

Oakham Town Council is pleased to support Oakham in Bloom and I was very pleased to be invited to attend the annual East Midlands in Bloom competition award ceremony. This year it was held in St Botolph's Church, Boston, Lincolnshire. This is one of the largest parish churches in England and just as well as it was packed with representatives from the many cities, towns and villages that entered this year's competition.

I must admit my expectations for Oakham in Bloom were not very high. This is not a reflection on my perception of the ability and efforts of the volunteers who have worked so hard but on the roadworks, that have disrupted and blighted much of Oakham for much of this year, including the judging period. To top it all, a hailstorm one week before judging left cars in Oakham with dents, conservatory glazing smashed and cabbages prepared for coleslaw! I'm sure you can imagine what this did for the floral displays.

Much to my delight and that of the Committee members present, Oakham in Bloom were awarded a Silver Gilt and with 164 points, just 6 points shy of a top Gold award. Oakham in Bloom also picked up the coveted 'Best New Permanent Landscape' award for the recently developed and planted beds in Landsend Way. To round off a special day, the Wheatsheaf received a Gold award for best hotel/ pub garden, a Silver award for best residential garden went to 86 Burley Rd and finally Landsend UK for the best retail/ commercial premises Silver Gilt award. I feel you will agree, quite a haul of medals and very successful day by any standard.

Most would have understood if the Committee had decided to give it a miss this year. After all the road works could not be hidden and by no stretch of the imagination could they be considered an enhancement! Oakham in Bloom decided 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em' and made the roadworks a feature. Would you have thought of that? So wheelbarrows overflowing with flowering plants and shop window displays picking up this theme were the order of the day.

Oakham in Bloom is more than just about competing for regional awards. The residents of and visitors to Oakham benefit from colourful and attractive displays, all of which help to make Oakham a more attractive place to live and visit throughout the summer. It also demonstrates what can be achieved when members of a community, coming from diverse backgrounds, can achieve when they work together with a common goal. As well as the Oakham in Bloom volunteers, the Lions, local schools, Brownies and local shops all involved themselves. A resounding message to the few in our community who only wish to promote negativity?

Oakham in Bloom has also been selected as part of a BBC television production featuring a few of the towns and parishes, selected from the length and breadth of the country, as they worked and developed their respective displays. A 30 minute programme, exclusively featuring Oakham in Bloom is scheduled to be televised in the spring of next year – look out for it!

Cllr Michael Haley
Mayor of Oakham