

Richmond Rotary Club Best Kept Village Competition

Judges Guidance 2025 following Consultation.

The following information will assist you in carrying out the judging systematically and efficiently. A copy has been provided to all entrant village as guide to them.

A maximum mark of 10 can be awarded for all categories. There are ten judgement areas and a total of 100 points available. Not all villages will have all features. Judges must award points on those aspects that are present. In some isolated cases a village may have none or almost none of the composite features. In this case omit the category and reflect this in the percentage of the scores possible.

Excellent 10

Very Good 8-9

Good 6-7

Fair 4-5

Poor 2-3

Very Poor 0-1

NO HALF MARKS TO BE AWARDED

The judges will assess the villages from any place normally open to the public, but will in no circumstances intrude into private property. The judges will mark the categories outlined below.

Villages have been given the opportunity to provide a brief guide (up to 500 words) to the judges to indicate special features or projects. Where this is provided this will be passed on to judges in time to be considered prior to judging

1. Conditions of Village Green/Village Centre and/or Main Streets

To obtain maximum marks the standard of maintenance should be high, with regular grass cutting, neat verges and weeding where appropriate. In the case of the village Centre/Main Street (i.e. villages with no green or little green) verges and paths should be tidy and weed free with an overall, good general appearance.

Village Grass.

Consideration should be given for any 'wild corner' of the village, or areas of the village green and/or verges left uncut between May and August to encourage nature.

Absence of litter

It is the job of the whole community to tackle the litter problem. Every effort should be made to ensure that any pieces of paper etc. particularly gathering in kerbs or roadside verges have been removed. Maximum points should only be awarded where no litter is visible.

2. Condition of hedges, fences, and walls, especially those adjacent to and surrounding buildings and gardens.

These are normally factors in the private sphere and high marks should be awarded where every effort has been made to keep the hedges, walls and fences well maintained.

If birds are nesting in hedges (April – July) no points will be deducted for those hedges remaining uncut, or for new growth being slightly less manicured. Judges may note other spaces where a particular effort has been made to encourage the bird population.

3. Conditions of Churchyards, Burial Grounds and Chapel Gardens or Community Garden Space

Church/Chapel/Community Gardens and Burial Grounds should be well cared for with neat and tidy grassed areas. Neglected gardens and grounds should be marked low. However, consideration will be given for leaving some areas of the churchyard/community garden, uncut during summer, and/or cut on a rotational basis to encourage nature and wildlife

4. Condition of flower and vegetable gardens

Nothing will show better than the state of the gardens, the degree to which everyone in the village is co-operating in this competition.

This is an opportunity for everyone to show pride in their village. High marks should be awarded for a majority of well-tended gardens. Judges may look for ways individual gardeners also provide areas which encourage nature.

5. Appearance of garages, outbuildings and sheds and the Condition of industrial Estates in the Town.

This is an opportunity for everyone to participate in the Competition by keeping garages, out buildings and sheds tidy and well maintained.

This is very much a matter for the private individual. Farmyards should be tidy and unobtrusive and any obvious scrap vehicles or materials in farmyards should be marked low. Judges may consider the cleanliness of adjoining highways, and the way business spaces in the confines of the village, encourage, and protect wildlife.

6. Upkeep of all natural spaces, and the encouragement of wildlife

Judges will observe those areas set aside to encourage nature. Not all villages have natural wild habitats, but Judges will reward the various, and diverse ways that are open to all, to encourage wildlife. This may be through bird feeders, bird baths, bird nesting boxes and sites, wood piles for hedgehogs, or insect hotels, bat boxes, hedgehog highways and other creative initiatives, however small they may be. Where present, natural features and spaces including streams and ponds should be kept free from rubbish and where feasible the grass maintained without detracting from the natural beauty of the area. Tree, shrub, or flower planting may also enhance the area. Where villages have a pond, or other water environment, this should form part of the overall judgement yet in no way detract from those that do not have this feature. Be aware of the encouragement and presence of insects, frogs, toads etc. Pond edges should be wildlife friendly, and planted with native species.

7. Community Features and Utilities which include the

- Condition of Village Community Buildings, other public buildings
- War Memorials and surrounding areas
- Other highlighted village features including the access to spaces that enhance community life.

These may well be places in which there should be a special pride in the Village. Community Buildings should be well-maintained and grassed areas cut and once again, there should be an absence of litter.

