

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Wexford** Ref: **458**
County: **Wexford** Mark: **272**
Category: **G** Date(s): **21/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	40	39
The Built Environment	50	39	39
Landscaping	50	38	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	27
Litter Control	50	24	27
Tidiness	30	16	15
Waste Minimisation	20	9	10
Residential Areas	40	33	33
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35	35
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	269	272

Overall Development Approach:

Céad míle fáilte roimh Wexford TidyTowns Committee to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. We thank you for your entry, for all of the additional material outlining your work in the past year. We wish you the best of luck in the competition. You have built up an impressive number on your committee. The adjudicator does not need to know the names etc of each committee member but would like to know what the various roles of committee members embrace. Your appendix on your sponsors and the agencies with which you engage is also an impressive one. Congratulations on your website. The website not only illustrates the work done, in all seasons, and keeps the public abreast of upcoming events but is an open invitation to the public to become involved in your activities and to contribute to the sense of community being created. Then, as you state, TidyTowns belongs to everyone in the community. Your involvement with the schools seems meaningful. One is delighted to read of your immediate ambitions in this competition and the adjudicator wishes you the very best in the realisation of these ambitions. Some suggestions for next year's entry. Reappraise the material you include in your submission. Ask if an item will help the adjudicator make his survey or if the item is a hindrance, for example, why list the names of your committee, their contact details or why include application forms to the Borough Council or the County Council. A lot of the material has relevance to your work but clutters your submission. The danger in including too much material is that relevant material will be overlooked by the adjudicator. For instance where is the 3 Year Plan that was certainly included last year and is such a vital part of your planning?

The Built Environment:

Your description of the town as consisting of four central areas is of great assistance to the adjudicator in negotiating Wexford town. Point those areas up in next year's map. When one arrives at what the adjudicator first thought to be the town centre, there is so much to entice one to linger. The buildings at the John Barry Crescent area are an example. But be watchful for the quality of shop signs. These should represent the

aura you wish to create for your town and the image you wish to portray. Even if John Keane and Company are long gone from their premises they have left an attractive legacy in their raised lettering. The Hair Studio shows what can be done when providing a modern service. Your finger signposting is not just attractive but helpful also.

There are so many buildings that represent the modern Wexford such as the Tourist Office or the block at Aviva portraying the dynamic, progressive Wexford. The Nicky Rackard Plaza reinforces that modern appearance. This could also be mentioned under hard landscaping, a modern buzz to the area.

The unoccupied new buildings at a central location create an unease.

One loves to find buildings from an age long passed now serving a new function. The County Council, the Vocational College, the Art Campus all occupy a wonderfully maintained village of buildings that represent your built heritage. The Fusion Café, a building from 1775 houses the Wexford Arts Centre bringing new life to old walls. Maybe the Fish Market was always the Fish Market? Will the old hospital survive the building works that are on-going and receive a renewed lease of life in a new guise? William Gaynor and Co is an example of a building that creates interest not just in itself but in the surroundings. The Church influence abounds in its various persuasions, as along Mallan Street but keeps up appearances at the Weseley Church, just as has been done at St Iberius's.

Educational institutions also abound. The stand out schools for the adjudicator were the Loreto Convent and St Peters, one on a limited site, the other more spacious but both representing much of their influence in the appearance of their buildings. The Republican Garden of Remembrance excited one by the fact of its existence in such august surroundings. Sadly the experience of the visit did not match the anticipation because of a generally neglected appearance. From time to time one comes across an information plaque that reveals more of the heritage of the town as in the information that Wexford Infirmary was used as a hospital during 1798. On a visit to Priory Hall Estate one discovered what must have been the Priory, part of your heritage but could not find any sign to give information. The adjudicator loved the trip across the bridge revealing the Riverbank House Hotel and the magnificent Swimming Pool complex. The sculpture seems so appropriate in a harbour town agus tá an Ghaeilge ar fheabhas.

Landscaping:

Landscaping presents itself in many, various forms throughout the town. The hard landscaping all along the quay affords opportunities to wander along the sea front. The seats bid one to relax and enjoy the goings-on. It is all very attractive. Planting in many locations not only provides the shades of summer but also help soften their surroundings. Three planters at an obelisk brighten up that little area. Then trees on streets help to soften the influence of the pervasive concrete.

The bust of William Redmond welcomes all and sundry into his park which is bustling with activity. This is a wonderful experience. Between walks, picnic tables and playground there is something for everybody. There are information panel plates for the many specimen trees that have been planted. This Park has all of the signs that it is getting the attention your submission describes. Then there are the hanging baskets and window boxes that attract one to the shops as along Common Quay Street or at Maggie Mays or at the fishmarket, as examples. You are certainly maintaining the standards that you have set yourselves.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

In this section you define the diverse areas with clarity. You also describe work being done clearly. Your response to the promptings of last year's report is heartening. You tap into the obvious enthusiasm and expertise of groups around you. Very good.

After one crosses the bridge the land on the right must be a haven of local wildlife with the furze growing wildly. The comment in your submission that there is funding to clean up this area causes wildlife fright. If there is to be cleaning up ensure that it is planned and supervised by wildlife expertise. Much habitat damage could be done. Is that lane an official trail or is it a lane for wildlife vandals? The adjudicator understands that the 'clean-up' you have in mind could be very necessary, for the well being of the wildlife too.

