

'BRITAIN IN BLOOM' open meeting, East Hagbourne Village Hall 9 November 2009

Following East Hagbourne's success in 2009 in the Britain in Bloom and the Calor Villages of the Year competitions, an open meeting was convened by Roger Emery on behalf of the Parish Council to celebrate the achievements, discuss learnings, and decide what to do in the coming year. 30 people attended the meeting, including members of the Britain in Bloom Committee, Parish Councillors and other residents of East Hagbourne.

Following the Agenda shown in the Attachment, the PC Chairman, David Rickeard, welcomed the participants and briefly explained the objectives. Roger Emery congratulated the committee and the village on their success and showed the certificates and trophies that we had won, before showing the excellent video made by Andy and Beth Riley.

Feedback from National Judging

The judging was attended by John Lawson, Sharon Langford, Terry Taylor and Roger Emery. Margaret Emery also attended as an observer and reported some of the main impressions and the comments by the judges.

- it was a big event, almost like the Oscars. The delegates learned a lot at the event and in meeting the judges the next day.
- the standard of those villages that gained gold was very high; they were experienced and knew how to play the game.
- the judges said that we were not well prepared but that this was not our fault. It quickly became obvious that to succeed at National level a community has to have been working towards the national level over a period of years. In the light of this, we could be proud of our achievement of silver. John Lawson commented that in earlier years silver would have been an exceptional mark and that the overall standard was now very high.
- for the future, mentoring is available from the regional organisations (we did not receive much help this time), also we can influence the timing of the visit to best suit our needs. We should select parts of the village to show our best; it is OK to use cars to reach different locations. A range of different types of village "scenes" needs to be displayed, and every step of the route for the judges must represent one of the criteria – no "wasted" time. The most successful communities, large and small, had strong support from District and County Councils as well as from the Parish Council and local businesses.

Points that had impressed the judges in other villages were:

- wide range of community groups, and activities around the year (not just one-off)
- greater involvement of younger people
- show how BiB will enhance the village in the future, not just now
- productive relationship between the Bloom Team, the community and the Parish Council
- express the identity of the community

It was important to note that the judging criteria were split between the 'bloom' aspects (flowers and village tidyness), community activities and sustainability - we need to work on all three areas if we are to be successful.

East Hagbourne is one of the smaller villages in the 'larger villages' section.

Feedback from Regional Judging

Jenny Smith reported on the regional competition based on the judges' marking sheets. Some of the well performing villages had many shops and businesses who could support the effort. It was also noted that some entrants were urban regions rather than villages in the traditional sense. Positive points about our entry were:

- we had a theme (the Great Fire)
- our floral displays, residential and public areas were well presented, verges well trimmed: particular mentions for the displays at the school and pre-school
- the wildlife meadow scored high for bio-diversity.

- community involvement (church rota, shop)
- Overall we scored 161/200 and won the regional award.

Feedback from Calor 'Villages of the Year'

Iain Duff reported on this competition which in former years was called Best Kept Village which East Hagbourne won in 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2004. In this case there was no village visit, we had to submit a dossier and attend a meeting in Kidlington to present it. The criteria centre on community involvement.

- We won the South Oxfordshire district prize of £500 (Goring won the overall Oxfordshire prize)

Discussion Session

Roger moderated a discussion on what we had learned and what the community wanted to do in 2010.

- we gained admission to the national competition by gaining top marks among the region in the 2008 BiB competition. Since we did not achieve the same heights in the regional competition in 2009, we are not invited to the national competition next year.
- There will be no Calor competition in 2010, because Calor are withdrawing their sponsorship.
- So, we need to think about the BiB Regional competition.

Key points from the discussion are summarized here:

- Bill & Susan Proctor were impressed by the way the community got involved, but disappointed that street furniture was marked low after all the effort on it (but we think the regional judging took place before this work was completed)
- Allison Huckle suggested we need more guidance on what to aim for; Nick Rigby suggested broader aspects such as a childrens' action group
- Roger Emery said some villages had 3 sub-teams for each of the 'pillars' (horticultural, community, sustainability)
- Caroline Hunt said we would need a larger committee if we were to divide responsibilities in this way. However spreading the load was important, because it was a heavy burden for a few people. We could do better by starting earlier next year. In fact the BiB needs to be a continuous ongoing process. The most successful communities work on the projects all year round.
- Jean Elliott noted that Blewbury Road felt a little out of things because they were not on the visit route this year. Derek and Christine Button said that they who lived in New Road felt similarly. However Jenny Smith said that the judges can go where they want, and suggested to include other areas e.g. Bishop's Orchard. Roger supported including all areas next time.
- Margaret Emery commented that local groups e.g. Ryman's Crescent could get together to coordinate - perhaps we could even have a 'Hagbourne in Bloom' competition to get everyone involved. Roger pointed to the scarecrow competition as a successful example of involvement

Decisions for Next Year

- Cynthia Napper proposed we should think about whether entering the competition benefits the community, don't just enter for the prize - make it a force for good.
- After some discussion, the meeting declared firmly in favour of participating in the 2010 BiB regional competition.
- Allison Huckle asked whether we wanted to fit the BiB criteria (or just be ourselves). This did not generate much response, but an informal vote later seemed to confirm being ourselves and not trying artificially to tick boxes.

The discussion turned to how we will organize ourselves:

- Caroline Hunt asked for stronger leadership from the Parish Council. Roger and David agree that the PC could provide a leader, but noted that a strong Bloom Team would still be needed.
- Roger said that our clerk, Robin Parsley, was the key link with SODC and OCC and he had achieved a lot this year, together with organising PC sponsored work around the village.
- It was agreed that more lead time would help - an early start will give us more time. An early action is to put a link to BiB on the village web site so we can see the portfolio requirements. Note: here is the main web site: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom/index.html> it would be helpful if someone could point us to the relevant parts for the 2010 portfolio.
- In summing up, David Rickeard said we should try to do it efficiently, without making excess work. The Parish Council will discuss at its next meeting and start the ball rolling.
- Jenny Smith said that in the meantime, we should ensure that village events are photographed to provide material for the submission.

Notes prepared by: D Rickeard

ATTACHMENT



AGENDA 'BRITAIN IN BLOOM' open meeting

**Hagbourne Village Hall (Small Hall)
Monday 9th November 2009 at 8:00 p.m.**

- Teas/Coffee/ Biscuits.
- Welcome and handover (**David**)
- Introduction (**Roger**)
 - o Point out awards and Portfolio
 - o This is your meeting
 - o We need to come to some conclusions about the future.
 - o After all the hard work, let's see where we are now and celebrate our awards:
- Watch the wonderful film made by **Andy and Beth**
- Hear from the people who attended the awards ceremonies, with comments from the judges and suggestions for the future
 - o National Judging (**Margaret**)
 - o Regional Judging (**Someone? or Roger**)
 - o Calor Oxfordshire villages (**Iain**)
- Open for any comments (**General**)
 - o What do you think went well and not so well this year?
- What are our options for next year? (**Roger**)
 - o Regional BiB entry trying to fit the RHS template, aiming for gold.
 - Implies we might be in the National the following year
 - o Do our own thing but enter for BiB anyway, e.g.
 - Specific parts of Village 'looked after' by neighbours
 - o Do nothing
- Conclusions (**Roger**)
- What the Parish Council will do now. (**David**)
 - o Thank you and good night.

East Hagbourne Parish Council