

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

6 October 2023

Outstanding Fenland volunteers honoured at annual celebration event

Dedicated volunteers who have helped to nurture and transform Fenland over the past 12 months have been honoured by Fenland District Council.

The Council held its annual Celebration Evening yesterday (5 October) to recognise the positive impact the work of volunteers has on our communities, and to say a huge, well-deserved 'thank you!' for everything they do.

There are now 17 Street Pride groups in the district, and a number of In Bloom and Friends groups all working hard to improve the local street scene, our open spaces and heritage sites and promote environmental education.

This year they have also worked in partnership with a number of local businesses, schools, brownies, cadet organisations and many more.

More than 100 volunteers attended the celebration evening, which was held at March Braza Club. The highlight of the night was a special awards presentation, with six awards for the best voluntary projects over the past year.

Cllr Peter Murphy, Fenland District Council's Portfolio Holder for the Environment, who presented the awards, said: "The efforts of all our volunteer groups have once again been exceptional this year. Many groups go above and beyond litter picking, transforming neglected areas and buildings, enhancing wildlife, and promoting environmental sustainability. I can't thank them all enough for everything they do to help make Fenland a better place to live, work and visit.

"As always, it was an extremely hard job choosing winners for the awards, as all the projects completed this year are all very worthy in their own right and deserve praise."

The evening also included a talk from Tony Cook, of Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT), who spoke about how the trust can support groups with wildflower establishment, a supper by Glam Grazing by Gem and live music from Bar Six.

Award winners

Best Nature Project: Friends of Wisbech General Cemetery; and Doddington Street Pride (joint winners)

The **Friends of Wisbech General Cemetery** won the award for their unwavering dedication to looking after the Victorian cemetery, promoting the history of the site and its monuments, while considering the needs of the wildlife. During the Friends' annual Spring Walk in April a new volunteer came on board to create resources on the cemetery for schools, passing down its history to the younger generation.

Doddington Street Pride also won the award after turning their hand to restoring the pond at Pocket Park. They have done a lot of work to renovate and enhance the area over the 12 months and will continue to do over the coming year.

Best Partnership Project: Wisbech Street Pride & Wisbech In Bloom; and Parson Drove Street Pride (joint winners)

Wisbech Street Pride & Wisbech In Bloom won the award for the creation of a new woodland in the town, in partnership with the National Trust. On a four-acre site adjacent to Harecroft Road, some 48 saplings have been planted consisting of native fruit and nut trees and native British tree species. When mature, the woodland will be a foraging orchard for all the community to enjoy.

Parson Drove Street Pride won the award for helping to restore St Johns churchyard with the Friends of St John. When the Friends secured the church, they approached the Street Pride group for help with the churchyard which had deteriorated over the years. Together they uncovered gravestones and restored the area ready for a varied programme of activities over the summer. Parson Drove Street Pride continue to work with the Friends committee and have planned future work sessions to maintain the churchyard in future.

Best Street Scene Project: Whittlesey Street Pride

Whittlesey Street Pride, which this year saw the largest increase in additional volunteers out of all the Street Pride groups, won the award for its help with the creation of a new woodland area at Yarwells Headland, a residential area in the town. The 'Platinum Wood' initiative was organised by Whittlesey Town Council as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative, with support from Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT). Over 100 trees were planted, with an area left for a future wildflower establishment.

Best Youth Project: Wisbech St Mary Street Pride & Wisbech St Mary Church of England Academy; and Chatteris in Bloom/Street Pride (joint winners)

Wisbech St Mary Street Pride & Wisbech St Mary Church of England Academy won the award for a joint litter pick they carried out. They first worked together in 2019 when the Street Pride group provided the school with equipment so pupils could set-up an after-school litter picking club. The club, the Environmental Savers, have continued to litter pick regularly and earlier this year the Street Pride group got in touch with the school to hold a joint one. The pupils fed back that they had an "amazing time" and are looking to holding more litter picks with Street Pride in future. Street Pride member Sarah Bligh dedicated the award to fellow member and parish councillor David Wheeler who recently passed away.

Chatteris in Bloom/Street Pride won the award for a special King's Coronation project in the town. At the beginning of the year, they launched a children's competition to create a Coronation-themed design for the bus shelter on East Park Street. Fourteen-year-old Grace won the competition and together with the In Bloom/Street Pride group and local artist Ric Savage, turned her design into reality. The finished boards made an immediate impact, just in time for the King's Coronation.

Best Promotional Project: Friends of Station Road Cemetery, March; and Friends of Octagon Graveyard, Wisbech (joint winners)

The **Friends of Station Road Cemetery** won the award for its ongoing work to maintain the Victorian cemetery and ensure it can be appreciated by everyone visiting to remember loved ones. Volunteers also held a guided tour of the cemetery to coincide with the national Heritage Open Days event in September. Not only do events such as this enable members of the community to find out more about the cemetery, but they promote the fantastic work of the group too.

The **Friends of Octagon Graveyard** also won the award for its work to maintain the Octagon graveyard in Wisbech. They manage the graveyard to provide visitors with an inviting, peaceful space to reflect and appreciate the site's history and wildlife. Volunteers also hold regular open days throughout the year to guide visitors around.

Best Clean Up: Friends of March Railway Station; and Manea Street Pride (joint winners)

The **Friends of March Railway Station**, who actively work to renovate and preserve the disused platforms and community rooms at the station, won the award for their continued clean-up efforts this year. Among the activities were tackling the removal of ivy and undergrowth from around the buildings on platform 1 (disused side), and cleaning up the station stairs and disused track bed.

Manea Street Pride won the award for its continued efforts to clean-up litter from the village. Earlier this year a new chairperson stepped in who had lots of ideas of how to grow the group and encourage community participation.

- For more information on becoming a Street Pride, In Bloom or Friends volunteer contact Rebecca Robinett, Fenland District Council's Street Pride coordinator, at: streetpride@fenland.gov.uk

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Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk