

PROJECT CLOSING REPORT – The Big Buxton Spring Clean 2015

1. OVERVIEW

The aim was for a spring clean of the whole town in preparation for the Buxton Spring Fair 2015 and 'Buxton in Bloom'.

2. DETAIL OF WHAT TOOK PLACE

This was a repeat of the first Big Buxton Spring Clean held in 2014, and was a combination of two events - a Spring Clean of signs and street furniture and a separate event to remove green algae from the Pavilion Gardens Railings.

The Spring Clean took place on Saturday 25th April. Because litter picking walks are now taking place on the first Sunday each month, the Spring Clean remit was reduced to cleaning the things that people see and touch, so signs, parking meters, street furniture and the like. Prior to the day we leafleted businesses in the town, and encouraged them to take responsibility for cleaning their own premises and the immediate surrounding area. On the day Town Team members and other volunteers cleaned signs and street furniture in the town centre; Buxton Lions cleaned the large signs at the town entrances; Friends of the Pavilion Gardens thoroughly cleaned the Children's Well removing all the build up of lime scale.

The Railings Clean took place on Tuesday 28th April. Students from Buxton & Leek College were involved in planning the activity, and made a hand painted banner to advertise the event, complete with sponsors' logos. About 300 school children came cleaning on the day, from all but one of the schools in Buxton. They were joined on the day by a number of members of Buxton Town Team, by officers from the Derbyshire Constabulary Safer Neighbourhood Team and also by Hilary Paxman from DCLG who happened to be visiting Buxton on the day.

Alongside these two events, we contacted HPBC asking for help with two major issues in the town namely the build up of mud and debris in the central reservation of the A515 dual carriageway, and the rubbish and rocks on the High Path along Ashwood Dale. We were delighted that they sent teams of men out to work on both these places.

We also put pressure on Electricity North West regarding the condition of some of their substations; they built a new fence around the substation behind Marks & Spencers, which made a huge improvement to the look of the area, and promised to clean and repaint the one by the Sylvan Coach Park.

3. ASSESSMENT AGAINST AIMS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA

The aims of the project were:

- To tidy and clean premises, signs, street furniture etc. in readiness for the Spring Fair, Buxton in Bloom, the summer festivals etc. with particular focus in 2015 on signage and street names.
- To work with schools, the college and the university to clean the railings around the Pavilion Gardens
- To encourage a sense of pride, ownership of and responsibility for the town
- To raise the profile of the Town Team
- To engage with existing, and to recruit new, members

All of these aims were achieved.

The measurable success criteria of the project were as follows:

1. **A brighter, cleaner Buxton - before & after pictures that demonstrate this**

As well as before and after pictures, videos were made of both the events and posted on our website, Facebook page and You Tube channel.

2. **Positive media coverage and calls for it to be repeated annually**

The events were covered by the Buxton Advertiser. We are not aware of any specific calls for this to be an annual event. There were a couple of comments on the Facebook page complaining that pulling children out of school was a bad idea, they would be better off studying; this was countered by other people responding that experience of volunteering was a valuable contribution to their general education.

3. **Positive feedback from retailers and other businesses and some commitment to maintaining their patch**

Sadly there was very little evidence of this.

4. **Increased membership of Buxton Town Team**

No evidence of any new members joining as a direct result of the event, but the media coverage helped to raise our profile.

5. Ongoing focus on maintaining impetus

Following these events it was agreed that the successful establishment of the monthly Litter Picking Walks means that there is less need for the Spring Clean to be an annual event. The focus should instead be on the Railings Clean as an annual event because of the benefits of engaging children in voluntary work.

4. ANY FURTHER BENEFITS

Relationships between the Town Team and the various educational establishments in the town were strengthened. The Pavilion Gardens management were delighted with the improvement to the railings.

5. COSTS

There was no income or expenditure associated with the project.

6. LEARNING POINTS FOR THE FUTURE

Businesses - It is still proving difficult to persuade retail businesses to take part proactively in Town Team activities. Some businesses were simply uninterested, others seemed enthusiastic when approached but then did not do as much as they had indicated they would, a few did actually get out and do some cleaning. The most successful instances were where a group of two or three shop owners got together and enthused each other; it might be more efficient to concentrate on a few individuals who might then work to bring others along with them. The exception was Waitrose, whose volunteers did some cleaning in the Wye Street car park area, as they had the previous year, and who also assisted by loaning shopping trolleys (water carriers) for both events.

HPBC - Our policy of polite persistence does seem to be yielding results, the issues we raise with them do seem to be dealt with much more quickly and efficiently than used to be the case. We are also expanding the number of people in the council that we can call on for specific help when needed.

Buxton & Leek College - Discussions on using student volunteers started in July 2014 with a view to a general collaboration between the Town team and the Public Service students. Students were involved from September, but there were issues around gaining permission for the students to be allowed to leave college premises and venture into the town, and it was a while before these were resolved. There was also some confusion as a result of changing responsibilities between college staff. Additionally this was one of a list of 15 potential projects we were exploring with the students, most of these proved too ambitious and were eventually dropped but a lot of effort had gone in beforehand to trying to make them work. Re the Railings Clean, the students were in the main enthusiastic and helpful on the day. It is clear that when working with this level of student very clear and specific guidelines are needed and offering a choice of projects is not helpful.

Schools - There is a lot of effort involved in persuading schools to be involved, but that work will stand us in good stead for future years.

Janet Miller
February 2017