

Exeter City Council

media release

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Exeter back in the running for Britain in Bloom - joint media release with Exeter Parks Watch

After an absence of over ten years, Exeter is to take part in this year's prestigious Britain in Bloom competition.

The Chairman of RHS Britain in Bloom South West, Jon Wheatley, said he is "delighted" to welcome Exeter back to the competition. Exeter was one of the 'highlight' cities when the competition started 50 years ago and although it has been absent from the main category event for over a decade, its return this year has delighted the organisers.

The judges' route round the city for the four-hour assessment has not yet been decided but it is hoped to include Northernhay Gardens, Rougemont Gardens, University grounds and one of the City's valley parks. It is hoped that local businesses, residents with gardens or even small window boxes, will all help to present the City at its best as the judges walk the route to inspect the parks and other green spaces.

Welcoming the Council's decision to enter RHS Britain in Bloom, Cllr Keith Owen, Lead Councillor for Environment, Health & Wellbeing, said: "We are delighted that we are able to work with Exeter Parks Watch on this exciting initiative and show off the city's parks and gardens. It demonstrates how much excellent work is being done by people in the community, something which we wish to build on in the future."

The decision to take part in Britain in Bloom SW Main Competition follows the outstanding results achieved last year by the 14 community groups across the city who entered the smaller category called 'It's Your Neighbourhood' category (IYN) which enables community groups to celebrate the green spaces - parks, allotments, cemeteries, traffic islands - in their own area which they have helped to maintain, plant and keep clean. This category, independent of the main competition for the city itself and assessed separately, had more than 500 entries from across the South West Region last year and it is anticipated the number of entries for this year will reach 600. Last year awards for these groups were presented to Exeter Parks Watch members at a superb celebratory event held at Truro Cathedral last September which paid tribute to the commitment and creativity of the participating members. (A list of Award Winners and full details can be found at www.exeterparkswatch.org Click on 'RHS'.)

This year even more groups from Exeter have entered 'It's Your Neighbourhood' and they will be assessed in July.

In addition, St David's Neighbourhood took part in the RHS Britain in Bloom new category, a pilot for the 'Village' category. This involved assessing a group of green spaces in St David's, including two cemeteries, a housing estate, a 'village' green, The Mulberry Garden at Exeter Community Centre, and Bury Meadow Park. Receiving the Silver Pennant Award for St

David's 'Village', Exeter Parks Watch members said they would work to encourage other areas of the City to enter their green spaces as 'Villages' in 2014. And to date there are five entries: St James, St Thomas, Sylvania, St David's and, hopefully, Newtown.

Sue Lawrence, Chair of Exeter Parks Watch said: "This has been a revelation - so many groups are putting in volunteer time and effort to help look after their green spaces and we are delighted to announce that, with a grant from the Exeter Board, we will be providing free coach travel for all participants to attend the Award Celebrations in Trowbridge on 18 September. And this year will be very special because the City Council is entering the Main Competition as well, ensuring that Exeter is well represented in this, SW in Bloom's Golden Anniversary year."

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Notes:

- 1 The 'Main Competition' is for cities and towns in the SW
- 2 'It's Your Neighbourhood' is for small community groups within the city
- 3 'Village' pennant awards are for 'clusters' of green spaces in a community
- 4 RHS SW in Bloom itself will be competing with 'Going for Gold' garden at Chelsea this year.