Judges will consider the condition and cleanliness of bus shelters, telephone kiosks and surrounding areas, and other utilities. Note should be made of the creative use of communal buildings and the imaginative re-use of redundant utilities. Where villages have these facilities, these should be well maintained, clean and free from litter and graffiti. Judges will note the creative re-use of redundant or under used facilities.

8. Appearance of Post Office and/or Shops Com pubs. Appearance of Inns/Public House/Guest Houses/Intermittently occupied property.

Judges will be clearly aware that some villages will have few of these features and where there is not enough evidence to make a judgement this section may be omitted and the possible score adjusted.

Post Offices and shops should be well maintained. Where appropriate, an attractive window display should receive good marks.

There are now an increasing number of Guest Houses in addition to the usual Inns/Public Houses. To receive high marks all these should be well maintained, and where appropriate, with tidy car parks.

There are also many houses used as holiday or second homes all of which should be well kept and contribute to the ambience of the village. However, judges are sympathetic to the challenges this brings. (Villages may want to mention this in the information they make to the Judges). Judges will also be sympathetic to property abandonment beyond the responsibility of the community.

9. Condition and situation of seats

Condition of Notice boards and display of public notices

Efforts made to encourage, recreational social and sporting contacts.

This section reflects the effort to provide spaces or other features that encourage the community to meet.

These may include, gardens or just simple spaces set aside with seats both formal or informal. Seats provided should be well maintained and situated at good vantage points for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Judges will also award points to initiatives which encourage recreational activities, play, or sports for varied ages, or promote wellbeing, health, and reduce isolation.

Judges will note any local initiatives to enhance services to local people and visitors.

Notice boards should be well maintained and notices displayed should be of a nature relevant to the Parish and/or its community. These may reflect the effort the village makes to promote community life. Marks should be deducted for any out-of-date notices still displayed.

Judges may award points for efforts to improve or maintain **access** for all, to the facilities and environments.

10. Private and Public decorative features - Display of tubs and hanging baskets at private houses, public houses etc.

The display of tubs and hanging baskets in the village adds considerably to the prettiness of cottages and houses and to the whole village. However, it is not expected that every property should provide this display and maximum marks or high marks should be awarded for the overall effect of such displays. Clearly however in this one way, all can contribute to the village ambience.

General Notes

Certain villages have a natural charm and beauty, but are not necessarily of the highest standard. So far as possible, judges will reward the effort made by all communities large or small to keep their village as clean, tidy, and attractive as possible in all respects. Allowances should be made in respect of major roads running through, or near to villages, or other sites or developments over which they have no control.

The judgements take account of the extent to which the village community have considered how they encourage biodiversity and nature. Some village environments lend themselves to this, but all are able, even in small ways, to demonstrate the effort they have made and should be rewarded for this.

In addition, this year we are asking judges to consider how the village, whatever the size, tries to promote community life and recreational activity. Some communities are again well suited to this due to aspect and size. In the past however Judges have been aware of efforts made to promote these aspects regardless of the challenges faced. The effort the village makes in this area may feature on the up to 500-word submission they are invited to **make by 25th June**

Judges are **encouraged** to write observations, in the space provided on the Marking Sheets. These are really very helpful, when moderating the final placings. Ideas for improvement of villages will be welcome, and they do illustrate the judgement.

Prizes

The first Prize remains at £400.00 the same as previous years

We continue to offer **two** £60.00 prizes (the price of a tree) to reward efforts to encourage nature and wildlife.

We offer another £100.00 to reward efforts to improve access, and community, life, and wellbeing.

There is also a prize of £100.00 for the most improved village score.

Judging the special categories.

This year we are asking judges based on their observations in the above categories to nominate villages for special awards for: -

- their special efforts to encourage nature and wildlife
- the way in which they are encouraging community life, recreation, inclusion, and accessibility.

Judges are asked to **nominate** initiatives or efforts which may be considered for these special awards for the encouragement of nature and wildlife (mainly section 6), and enhancing of community life, wellbeing and recreation. (mainly sections 7-9).

At the end of the mark sheet there is a section to make a nomination for these and provide a mark out of ten. Judges will base their judgements on their main survey.

If there is insufficient evidence in either category please make no recommendation or mark.

These categories are both developing areas so do not 'overmark.' If you do decide to recommend then please qualify with a brief comment in the space provided.

Please note that Villages are provided with the opportunity to provide up to 500 words to guide Judges. This will be supplied to judges where this has been provided. This may help understand the current challenges the villages face, new initiatives, or those aspects of which they are proud.

This Guidance for Judges will be provided in June