

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Wexford** Ref: **458**
County: **Wexford** Mark: **281**
Category: **G** Date(s): **22/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	43
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36
TOTAL MARK	450	281

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are delighted to welcome Wexford to the 2014 tidy towns competition and we are pleased to see that the participation rate in your committee is quite high with 22 members. However, Wexford is a big town and you are commended on your excellent 'Adopt a Street' approach with 45 separate groups pledging to monitor a particular area at least once a week. It is great to see that 23 new areas were added to this initiative in the last year alone. Your highly organised approach is demonstrated by the sheer number and range of development partners to your projects and they include; Wexford County and Borough Council, the EPA, the IFA and Wexford Local Development. We also wondered were Fas involved? Your partnership approach with other voluntary groups is commended and while the list that you have provided is extensive, we noted that no sports clubs appear to be included? Perhaps these clubs could be a source of either new members or new 'Adopt a Street' groups? Your communication strategy is highly commendable with a newly organised webpage, a social media presence, use of you Tube, television, radio and all other forms of communication available to you. This imaginative approach to publicising your work should lead to a very high level of public awareness of tidy towns projects in Wexford Town. We were pleased to read that you enjoy a good relationship with the schools and we would love to see some joint projects undertaken between your committee and both national and secondary schools. Thank you for the table including the schools which have green flags and it revealed an opportunity for your committee to become a partner of Wexford VEC and Our Lady of Fatima who are both working towards their first green flags. Why not meet with these schools and explore what joint projects can be undertaken to your mutual benefit? Alternatively, consider organising a competition between all the schools in Wexford Town for the best tidy towns project undertaken by a school? This could help raise awareness and hopefully boost participation. We were delighted to read your positive comments about your experience in the competition. Thank you also for your entry form, which was comprehensive and clear. The map was also useful. However, the development plan could be improved by grouping your projects in accordance with the relevant tidy towns categories.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

The adjudicator was delighted to have the opportunity to return to Wexford after an absence of a number of years and we are pleased to report that the visit was very enjoyable. A number of elements of the town are most impressive. The buildings that front onto the quays provide interest and character to the town with a mix of very high quality period buildings of traditional design and they include; the credit union building, the Southeast radio building (an excellent reuse of a historic building) and the John Keane building. The modern additions of Pettits Supervalu and the very contemporary design of the Bank of Ireland building also looked well and are presented to a high standard. The quays themselves provide a lovely multifunctional space offering a very popular and attractive amenity (with plenty of appealing and well maintained seating areas) in addition to a landing area for a sizeable number of fishing boats. The train track, which occupies the space between the quay and the road is also a lovely

urban feature of the town. The Crescent proved to be tremendously impressive. It was overlooked by the number of high quality buildings such as the Asple building (which is an attractive period building in very good shape that is presented to a high standard) and the Harbour Masters office which is a lovely traditional building. The Main Street is a lovely place to visit with its narrow streets, original terraces of three-storey buildings and some fine examples of traditional style buildings that are presented to a high standard. There are some great examples of modern shopfronts on commercial premises and the vast majority of retail premises look very well. A small number stood out and they include; the Ulster Bank (with its modern and well presented shop front) while Boots pharmacy (on North Main Street) and Wexford Art Centre (in the Cornmarket building) provide further examples of excellent reuses of period buildings. The Bull Ring also impressed as it seems to be a good focal point for the town. We were delighted to find that a number of modern buildings with contemporary designs had been constructed and they were considered to be very welcome additions to the streetscape. The library building with its starkly modern design and materials, drew attention as it presented an interesting departure from the predominantly traditional designs of the surrounding streets and church. The Greenacres restaurant building with its contemporary extension adjacent to the modern urban space similarly impressed. We are pleased to see that visitors (and locals) can explore the rich heritage of the town by taking the heritage trail and view the excellent historical buildings such as Selskar Abbey, Wexford County Buildings, the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Westgate and St. Iberius Church. The Faythe to the south is a lovely historical part of town with many eye catching features. We liked the neighbourhood centre at the Faythe with very well presented commercial premises such as Billy Kellys, the Wicked swan and the Pike (at the junction of Michael Street). The triangular area at the Faythe with its pleasant seats, lovely mature trees and neatly maintained grass is a lovely open space. We note from your entry form that a number of actions have been taken in response to the adjudicator's comments in 2013 in relation to the Irish rail shed, the credit union, the opera house, the gates at Westgate and derelict sites. You are commended on this work and we look forward to seeing it completed (hopefully) in the months ahead. We note that you have written to businesses to request support in ensuring a good standard of presentation of the premises and we were pleased to read that an information leaflet and panel is now available for the towns historical trail. Well done also on organising a walled town day walk for heritage week in 2013.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Your group appears to have been busy with projects under this category. This is perhaps due to the phenomenal response that you got to your Wexford in Bloom competition (with a staggering 103 entrants!). This is an excellent initiative and we have no doubt that it is making a big difference to the appearance of your town. You are commended on responding to last years adjudicator's comments and well done on rehabilitating the Paupers graveyard, continuing with your trees of Wexford Campaign (through 17 groups planting 102 trees), your sustainable roundabout planting and continued planting and maintenance of landscaping displays. Hosting the Wexford in Bloom awards is a great achievement and its positive influence cannot be over estimated. Your pledge (under the tree musketeers programme) to plant 1000 trees over the next five years is noted and highly commended. A number of high quality landscaping displays were observed at the Bull ring where the large half barrel planters at the 1798 monument add colour and help to enhance this feature. The market place building is adorned with very colourful window boxes and this draws positive attention. The contribution of individual business to this category was appreciated as many businesses such as the Green Acres Restaurant on Georges Street and the Cape Bar provided colourful window boxes and hanging baskets. The credit union building was also adorned with very bright and colourful windowboxes and it provided an explosion of colour on Custom House Quay (presumably in response to the comments of the adjudicator in 2013). The landscaping in other areas impressed. St. Peters Square is quite attractive with its bandstand, some nice seating areas and semimature trees. The large wooden planters with perennial rather than summer planting also enhanced this space. Similarly, the planting at the John Barry Memorial at the Faythe was admired.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