The wildlife provisions at Redmond Park are a deep disappointment. A lot of planning and planting for wildlife has been completed in here by TidyTowns but projects that have been put in place are now neglected. One is baffled at the sight of the wildflower meadow for it seems neither wild nor manicured.

Litter Control:

Lets start by being defeatist. Litter is inevitable. The videos on your website show the extent of this inevitability in Wexford town. But the fight back is on. Your website shows the extent of that fight back. The adjudicator walked all of the main streets of Wexford. Litter levels are not out of control. Clean-ups, pick-ups, patrols all assist. Dog owners do need to be toilet trained. Well done on your comical scoop the poop signs. Well done to the Borough Council for the dog fouling awareness signs. They will have an impact in time. The adjudicator saw just one but expects there are more around. Butts, not so bad. Bring Centres visited are well maintained but someone dumped black bags at one centre, as if out of spite. A playground was badly littered. This adjudicator feels that you need to launch a litter awareness programme. The amount of effort expended on cleaning up after people needs to be reduced and that energy put into creative devices that deter the litter bug. One looks forward to that creative response.

Tidiness:

There are many examples that would help one to describe Wexford as a tidy town. There are so many areas of town where cables do not interfere with the skyline. Kerbside weeds are a rarity. The adjudicator found kerbside weeds in two estates, only. There was but one example of a stone wall that was in need of repair. Even if the one way streets might need getting used to, traffic flows freely in this busy town. The town is not graffitied. The railings on the bridge or at the Redmond Park are in pristine condition. All of these situations lend themselves to a tidy town appearance. Well done. But there are issues.

Watch out for the fly posting. Well out on the Rosslare approach road the omens are not good and as one gets closer to town one's fears have been justified. Again in the town one wonders do businesses need so much advertising, the quality of presentation being so tacky at times. One business has six adverts along its front. Number 32 response to last year's report sounds like a Dáil answer. What are you doing to help the Borough Council for there is no action from one year to the next? Railway doors in a prominent position need painting.

Waste Minimisation:

One is heartened by the content of your website in this category. You are engaging with the home dwellers in Wexford with regard to waste minimisation. This adjudicator prefers to see the website rather than the submission, as we see at first hand what is happening in the community. You make it very easy for your surfers to register with greenhomes.ie. Well done. Have you any idea how the people of Wexford responded? You are proactive with regards to Green Schools. Very good. For the coming year you might reach out to minimising the use of energy in the business community. Visit calling timeonwaste as a start.

Residential Areas:

There are so many terraces of houses in the town which contribute to the town character. How one would wish to have a name plate on each of these terraces with a date to inform of the year of construction. Fishers Row, full of meaning and the Gaeilge, Sraith na n-Iascairí, is a delight and tells a story. The Carcut Cottages erected around 1870 is an example to the rest of town. At times the fronts appear somewhat jaded or bland and may need a power wash in other places but then in other areas these terraces brighten up their area. The buildings in the Selkar area tell the story of another social class that lived in Wexford in the nineteenth century and their appearance is still uplifting. Many estates are fortunate in the attractive landscaping of their entrances as at Newtown Court or the Spawell Crescent or at Park View. Every now and then we meet a new enclave of modern town houses.

It would not be fair to mention estates by name that disappoint but there are challenges to your ideals in some areas where litter abounds, uncut grass creates a dysfunctional appearance. By contrast Priory Hall lifts the spirits.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The signature approach road to Wexford is certainly the route from Rosslare. The trees, the treatment of the road verges, the cottages combine to create the welcome. A mosaic adds further to the experience. The approach road by the hospital provides cycle lanes on both sides and apart from the safety issue at all their presence and the added road markings have a calming effect. The attraction of this route is the downward sweep it provides into town. Keep an eye on that low wall on the R730 near the Topaz. It is crumbling and in need of assistance. The river is a delightful companion on another route. There are some gems of areas dotted about as in the area of Spawell Road. Leave the main road and sneak in towards Chique hair and Beauty to view the walls made magical with climbers and creative summer colour. The adjudicator fell in love with the maze of streets, lanes, pedestrian ways that interlock into a delightful mystery tour away from the harbour but making the harbour accessible at all times. One can never get lost but can be lost all the time in the eclectic mix of bright colours of the shop fronts and their hanging baskets and window boxes, in the memories of the past as one is reminded that bread is the staff of life, in your heroic past as 1798 is as alive now as it was horrific then, in the buzz of the people who race around oblivious to our economic woes.

General Impression:

There is so much about the Wexford experience that glitters. If not a finger were lifted on its behalf its rich maritime history is painted onto the streetscape. So the Wexford experience benefits from the ambition and the care being bestowed on it, as is evident from the beautiful landscaping on the approach roads. But the challenges are obvious, as in the case of unoccupied and derelict buildings and these challenges will take time to resolve. Other challenges are of a more cosmetic nature and can be tackled, as in the tendency to put up a sign at the drop of a hat. You see the improvements clearly. You see the potential. There is an energy to your group that will overcome.

