

Blairgowrie & Rattray in Bloom

Coronation Corner

The project area has a rich and colourful heritage having seen crowded tenement buildings, an inn and “Mulligan’s Mansions” all come and go. In 1953 the site was redeveloped into what is now known as “Coronation Corner”, a formal public garden space to celebrate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

Since then, the site gradually deteriorated to become a rather unattractive and unloved area in the middle of town with over-hanging trees, overgrown and uninspiring plant beds, with the bench seating and pergola very much past their best.

Blairgowrie & Rattray in Bloom (Blair in Bloom or BiB) seized the opportunity to rejuvenate the site by raising funds to carry out hard and soft landscaping works and driving the project forward. They have successfully transformed it into an attractive and useable space for the town, fit for the 21st century.

<https://www.facebook.com/Blairinbloom>



Project Background

The unkempt appearance of Coronation Corner had become a talking point in the town and there was clear evidence that the site was a hot-spot for vandalism and antisocial behaviour. BiB recognised the positive environmental and social benefits of refurbishing the site and took on the challenge with enthusiasm!

As a member of Take Pride in Perth & Kinross Association (TPPKA), the group were eligible and encouraged to apply to TPPKA for fundraising, project management and contract tendering support. After considering their application TPPKA was delighted to offer its assistance. This support, wider community endorsement and BiB’s drive and determination meant that the design for the new garden was drawn up, probable costs determined and fundraising began.



Project Details

As with all projects, before work could start all permissions, evidence of local support and funding had to be in place:

- A 10-year Licence to Occupy was obtained from Perth & Kinross Council (PKC).
- Multiple funding applications were submitted to local, regional and national grant givers.
- The project’s profile was raised by local press and social media and supported by local Councillors, the Community Council, and community organisations.

To bring the project in on budget, the scope of works and choice of materials were reviewed. Cost savings were identified including opting for a less expensive, but equally durable, path surface. Once preparations were in order, work started on site:

- Site excavated, cleared and re-contoured.
- Circular pathway created, edged with granite setts, surfaced with Limestone Drypave.
- Event space formed in the centre of the site; electrical connections installed.
- Planting beds created and stocked.
- Timber bench seating installed.
- Interpretation points, bird and bat boxes to be installed.



Project Outcomes

The transformation of Coronation Corner was eagerly anticipated, widely supported and warmly welcomed by the community. BiB has brought new life to a previously undervalued space by:

- Proactively engaging with stakeholders including PKC, TPPKA, the local community and funders throughout the project.
- Taking a flexible approach and re-evaluating plans when necessary without losing sight of the project aim.
- Adding value to the site by making it a multi-purpose space e.g. as spill-over space for monthly farmers’ market and for pop-up and seasonal events.

BiB are now scoping out the potential for large murals to be professionally created and installed on site to illustrate the heritage of the town. There are also discussions about Coronation Corner being the official starting point of the Cateran Trail. This would put Coronation Corner ‘on the map’ and affirm it as a landmark in the town.



Stakeholders

Blairgowrie in Bloom
Perth & Kinross Council
Take a Pride in Perth & Kinross
Association
Alex Butter Landscaping

Funders

Gannochy Trust £15,000
Awards for All £8,000
Community Investment Fund £7,500
Local Fundraising / BiB Funds £4,500
Tesco Bags of Help £4,000
Community Environment
Challenge Fund £2,000
Just Giving £370

Total Raised: £41,370

Total Project Cost:
£40,000



Lessons Learned

Mary Birch of BiB said “The main lesson to learn when planning a project is patience and be prepared for the unexpected! Things will always take much longer than you think – especially gathering enough funding. We first looked at revamping this site late in 2017, but then decided to aim big and completely re-landscape it. Working with the Project Development Advisor for TPPKA, meant we had professional access to funders and the services of a Landscape Architect to draw up the plans. We could not have carried out this project on our own.

From start to finish, the project took 3 years before enough funding was secured and work could start. The Covid-19 pandemic most definitely put the timeline behind schedule, but finally the hard landscaping was complete early in November 2020. We have received lots of positive comments from local residents.”

“ What a transformation, well done to everyone ”

“ How interesting, love the shapes ”

“ Stunning ”

“ Looking great – congratulations ”

“ Well done, outstanding contribution to the town ”

Timeline

September 2017:
Original TPPKA
application approved

November 2018:
Revised TPPKA application
approved

May 2019:
Licence to Occupy
concluded

October 2020:
Contractor on site

September 2018:
Revised plans agreed

January 2019:
Funding commences

July 2020:
Tendering process

December 2020:
Landscaping and
planting completed