We were delighted to read that your group has completed a draft habitat map and that you plan over the coming year to add more detailed information to it. The 'lets bee friendly' is an excellent initiative and we wish you success in raising awareness of the many benefits of bees. We would strongly encourage you to ensure that your own landscaping schemes are consistent with the advice in your campaign and that each planting scheme contains at least two nectar or pollen rich plants. This enables the tidy towns committee to 'lead by example' and demonstrate how attractive landscaping displays are possible by using nectar and pollen rich – or 'bee friendly' plants. Be sure to make this information available to all the business and commercial premises in your town as they make a significant contribution to your landscaping schemes (and the appearance of your town) through their window boxes and hanging baskets. Well done on completing the insect hotel in Redmond Park and we urge you (and the school) to monitor its usage over time and perhaps consider planting in the park that supports the insects. Your biodiversity action day at Scoil Mhuire and putting up a Harbour wildlife information panel are commended as they will help to raise awareness of biodiversity. We are also pleased to read that you are planting wildflowers at County Hall and raising awareness and taking action on invasive species in Wexford. Is there any update on the usage of the bat boxes mentioned in last years adjudicators report? Now that your habitats have been identified, we would encourage you to consider initiatives to link them up. Why not consider providing a 'natural heritage trail or walk' in the town that would link up the rich and diverse habitats of your town? It could be similar to the 'baile stairiul' built heritage trail with mapping at key points and information signs.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

This category now accounts for a total of 50 marks (up from 20 marks in 2013) so it has significantly increased in importance. We are pleased to read that your committee have been active with projects under this category for 2014

