

JUDGES' TOP TIPS FOR ENTERING AND PREPARING FOR THE BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION 2018

The judging team (normally two people) will only be in your village for part of one day. It might be sunny or raining but there are several things you can do to help the judges. The paperwork you provide is vital to ensuring you are judged as you would want to be. Below are some tips from the judges who supported recent competitions. These should be used in conjunction with the 'Entry Guidelines'.

1. Maps. Judges will base their time in your village on the map you provide – if it is clear, accurate and inclusive they will be happy (a good example is included with the entry invitation). If it is difficult to read and follow, and misses out important information, the judges will not be impressed.

- If a village is split with open countryside between parts of the village this should be shown with the different areas clearly marked
- All the areas you want to be judged need to be clearly marked on the map. If you have something you are proud of make sure it is mentioned on the entry form and shown on the map.
- Ensure that the judging boundary is really clear on the map. Note that this should normally be the boundary for the entire village and must not exclude problem areas. It should follow identifiable features, such as roads or field boundaries, and not be a set of straight lines.

2. Problem Areas. Many villages may have a temporary eyesore which is beyond their control, such as road works, construction sites or derelict buildings. You will not be marked down for these if they are clearly and briefly described in your report and explained in your entry and marked on the map.

3. Sharing the Tasks. Preparing to be judged can appear to be a big task for any village and it should not be confined to members of the parish council and their friends and family. In the past some villages have been put off from entering by their expectation of the amount of work involved so it is vital to share the various tasks around as much of the village as possible. It is remarkable how much improvement can be made by a large group of people in a couple of hours. It has also been found that some villages can achieve high marks without a lot of special preparation if they are in the habit of looking after their village throughout the year. Preparation work can also be an opportunity for groups to come together, perhaps for a tea party or in the pub, after carrying out a task. Remember you are mainly being judged on the features you identify in the entry form, on the absence of litter and on the footpaths. Concentrate on these and you will not go far wrong.

4. Community Spirit. The BKVC is a competition and although we expect you will strive to win it is also about encouraging village communities to work together to improve their surroundings. This includes maintaining and improving their environment including local fauna and flora. Some villages have made huge progress in improving their villages through entering the competition. If you have a particular part of the village which is unloved and down-at-heel then entering the competition is an ideal way to motivate people to change it for the better. Any area you single out for improvement should be mentioned in the report which you provide with the entry form.

5. Attention to Detail. Judges pay close interest to communal areas such as village halls (although they will not go inside buildings), public open spaces and notice boards. Try to ensure that notices are neatly pinned up and that anything out of date is taken down. You should consider having your own 'judging inspections' at the beginning of May to look for areas that need more attention.

6. Entry Paperwork. Please check everything you send us several times. Printed text should be in a clear font which is easy to read. Entry forms need to be filled in accurately, completely and legibly.

7. Bottom Line. Remember the competition is for the 'best kept' village, not the prettiest or most photogenic one. Any village could win but hard work and attention to detail is the best way to get on the winner's podium.