



Welcome to Blairgowrie & Rattray

Blairgowrie & Rattray is a twin burgh in Perth & Kinross, united by an Act of Parliament in 1928. Situated on the banks of the River Ericht, it is a gateway to a network of walking trails and the official start of the famous Catechan Trail, a 64 mile circular walk through stunning scenery. Blairgowrie & Rattray has also been designated as the start of the Snow Road, which follows the A93 to Glenshee, across the Devils Elbow and finishes in Grantown-on-Spey.

In the 19th century there were many textile mills built along the River Ericht and the disused mill buildings can be seen from the riverside walk. Soft fruit growing developed in the 20th century and became an important part of the town's economy with a canning and jam factory situated in the town. Soft fruit growing still plays a large part in the area, but a wider range of fruit such as cherries, blueberries and blackberries are now also grown. The extensive use of polytunnels has extended the growing season.

Major employers in the area are Castle Water, Tayside Contracts and Davidson's Chemist headquarters. Blairgowrie has a thriving town centre, with a wide range of independent shops together with major retailers such as Tesco and Sainsbury.

Today the Blairgowrie & Rattray area offers unrivalled facilities for walkers, anglers and golfers as well as winter sports enthusiasts.

Introduction

Formed in 1978, making 2019 our 41st year, Blair in Bloom was the first 'Bloom' group in Perth & Kinross. Our dedicated committee of 7, together with our hard working volunteer group turn out in all weathers to plant, weed, prune and litter pick etc to ensure the town looks good for residents and visitors alike.

Committee

Honorary President	-	Sir William MacPherson of Cluny
Chairperson	-	Mary Birch
Vice Chair		Janine Seymour
Treasurer	-	Pat Lumsden
Secretary	-	Avril Wilson
Committee	-	Andrea Graham, Phil Seymour, William Wilson
BRCC Representative		Ian Cruikshank

Volunteers

Hanne Anton, Elsie Bowe, Marjory Carnegie, Ercell Carruthers, Anne Dow, David Ferrier, Joyce & Mike Jones, Jean Laburn, Jan McHugh, Jacki McCorkindale, Nichola McCourty, Barbara Oswald, Kate Patterson, Morag Reid, Sheenach Shepherd, Moira Somerville, Elaine Walker, Stewart & Christine Wastell, Brian Webster

We raise all annual planting from plugs in our two polytunnels situated at Mount Ericht, an old walled garden leased free of charge from Caledonia Housing. The plants are then used to make up hanging baskets, which we sell to local businesses. Each year we are encouraged by the support of local shops, offices, hotels and restaurants. This year we made up 105 baskets with our yellow, blue & white planting, giving a colourful focus throughout the town.

Whilst we are not responsible for the upkeep of the two main public spaces, The Wellmeadow and Riverside we work closely with our local authority's Community Greenspace Team as we are obviously keen that these two areas look as good as possible. We regularly weed, litter pick and refurbish planting there.

We are ably supported by two of our local Councillors, who regularly attend our monthly committee meetings and help with fund raising projects. We have been working closely with St Stephen's RC Primary School on our project for a new sculpture at the corner of Golf Course Road and sincerely hope that this will be in place before the summer is over. In conjunction with the Community Greenspace Ranger, we will be helping them in the autumn to create a woodland wildlife garden within their school grounds.

As a new committee, we were thrilled to receive Gold Awards from both Beautiful Scotland and Take a Pride in Perthshire in 2018. We hope we can continue to build on these successes.

(Photo shows our past Chair Helen McCann and former Treasurer Andrea Graham accepting our Beautiful Scotland Gold Award in Haddington in September)



SECTION A - HORTICULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT

YEAR ROUND PROGRAMME

Removal of our hanging baskets and emptying containers of summer planting is usually complete by the end of September. We have a good working relationship with our local recycling centre and early on a Sunday morning take the baskets there to empty.



(Taking down is always easier than putting up, we all agree!!)

Bulbs were ordered for autumn planting and this year we added to the white crocuses planted to mark the start of the Snow Road in 2018. We also received a further 5000 blue crocuses from our local Rotary Group as part of their campaign to eradicate polio. These were mixed with additional yellow, purple and white crocuses and were used to continue the planting along Elm Drive, to the delight of residents and visitors in the spring this year. The tete-a-tete daffodils planted on the corner of Golf Course Road have really bulked up and gave a good show in April.



(Bulb planting in the autumn)



(Elm Drive crocuses & Tete-a-tete at Golf Course Road)



The tulips we planted for our Ruby Anniversary last year “Holland Baby” were stored and planted again to flower in the spring this year. Once again, they were a big hit with residents and visitors and put on a very colourful show. They were removed prior to our summer planting and, after being dried will be donated to local care homes for their residents to enjoy next spring.



