Welcome to this autumn’s edition of the Altogether Greener newsletter.

There is lots to celebrate this autumn, including successful community projects, partnerships and events. How fantastic to see the different ways people are working towards an ‘altogether greener’ county!

A big thank you to everyone who has played a part in placing Durham City and Tanfield as finalists in the Britain in Bloom competition. It has been an exciting competition so far and an absolute pleasure to see the amazing floral displays around our county. It is great that the time, skills and passion of those involved has been recognised. I await with anticipation the final results in October. Well done to all of the Britain in Bloom contributors!

If you have any news for a future edition of this newsletter, we would love to hear from you. Our contact details are on the back page.

Fingers crossed for success

Durham City and Tanfield village have been in full bloom as contestants showed off their green skills in this year’s national Britain in Bloom competition.

Royal Horticultural Society judges visited Durham and Tanfield as part of a nationwide whistle-stop tour of the country earlier in the summer.

Durham City has been successful in becoming a finalist in the small city category. The entry was led and coordinated by the County Council with support from the ‘Durham in Bloom’ group partners and sponsors.

Judges Brendan Mowforth, Geraldine King and trainee Ann Holland visited a number of locations including Wharton Park, the University Botanic Garden and Durham Cathedral. They also looked at floral displays on the city’s roundabouts, in the market place and met with representatives from the council, partner organisations and volunteer groups who come together each year to brighten up the city with flowers.

In thanking the city for such a warm welcome and praising the ingenuity of Durham County Council staff for their unique floral roundabout displays, Brendan Mowforth said: “Thank you for inviting us to have a look around your beautiful city. We are very impressed and we have thoroughly enjoyed it.”

Tanfield succeeded in reaching the national finals for the first time, competing in the village category, led and co-ordinated by a volunteer community group Tanfield in Bloom.

Winners of Britain in Bloom will be announced on 19 October 2018.

In addition, 15 towns and villages from around the county are also taking part in this year’s regional Northumbria in Bloom competition. We wish everyone the best of luck!

Winners of Northumbria in Bloom will be announced on 26 September.
Coastal, heritage and landscape

Volunteers recognised

Two long serving countryside volunteers have been recognised for their hard work and dedication.

Valerie Stokell and Linda Schofield have both been given a Caring for Your Environment Award and met at Hardwick Park to receive their accolade. Valerie, a retired teacher and grandmother from Sedgefield, helps out at the popular park and can regularly be found in the picturesque grounds making sure they are up to the standard visitors have come to expect.

Linda, a retired teacher from Newton Hall, takes on more of an administrative role these days, but earned her volunteer stripes taking part in many of the countryside work parties which encourage like-minded, green fingered members of the public to come together to volunteer in the countryside. She now helps out with tasks such as collating information for our popular guided walks programme.

She said: “This came totally out of the blue. We volunteer because we enjoy it but it is nice to be recognised.”

Getting into the ancient swing of things

Volunteers with the community heritage project Land of Oak & Iron got stuck into the traditional art of scything, an ancient method of cutting crops and grass.

Meeting at Derwentcote Steel Furnace, Rowlands Gill, volunteers learnt skills such as scythe sharpening and maintenance, before using their tools to cut the wild flower meadow surrounding the site.

The steel furnace provided a fitting setting, with wrought iron converted to steel in the eighteenth century there. Converted steel would then be taken to the nearby forge to be made into items such as cutting tools, possibly even blades for scythes.

The task day was organised by Land of Oak & Iron as part of their ongoing volunteering programme.

Land of Oak & Iron is hosted by Groundwork North East and Cumbria and supported by National Lottery players through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Given the green flag

County Durham is leading the way after 12 of its parks and cemeteries received prestigious environmental awards.

The sites, all managed by Durham County Council, have been given Green Flag accreditation by the charity Keep Britain Tidy in recognition of the excellent standards of maintenance, management and good practice which keep them looking great.
Community garden team reaping well deserved recognition

The Burnopfield Gardening Team has been recognised with a ‘Clean and Tidy Derwent Valley award’.

The Derwent Valley Partnership has developed the award in recognition of the volunteers who devote their own time to improve local communities.

June Gledhill from the Burnopfield Gardening team said: “It is hard work but we have great volunteers who are keen to put their time and effort into helping improve the village.”