and they include; segregating litter collected, adding information tips on sustainable waste and resource management to your website, undertaking a green homes awareness campaign (299 homes signed up), attending an EPA stop food waste composting course, commencing the leaf composting programme with the Council and undertaking the sustainable roundabout planting project. These are all excellent initiatives and while we urge you to continue with them, don't forget that monitoring is required to see whether these initiatives are having the desired effect and encouraging people to engage in sustainable waste and natural resource management. Perhaps a survey could be organised for 2015 as this would indicate what progress is being made. We were pleased to read that the committee has entered into an upcycling project with Woodies and the Wexford model railway club and congratulations on being chosen as one of the five communities in the pilot 'greening communities programme'. During adjudication, it was observed that there seems to be significant parts of the town that do not have convenient access to recycling facilities – as the two of the facilities indicated on the map are clothes banks only (adjacent to Orla Hores shop and at Clonard church (whose front gate badly need painting)). In addition, 3 of the 4 bring centre facilities identified (at the service station opposite Kennedy Park, at the Supervalu on St Aidans Road and at the Tesco, Distillery Road) are in the south of the town with few facilities in the west, north and the centre of Wexford town. This could discourage recycling if the facilities are not convenient and we would encourage the committee to explore this matter with the Council. Why not provide a bring bank in one of the car parks in the town centre?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on your success in the IBAL litter league as sixth place represents an excellent performance. Congratulations on your second successive win in the gum litter task force award in 2013 and we wish you every success for this year. You are commended for your work on the pole audit and for identifying unsightly sites. It is noted that your group and Wexford County Council have placed CCTV at known litter blackspots and your work on the mini pillar clean up is commended. Well done on mounting an anti-dog fouling campaigning and painting the gates in the Bullring. The standard of litter control was generally good in Wexford town centre with the Main Street in particular looking neat and tidy on adjudication day. While litter was spotted in an isolated number of locations (on Custom House Quay, opposite Whites Hotel and on the steps adjacent to Selskar Abbey), these were clearly isolated incidents and did not detract from a very good performance. Your work on tidiness is paying off with improvements noted in the appearance of signage. In addition, the vast majority of paths and roads appeared clean and neatly swept with very little weed to be seen. Improvements however, are still possible. We were surprised to find 2 very untidy benches at the junction of John Street Upper and John Street Lower – with peeling paint and dirt obvious – it was clear that they had not been maintained in quite some time. While it is noted that improvements to signage are ongoing, some of the signage in the vicinity of the Talbot Hotel, (a parking sign and a directional sign) were in poor condition. It is disappointing to note that a small number of sites have an untidy appearance with the OPW site to the rear of Tesco drawing attention for the wrong reasons with its gates being particularly poorly presented. Similarly, a vacant site and building on the access road into Cromwellsfort was untidy and overgrown. It appears that neither of these sites were identified in your audit and it is recommended that they are discussed with the Council.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

We were delighted to read that an additional 23 estates have joined the 'Adopt A Street' Campaign (bringing the total number to 45) as this is considered to be an excellent initiative. We were also pleased to read that you have contacted the owners of the vacant site at the south end of the Main Street about its poor condition – but we wondered if this project would be best considered under the built environment category. A number of estates were visited on adjudication day and the standard of presentation was generally considered to be quite high. Wexford is fortunate to have such diversity and variety in its residential areas with many established residential areas of traditional design such as William Street, Trinity Street, Emmet Place and the Faythe providing very attractive and distinctive streetscapes. Many more modern estates which are also attractive can be found. It appeared to the adjudicator that the best standard was achieved by the residential estates that are part of your 'adopt a street' campaign. A number of these estates stood out and they included; the mature residential area of Fishers Row, which was very impressive with its lovely terraced dwellings (in excellent condition) and its fabulous open-space to the front that is maintained and landscaped to a very high standard (and which achieved an excellent diversity of planting). Trinity Place is another lovely Street and we were somewhat surprised to see that Brendans Road which achieved a good standard of presentation with its landscaped boat, attractive mural and good quality playground, was not part of your 'adopt a street' scheme. The Faythe also impressed while the more modern Cromswell Fort Heights / Drive and Avenue also looked well. Despite its absence from your adopt a street scheme, Bishopswater achieved a good standard and it seems clear that the residents here are active too. Talbot Green (with its lovely mature trees and well maintained amenity areas) and St Peters Square stood out. Corish Place (adjacent to the GAA club) looked very well while Kennedy Park (with attractive bilingual name stone and mature trees and Clonard Road drew positive attention. The Laurels and Mount Prospect also caught the adjudicators eye. Well done to all involved and we look forward to seeing a greater number of estates participating in the 'adopt a street' scheme in 2015.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

The approach roads into Wexford are generally well maintained and achieve a good standard of presentation. The approach road from Curracloe was impressive with clear 50 kmph signage, no litter, no weed and neatly swept roadsides verges and curbs. This approach also offers an excellent view of the town and the bay. The approach from Rosslare is also quite nice with neat and tidy verges, clear signage and no weed or litter. The other approach roads achieved a similar standard. Your work on identifying and dealing with unauthorised signage is commended – as untidy signage can detract significantly from the appearance of roads and street. Well done also on your work on

improving Fettits Lane, for undertaking power washing and litter pick ups on Keyser Lane and for painting the back doors and gates in Marys Lane. The adjudicator was very impressed with these historical laneways in Wexford town –both in terms of their appearance but also due to the convenience that they offer pedestrians. We would urge you to continue to maintain these laneways (and promote their usage) as there seems little doubt that they encourage greater numbers to walk as they enable people to take the shortest possible walking routes. Your participation in the smarter travel programme (cycle lanes) is also acknowledged.