to come and meet the Waste Warriors and learn about the work they’ve been doing and their impressions of the project. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to get in touch by emailing michelle.ballantyne.msp@parliament.scot or calling 0131 348 5661 and we can arrange a visit for the near future.

Yours Sincerely,

Michelle Ballantyne MSP
Scottish Conservative and Unionist for South Scotland.

29th March 2018