

BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION 2018 – JUDGES' COMMENTS GNOSALL

Measures taken to publicise participation in BKV included sending a flyer to every household, regular articles in the Gnosall Parish News and on the Parish website, and publication of the BKV calendar which is sponsored by local businesses. There were two large Kitchener BKV boards (perhaps needing a bit of colour now?) at the Memorial Hall and the Grosvenor Centre and BKV posters at the village entrances, on noticeboards, in bus shelters and in shop windows (particularly in Gnosall Heath).

There were two excellent displays of children's posters at the bottom of High Street (over 100) and near the Gnosall Heath shops (over 70). These were good sites to attract residents' attention, the posters were well linked to the philosophy of BKV and they made a good visual impact. Some judges wondered if there might have been a few in shop windows in High Street too.

All the noticeboards were in good condition (some newly varnished) and packed with neatly displayed information. Their surrounds were clean and tidy.

There was a very good range of up-to-date local information on Parish Council matters, local events and activities, dog fouling and recycling awareness. Some judges expected to find copies of the Parish Council minutes too.

St Lawrence's churchyard was very tidy, with well mown grass, tidy path and grave areas, good noticeboards and benches and no litter. The burial ground was extremely tidy, the grass was well mown, grave areas were tidy and the paths were clean. The seats and benches were all good. The car park and surrounds of the Methodist church were also very tidy, with few weeds and no litter.

The car park and general surrounds of the Memorial Hall were tidy, with no litter and just a few weeds on the edges. The surrounds of the Grosvenor Centre, Parish Office and Youth Club were excellent; with lovely, well maintained planted areas and no litter (work was under way on the new Library on the site of the Youth Club). The grass in front of the Scout and Guide centre was neat and tidy, with nice planting and eye-catching scarecrows. The car park, surrounds and planted areas at the Health Centre were (as always) immaculate.

The car park, surrounds, lawn and outdoor drinking areas at The Navigation were extremely neat and tidy, with no litter. The car park, outdoor drinking area and frontage of The Boat were tidy and litter free and the whole premises were enhanced by attractive, well maintained planting, with the hanging baskets at the front being particularly good. The surrounds, car park, play area, outdoor drinking space, etc. of The Royal Oak were very good; there was some lovely planting and a very tidy recycling area. The frontages of The Horns and The George and Dragon were clean and there were some nice hanging baskets at the front of The Horns. All the pubs were a real credit to the village.

The former telephone box had been converted into an excellent book exchange. It had been painted, was very clean inside and the surrounds were enhanced by some good planting.

All four bus shelters were in good condition and their surrounds were weed and litter free. Some were decorated with a lively flower motif and some displayed local information and BKV posters. They were generally clean inside, but the one opposite The Royal Oak needed a good sweep out in May and July.

All the many seats and benches were in good condition (several recently varnished) and their surrounds were tidy; some had suffered repeated bird strikes by the time the July judges visited!

Many village features caught the judges' eyes. These included the new, very attractive village entrance sign. There were a number of village and footpath maps and many very attractive and well cared for planters (which had been sponsored by local businesses). The Lock Up stood out, as did the Rainbows'

planter, which judges felt was an indication of good community effort by the younger generation. There was also a good milestone, which could be classed as a village feature.

The Acres open space was very attractive, well maintained to a clear management regime and generally free from litter. The summer meadow/conservation area with well mown grass paths and boardwalk looked good. There was no dog mess.

All the verges and small open spaces – at Manor Road and Sellman Street – were well mown and free from litter. Judges appreciated that work on the proposed Village Green was still underway and that the long hot summer had delayed plant growth and other progress.

With just a few exceptions, private gardens were well maintained throughout the village.

The equipment and safety surfaces in the children's play area were good (but there were a few signs that parts of the safety surfaces will need attention in the near future). The grass was well mown. There were a few bits of litter in early July and judges noticed that there were signs that the moles had resumed their attacks! The Chippy Jumps play area was good all round.

The maps were excellent with a clear base and good use of colour, symbols and codes for BKV elements. The Gnosall Heath TCB should be removed from the map. The maps were easy to follow, but some older judges would have preferred a key more specifically related to BKV elements to be judged, rather than showing "groups of BKV features".

Very little litter was seen in the village throughout the judging period (the mobile litter picker was seen as in previous years!). Only one dog mess was seen (in June). There was very clear evidence of significant community awareness of and involvement in BKV. Judges met many people on their visits; all were aware of BKV and many were involved in work associated with the village's entry in BKV. The canal towpath maintenance, the new village sign, the work of the Rainbows, the bunting in High Street and elsewhere, the BKV calendar and the well informed residents met by judges all underlined Gnosall's commitment to BKV and the desire to do well.

Judges said "it was a pleasure to visit Gnosall again" (July judges). "Everyone we met knew about BKV and knew who we were", (May judges). The village looked very well cared for overall and the July judges enjoyed the special treat of a resident playing the piano in St Lawrence's Church! Standards achieved in recent years were more than maintained and Gnosall thoroughly deserved to be Best Large Village in the Stafford Area in 2018. Congratulations and good luck in 2019.

John T Perry, MBE
Chairman, BKV Working Group

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