

Cheshire Community Pride Competition 2016 Best Kept Village
(population 2501-5000)

Sponsored by Neston Town Council, the Parkgate Society entered the Cheshire Community Pride Competition for the Best Kept Village (BKV) competition. The competition is organised each year by Cheshire Community Action and is open to villages across the whole of Cheshire. There are seven BKV awards each depending on the size of the population of the village entered. Judges visit each village and using a strict set of criteria award points across six sections. The judges visited Parkgate in May and June and taking photographic record score each section. The results of their visits and the awards were announced on October 13th at Sandbach Town Hall. Although we did receive a "Little Gem Award" for St Thomas' Church gardens we were unsuccessful with our other entries and rather sadly Parkgate didn't even get a mention in the BKV awards.

There were 9 villages entered in our section this year and I am pleased to report that at least we did not come last, as we did in 2011, Parkgate came 6th. In other words we have improved Parkgate and I am definitely looking forward, to next year when, using the judges' comments, I am sure we can do even better.

In 2011 we received a total of 425 marks (62%) and this year we received a total of 648 (83%). In every section apart from one we increased our scores. The one section that let us down badly was the Allotments on which the judges commented ***"The Allotment area is mostly overgrown. There is little evidence of it being used adequately. It has the space to provide a number of allotments, but the whole area needs to be cleared to make effective use of this valuable land"***. ***Scored 11/30 (the allotments scored 15 in 2011)***.

This is rather disappointing after our successful efforts to improve the area with the replacement of the fence around the allotments with very smart new fencing. Unfortunately several allotment holders had left rusty wheelbarrows and other derelict equipment visible to all. Having previously raised this with the Town Council this was discussed with the Neston Looking Better group at their meeting on 9th November when I urged them to put pressure on the tenants to improve their allotment.

With regards to the other sections we will need to continue the good work on litter picking and cutting back overgrown areas. However we need to ensure that BKV posters are displayed in the shops and restaurant windows. Tidy the area around the public toilets with planting etc. Highlight the historical artefacts, Coal Trolley, the Pill Box and of course our new addition on the Middle Slip.

We will need to keep the grass verges and hedges etc. tidy and weed free? Certainly we will be looking for some targeted support from CWaC and the Town Council with some of the paved areas particularly. Other areas will be down to Community Spirit volunteers to assist.

I hope you will agree that all in all it was not a bad result and it gives me plenty of optimism for 2017. Coming 6th with 83% would make it appear that there was very little in it and by picking up a few extra points next year well who knows!

David Johnson

Judge' Scores.

Section 1 – Appearance of Shops including shop window displays. Condition of paved areas and parking areas. (70 points awarded/90 possible)

Section 2 – Railway Station, Bus Shelters, Telephone Kiosks, Public Toilets, Notice Boards, Public Car Parks, Exterior of Schools. (122/150)

Section 3 – Public Houses, Restaurants, cafes (including parking areas), industrial units, Town Halls, Government offices and Garden Centres, Medical Centres, Libraries, Village Halls. Other meeting places and their surroundings. (78/90)

Section 4 – Sports and Social clubs, War Memorials, Other memorials & Historical Artefacts, Churchyards, Cemeteries, Parks, Gardens, Children's Play Areas. (137/150)

Section 5 – Tidiness of verges, Hedges, Traffic Islands, Floral Displays, Allotments, Ponds, Streams and Canals. (84/120)

Section 6 – Litterbins, Graffiti, Chewing Gum Residue, Dog Fouling and Weeds. (157/180)

Thank you all for your support and assistance with making the improvements to Parkgate

We understand that the latest news for the 2017 Best Kept Village competition is that it will not be taking place)