Highlighted by the judges in 2018 as an area that required attention, in November 2018 we set about removing most of the old, overgrown planting from The Meeting Place and in early spring power washed and re-varnished all the raised beds and the pergolas. Once this was complete, we renewed the majority of the planting, whilst pruning and splitting some of the original plants.

(November 2018)



(March 2019 Sunday morning power washing – a great stress buster)



(Make-over complete)

Year on year we are reducing the number of annual plants we use and are concentrating on more sustainable planting. The entrance beds to The Wellmeadow have been replanted this year with new heuchera, hebe, euonymus, and spirea, at the same time retaining some of the astilbe. We have also replaced the planting in the stone entrance beds to the town on the Perth Road and Alyth Road with alpines, which will give year round colour and help early nectar loving insects.



(*New planting at The Wellmeadow entrances*)

Our plug plants arrived in early April and were swiftly potted on and cared for in our polytunnels, until such time as they were sufficiently big enough for us to make up the hanging baskets – in record time this year, 105 baskets in less than 3 days!!

(*Hanging baskets 2019*)



Containers around the town have been planted up with our colourful yellow, blue and white theme and we have received lots of positive comments.



(*Basket hanging 2019 and our re-sited containers at Parkhead*)



SECTION B – ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

We have a very good working relationship with staff at our local amenity site for recycling and, any garden waste we cannot compost ourselves at our Mount Ericht site is collected by the staff and taken to the recycling centre. There are a further four secondary recycling sites in the town for glass (plain and coloured), paper/cardboard, clothing and general waste. We recycle grain sacks from a brewery belonging to the son of committee members for collecting our plant waste, which we empty at the recycling centre and reuse. All local residents have brown bins for garden/food waste, although these now require a permit costing £35 per annum, blue bins for paper/cardboard/tin/plastic and green bins for all non-recyclable waste

In 2018/19 the recycling rate for all recycling centres throughout Perth & Kinross was 69.7%. Blairgowrie's recycling rate for 2018/19 was 73% and there was 5500 tonnes of material through the site.

The compost from our site at Mount Ericht is used as mulch for the various herbaceous borders we plant and maintain, plus as a starting layer in our containers so we do not have to use as much 'bought in' compost. Moyness Nurseries, our local nursery/garden centre is the supplier we use for compost for our hanging baskets. We also buy gravel, additional shrubs and herbaceous plants from them.

We have removed a number of containers this year in order to reduce the annual planting and in the autumn will be taking out a large container at Rattray Church to make the area into an herbaceous bed. The container is being donated to a local care home for their residents, as it is the perfect height for wheelchair users.

Our spring bulb planting throughout the town has provided nectar for insects in the early part of the year. The two cherry trees planted in 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee also give early nectar for the bees and other insects.

Our 'Berries & Cherries' bed on the main road into Blairgowrie from Coupar Angus is maintained by representatives of Blairgowrie & Rattray Community Council and the produce can be picked by the public, or used by local restaurants thereby reducing food miles.

We regularly litter pick in and around the town and our Clean Up event in April, organised as part of the Keep Scotland Beautiful campaign, resulted in a great turn out from volunteers from other groups and members of the public.

(April 2019 – some of the volunteers who supported our litter pick, with just a small part of the litter collected)



A popular Community Market is held every month between April and September in The Wellmeadow, where local produce can be bought. An apple pressing festival has been held for the last two years, where anyone with a glut of apples can have them pressed free of charge. Bags of free apples are also distributed throughout the town at various points for people to help themselves.

All Things Fair – a fair-trade shop in Blairgowrie has just celebrated its 10th anniversary. They stock a wide variety of fair-trade goods and ethically sourced accessories.

Wisecraft – this is an organisation run by Perth & Kinross Voluntary Service for people with mental health issues. They use recycled wood and other resources to make items for sale such as bird tables. They have used our larger polytunnel at Mount Ericht over previous winters.

Nest Creative Spaces CIC – a non profit social enterprise offering handmade gifts by local makers, along with craft remnant materials. Last year’s yarn bombing of the town to mark our Ruby anniversary, was organised by Nest Creative.

SECTION C – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There is already very good community engagement throughout the town – Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust, a very active Community Council, and many strong community based voluntary organisations. We receive a great deal of support from our local elected members, who regularly attend our monthly committee meetings and help out with our fund raising projects. We also have a very good working relationship with Perth & Kinross Council’s Community Greenspace Team. As a member of Take a Pride in Perth & Kinross Association, we are regularly in touch with other Bloom groups and this year have been invited to judge the Coupar Angus Pride of Place Community Gardens competition. Our chair, Mary Birch is secretary of TAPIP&K.



(Members of Blair in Bloom visiting Brickhall Community Garden, Bridge of Earn and meeting some of their volunteers – May 2019)

We are ably supported by our local Tesco store, where we hold fund raising raffles each year. They also provide us with free bags of compost, gravel and unsold plants. We have also been advised by our town centre Sainsbury store that they have 22.5 volunteer hours to donate this year.