Derek Snaith, Area Action Partnership coordinator, said: “It’s great to see how their actions are having an impact not only on the environment but on people’s wellbeing and sense of pride.”

Funding success allows Community Clean Up Group to keep growing

This autumn, Laurel United Big Community Clean Up Group are teaming up with Edible Gilesgate to develop activities aimed at improving the local environment and teaching communities new gardening skills.

Following a successful pilot after-school programme, where children and volunteers helped look after planters in and around Laurel Avenue Children’s Centre Community Garden, the group has been awarded a grant from Durham County Council.

The funding will enable a new project to design and build a bin storage bay within their premises. It is hoped this will encourage recycling and prevent fly tipping.

Edible Gilesgate is co-ordinated by Growing Durham, an initiative that encourages people across the county to grow their own food and supports them in turning their food growing ideas into reality.

Growing Durham co-ordinator, Hannah Murray-Leslie, said: “These children are doing fantastic work, they are so keen to learn about growing and helping to improve their local environment - I’m excited to see what they come up with next!”

Local nature partnerships

Derwent Valley Partnership secures funding for exciting new projects

Over £38,000 of funding has been dedicated to three projects designed to engage children and communities in the Derwent Valley Partnership (DVP) area.

Outdoor Sustainability and Education Specialists (OASES) will deliver the School Apple Project, encouraging children to improve their local environment through fun learning activities. Six orchards will be planted and children will learn more about the life cycle of fruit and their health benefits, as well as the benefits trees have to the environment. Children will also discover new horticultural and cooking skills, promoting better health and wellbeing.

Forest school workshops in Watling Wood, aimed at families in the Leadgate and wider DVP area, will inspire communities to engage with their natural environment. This will be led by Stomping Grounds North East in partnership with Leadgate Taskforce.

Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) will design new, enjoyable educational trails within the plantation in Burnopfield. The trust will come together with members of the local community and schools to design the trails.

Derwent Valley Partnership is one of 14 Area Action Partnerships set up across the county by Durham County Council.
What’s on...

Recycle Week
24 - 30 September 2018
Recycle week celebrates all things recycling to encourage a greener lifestyle. This year’s inspiring theme is ‘Recycling. We do. Because it matters’.
www.recyclenow.com

Lanchester Wildlife Group
9 October 2018 7.30-8.30pm
Mark McKeown will discuss Fynbos - The Cape Floral Kingdom of South Africa. Held at Lanchester Community Centre dining room. For more details email lanchesterwildlifegroup@outlook.com or visit www.durhamwt.com/events.

Low Barns Hedgehog Hideaways
23 October 2018 1-3pm
Create a hedgehog hideaway and make some wildlife winter treats to take back to your garden. Held at Low Barns Nature Reserve. www.durhamwt.com/event/low-barns-hedgehog-hideways. £5 per child. Activities aimed for ages 5-11. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Environment Awards 2018
8 November 2018
The annual awards which reward great design, environmental guardianship and community spirit in County Durham will take place at the Radisson Blu Hotel. Visit: www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk

Night Time Star Gazing
24 October 2018 8-9pm
Learn all about the night sky and have a lovely hot chocolate. Held at Low Barns Nature Reserve. Visit www.durhamwt.com/event/night-time-star-gazing to book your ticket. £10 per person.

Winter Hideaways- Rainton Meadows
20 November 2018 10am-12noon
Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve. Discover what our wildlife is doing to prepare for the winter. Help with some woodland management to create some snug hideaways for animals. www.durhamwt.com/event/winter-hideaways-rainton-meadows. £4 per child.

National Tree Week
24 November - 2 December 2018
For information see www.treecouncil.org.uk/Take-Part/National-Tree-Week

Volunteering opportunities

Civic Pride
Help us make your neighbourhood a cleaner greener place. Email civicpride@durham.gov.uk or call 03000 261 000.

Durham Wildlife Trust
Durham Wildlife Trust is always looking for willing volunteers. Get in touch at www.durhamwt.com/ or call 0191 584 3112.

Durham Community Action – A one stop shop for volunteering
If you want to gain experience, volunteer in a certain area, get skills for work, volunteer occasionally or help at one-off events. Email volunteering@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk or call 01388 742 040 or visit www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

Durham Countryside Volunteers
Join us and make your own valuable contribution to improving the County Durham countryside. Visit www.durham.gov.uk/countryside or call 03000 264 589.

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