

Usk in Bloom News - Oct 2018

What a Summer! The Town's outstanding public floral displays have now been seen, judged and recognised on the World stage as well as Wales and seen double success. (So far!)

On the back of winning Britain in Bloom in 2017, **the Committee intrepidly accepted an invitation to promote Usk on the World stage via the Canadian based Communities in Bloom competition.**

This international foray was the first since the 2005 smaller geographically based Entente Florale competition.

It had been an anxious long wait since the all day judging on June 27th when American and Canadian judges Karin Rindall and Berta Briggs thoroughly assessed Usk's entry via an incredible 67 separate categories!

The Chairs of Usk in Bloom and Usk Open Gardens Tony Kear and Jan Munday generously funded their own way to Edmonton, Canada to represent Usk at the combined National Canadian and International Award ceremonies held over 2 days on 28/29th September.

The tough competition for Usk came from the communities of Birdhill, County Tipperary, Ireland; Fogo, Fogo Island Canada, Tirharny Hungary and Pomeretto, Torino Italy. In the tense Oscar like ceremony held in the local Edmonton theatre, **Usk were dramatically announced winners of the International competition** by the narrowest of margins. 1000 marks were up for grabs and Usk had totted up an amazing 882. In accepting that award, Tony Kear paid tribute to the remarkable all round Community efforts built around unstinting teamwork that saw Usk presented at its very best on judging day.

The judges also recognised the incredible efforts of the Open Garden weekend this summer which raised £19,500 for local causes with over 2000 visitors that saw record trade for some Usk Business.

Tony Kear commented - " It has been a truly amazing experience. To see the hard work by so many to help achieve this result is just reward. Having the opportunity to promote Usk, Monmouthshire and Wales in front of an international audience has been a privilege. With UK National coverage via the BBC "Blooming Marvellous" programme which saw over 1 million viewers, we have truly demonstrated how outstanding floral displays and volunteering working as a team can positively promote Usk all Summer and for the longer term all for the benefit of the Usk Economy.

It is vital we build on this success. The 2018 achievements have, of course, been 38 years in the making and we readily acknowledge that our Bloom predecessors gave us the solid building blocks upon which to achieve this success - we share this award with them and don't underestimate what they began back in 1981. On behalf of all who took part this Summer, I would like to extend thanks and gratitude for such warm and heartfelt congratulatory messages we have received".

This international success hasn't outshone the **outstanding Wales in Bloom result which saw Usk once again achieve a strong Gold Standard.** They beat off the stiff challenge from Saundersfoot to win the large village category for the 37th Year in a row at the awards ceremony which was held in Colwyn Bay on 14th September.

Britain Bloom - Champion of Champions result is due on to be announced on 19th October as volunteers travel to Belfast under their own steam to anxiously find out if they can make it 3 wins out of 3 this Summer. Fingers crossed!

The Town judging took place early August and the Committee congratulate all who achieved success but especially those who achieved Gold standard and won their individual categories given the unusual prolonged hot weather.

Not resting on their laurels, **plans are already well underway for 2019** with a colour and planting scheme drafted plus fund a raising quiz and Christmas bottle stall booked in.

Long term financial stability remains a priority for the Charity and the volunteers are launching a second phase of "Friends of Usk In Bloom" where regular monthly donations can be made. £3 a month with Government gift aid can make a big difference. Watch out for the leaflet - Please help out if you can.

Equally important along side funding is the help of the volunteers. The amazing teamwork seen against the backdrop of challenging spring / summer weather has been remarkable. The Bloom team have shown that non gardeners can make a huge difference alongside the local green fingered experts! It's clearly been fun and rewarding along the way too, so **if you would like to help out and make Usk Bloom in 2019 please get on contact via -**

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