(Volunteers manning the Christmas raffle stall December 2018)



In November 2018 a local restaurateur, Willie Little of Little's Restaurant, very kindly organised lunch for all the Bloom volunteers as a thank you for the hard work we do in the town. It was enjoyed by all of us!



(Volunteers enjoying lunch at Little's Restaurant (November 2018))



We work closely with other voluntary groups in the town such as BRAN (Blairgowrie & Rattray Access Network), Blairgowrie & Rattray Illuminations Committee, Blairgowrie Braemar Association, Rotary Club, Rattray & District SWI, Riverside Venture Group, Ericht Allotment Association, the Climate Café, Blairgowrie & Rattray Community Council, the Hill Kirk graveyard renovation group and Loon Braes Parknership. In fact we all share many of the same volunteers. In the past 9 months we held two pop-up charity shops with the Ericht Allotment Association and the Climate Café.

Through our links with the Rotary Club of Blairgowrie, we were able to proceed with a new project involving a train made from whisky barrels. The judges will be told more about this project on their forthcoming visit.

Our link with St Stephen's RC Primary School children continues following their winning design for a new sculpture at the corner of Golf Course Road, which we are still hoping will be in place in time for judging. Renowned Public Space Artist, David F Wilson has taken the children's idea and incorporated it into an original design. Blairgowrie Golf Club has generously given us some financial support for this project and we will be starting the tour for the judges at BGC.



(The children's design of Scottish Thistles made from golf clubs and incorporated into this original design by David F Wilson)

Earlier this year we were contacted by the Employment Disability Unit regarding a client very keen to volunteer with us. He started in April and has proved to be a very worthy addition to our squad of volunteers. We have also recently received a communication from an advisor with DeafLinks and hope to be able to work with them and their client who is very keen on gardening.

We regularly have articles in The Hub, a quarterly magazine produced by Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust and which is delivered to every household in Blairgowrie & Rattray. This enables us to keep all the residents informed of our current work, forthcoming projects, etc.

We have a Facebook page 'Blairinbloom' which is updated frequently each week, also a twitter account @Blairinbloom where we regularly communicate with Bloom groups all over the UK. Every Tuesday evening there is #bloomhour, where groups chat about projects, problems and generally enjoy getting to know one another.

FINANCE

Grant Funding

Annual grant from Perth & Kinross Council	£1800
+50% extra	£ 900
Community Environment Challenge Fund	£8500
Tesco Bags for Help	£4000

Sponsorship

Blairgowrie Golf Club	£ 500
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Fund Raising

Charity Shop – October 2018	£1000
Christmas Raffle	£ 625
Quiz Night – February 2019	£ 400
Charity Shop – April 2019	£ 900
Easter Raffle – April 2019	£ 445
Community Market Raffle – April 2019	£ 161
Just Giving Page for Coronation Corner (to date)	£ 340

Donations

Blairgowrie Fire Station	£ 250
Ericht Holiday Lodges	£ 50
Blairgowrie Ladies Tangent Club	£ 80
Lytic Choir	£ 150
Blairgowrie Parish Church	£ 180
Private donation	£1000

Support in kind

Admin hours (to date) @£7.50 per hour	200 hours	£1500
Volunteer hours (to date) @ £7.50 per hour	650 hours	£4875
Support from Project Development Advisor @ £350 per hour -- 10 hours		£3500
Professional sculptor for Golf Course Road project		
@ £350 per hour 8 hours (to date)		£2800
Donation of 4 whisky barrels from Craigellachie Distillery		£ 300 (approx)

FUTURE PLANS

- Coronation Corner – this has become a major refurbishment project for this neglected area of the town, with an estimated cost of £40,000. Under the umbrella of Take a Pride in Perthshire, funding applications have been sent to Gannochy Trust, Steel Charitable Trust and the Land Trust with decisions expected sometime in July. An application will also be made to the Heritage Lottery, as plans for the site include a mural depicting the history of the town and marking it as the start of the CATERAN Trail. The plans will be available for the judges to see.
- Golf Course Road – as mentioned, we hope that the new sculpture for this site will be in place shortly and the new planting can be completed.
- Loon Braes Parknership – we will continue to work with the Parknership so the area can be re-designated as a nature park.
- Nurseries and schools – we will continue working with local childcare facilities and schools to assist them with all aspects of planting and growing.

- It is our intention to continue to increase the use of perennial and herbaceous planting in many of our containers, to reduce the need for annual planting.
- We intend to investigate different materials for lining our hanging baskets in 2020 and onwards, in order to reduce the use of black plastic.
- Our new signage, with our new logo is currently in production and we hope this will be in place in time for judging.

We look forward to welcoming Judges, Sandy Scott and Adrian Miles on Thursday,
1 August 2019.