

Hunton in Bloom Chair's Report 2022-23

Hunton in Bloom was formed after an initial meeting of interested people on 6th July last year. We are now just over a year on and so much has been achieved.

One of the first jobs of the newly formed Steering Group was to decide upon the aims of the organisation. Between us we came up with a vision statement; "We aim to enhance the beauty of our village in a way that is in keeping with its rural setting. We will do this in a way that is sustainable, encourages biodiversity and engages with the whole community". We have tried to keep this statement at the forefront of our minds in everything that we do.

The autumn and winter months were spent doing a lot of planning, organising and seeking permissions. We also began to engage with the community. We held a launch event, set up a Facebook page, designed and printed an information leaflet and held a logo competition. The idea of lavender as a unifying plant was mooted by Chris and some of us visited Yorkshire Lavender to get some inspiration. The fledgling Community Pub helped to support us by holding 3 fundraising coffee mornings and a quiz night. Not to be outdone, the Village Hall Committee came on board to support us with our own pub-style quiz and the Garden Group allowed us to have a lavender stall at their annual plant sale. Other village groups have supported us too, HEADS and The Steam Gathering Committee have given donations, the choir has sung for us at the woodland open day fundraiser and the Parish Council have helped us secure grant funding and negotiate permissions for our projects. Thank you to them all.

Thanks must also go to the many individuals who have helped us in many different ways; planting bulbs, making bird boxes, sedum roofs or signs, baking, donating, painting, attending our functions, helping at our work events, maintaining project areas, taking photos, donating plants.....the list is endless. A special thank you to Karen and Anna Barber who have painted and planted up some pots on the beckside area near the bridge.

During the year we have worked on four key project areas; the Pinfold, the Village Centre, The War Memorial and The Village Entrances.

The Pinfold was taken on by Claire in 2018. The aim was to create an area that was wildlife friendly and low maintenance. It has proved a challenge to plant into what appears to have been the village rubbish tip. However, the pinfold has matured into a wonderful space and now has two benches to allow people to enjoy it. Going forward it would be good to extend the season of interest and perhaps make the area more accessible to those with mobility difficulties.

The Village Centre was taken on by the group as our first new project. The original plans had to be modified due to an intervention by the Highways Department so we had to lose the stone sheep. Amusingly, more than one person admitted to me that they thought that the doctored photos of the sheep on the grassy triangle were real! The planting in the raised beds in front of the Village Hall has matured quickly, most plants were removed from the original beds established by Pat Gibson and replanted. The lavender hedge, although small, is full of promise for future years and the wildflowers are blooming marvellously either side of the bus shelter. This has been newly painted by David and Janet and is complete with a new village noticeboard which Janet ensures is kept tidy. A big thank you must go to Tim for his work on the development of this area and his ongoing maintenance. Future plans include more planting of spring bulbs and flowers on the grassy triangles.

The War Memorial Project was begun when Steve Tock worked with the Parish Council to ensure that the memorial was professionally cleaned and re-lettered. We wanted to ensure that the surrounding area looked attractive all year round without detracting from its amazing appearance for Remembrance Day. Some planting has been done; there is a sweet box hedge either side of the area which should produce a wonderful fragrance in the winter. As with many of our projects, getting started on the planting proved a lot more difficult than first envisaged, not just gaining the necessary permissions from the highways department and the various utility companies but also encountering concrete and rubble just under the surface! Thank you Gareth for your efforts to remove it. Metal poppies now reside in two planters either side of the memorial and two further planters sit either side of the gate. More planting is planned for the autumn in the areas under the remaining evergreen trees.

Thanks go to Gina who is doing a lot of the development and maintainance of this area.

The stone entrances to the village at Wild Hill and on Church Bank have been transformed by sedum roofs sourced by Jean. There was even enough left over to create a wooden shelter in the pinfold. These have been teeming with hoverflies, bees and other insects in recent days. Bulbs have been planted around the Bedale and Leyburn entrances and the hope is to develop these further.

Other smaller projects have included a plant pot recycling bank and the installation of water butts at the village hall, and the planting up of two porcelain sinks at the quoits pitch.

I would like to say a special thank you to my fellow members of the steering group. We have had a year that has been challenging and rewarding in equal measure.

Thank you to Linda for taking on the role of treasurer despite not yet living permanently in the village. Thank you for your patience in setting up and dealing with our bank account which has proved frustrating to say the least. Thank you also for your help serving teas at the woodland open day....you must have dreamt of scones that night

Thank you to Lynn for managing the Hunton in Bloom Facebook page, an area where I have limited expertise! I know you've found it difficult to be as involved as you wanted to be this year.

Thank you to Janet for taking on many of the jobs that none of the rest of us wanted to do. Thank you for persisting in chasing funds and for filling in countless forms, for representing Hunton in Bloom at Parish Council meetings and for the many pages of minutes you have written, including this evening's.

Thank you to Jean and Maria for the time and effort spent in producing an amazing portfolio. It goes well above and beyond what is required for the Yorkshire in Bloom judging and is a wonderful record of all that we have achieved this year. Thank you Jean for your beautiful flower arrangements and Maria for your baking and for the procurement of Mark's sausage rolls. Thank you both for developing and maintaining our Google Drive site and the Gmail account.

The steering group has worked together to coordinate work on our gardening projects and fundraising events. Our constitution states that we all stand down at the AGM and a new group is formed. I'm pleased to report that all of our current members are standing for a further year but we would welcome some new faces. You don't have to be an expert horticulturalist, just someone willing to give up some time and help to make a difference. You might have some ideas about areas to develop, you might be a keen fundraiser you might even consider taking on the role of secretary. At our first meeting in September we will discuss our priorities for the year and, depending upon the feedback we get after judging, start working towards an entry into the small village category of RHS Yorkshire in Bloom.

I am very proud of all that we have achieved this year and am looking forward to showing off our beautiful village to the Yorkshire in Bloom judge on July 28th. With that in mind, I would like to encourage you all to help us in this task. We are blessed by living in a village where so many people are prepared to devote their time for the good of others. There are many who already work to ensure that the village looks tidy, beautiful and is a haven for wildlife. Thank you all. Let's spend the next few weeks working together to show the judge just how special this village is.

Thank you