

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Wexford** Ref: **458**
County: **Wexford** Mark: **289**
Category: **G** Date(s): **02/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	50
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41	42
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28	29
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	11	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	43	43
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36	37
TOTAL MARK	450	281	289

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Your documentation is impressive, especially in the way it articulates objectives such as bringing together 'a diverse group of people with the common purpose of making their community a better place' and in which you demonstrate how you look beyond simple issues into 'possibilities of collective action in the future'. Your submission is especially valuable in drawing attention to matters that are normally 'invisible' to the adjudicator – for example, the information that the town was one of the first three communities awarded a Greening Communities flag, details of the Wexford in Bloom awards, considerations of how volunteering might be increased, and candid notes on what you perceive as inadequacies that are being addressed. This adjudicator was fortunate in the weather and was able to walk not only the prescribed route in the town centre but also walk around several outer neighbourhoods; it is felt that a comprehensive (and appreciative) overview was obtained. It was so useful having all the important features, even recycling centres, clearly named on the map. (You may now rename the theatre the National Opera House.) It is obvious that the Committee is under no illusions that a vast amount of work has not still to be done: but a very appreciable level has been quite rapidly achieved over 15 years. The nature of work of this kind, as you are well aware, is unending and self-perpetuating. Marks are awarded on what is seen to be significant advances on the previous year. The most important element is that needs are identified and approached with energy and imagination, which you are certainly doing; you may take richly deserved satisfaction from this.

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

This adjudicator has clear memories of the dishevelled state of the town centre and the annoyance expressed locally when a TV documentary suggested that Upper and Lower Main Street should be pedestrianised. Now that almost a mile of elegant pedestrianisation has been achieved we have the most unique and exciting linear shopping precinct in the country – a real 'heritage' route, but 'heritage' plus sensitive modernisation. Well done to your volunteers for their work on the intervening Bull Ring. The neighbourhood of Selskar has also been successfully rehabilitated (such a pity the roof was removed from the old church: avoidable). Several individual buildings on the Quay present a general sense of improvement (the demolition of the neo-classical Court House was a big mistake in the past). Your concerns about Crescent Quay are well founded in spite of excellent recent attention to three key buildings, among them the Ballast Office; apartments appearing over the original roofline do not help the picture (this is irreversible); on the date of the visit the smell of stagnant water was more than mildly displeasing: a concerted effort by the Local Authority is urgently needed here. Involvement of the Lions Club in the major redevelopment of Selskar Abbey and surroundings is acknowledged with pleasure. The former hospital, a magnificent 19c structure, has now deteriorated beyond being a mere 'building at risk'. Buildings new to this adjudicator are the fine Leisure Centre, and the glassy County Library insinuated into the narrow space between the Town Wall and Mallin Street – an astonishing success; the view of the townscape from inside is an unexpected bonus; and the view of rooftops, spires and waterfront from the top deck of the National Opera House is equally

fascinating. Of older buildings, the bright new yellow paint on Loreto Secondary School appealed. Thank you for noting that the tower of St Iberius' has been repaired. The adopt-a-street idea is remarkably widespread and must take much organisation. It is interesting the way that the sense of bleakness has been gradually removed from Redmond Square due to the maturing of the limes: whoever thought up this planting initiative a quarter-century ago must take a bow!

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The well laid out Redmond Park (see also below) continues to hold its place as a traditionally planted urban space both for a pleasant stroll and a fun location for children; the playgrounds here and at Ferrybank and Maundlinsown are colourful and clean. Very many well designed and maintained areas of incidental planting were favourably noted, among them, on the Rosslare road, the grotto, the fine rose bed and a charming bed of cranesbill, dog-daisies, etc. The 'Biodiversity Linear Park' should perhaps be noted under 'Streetscape' (above) but it does have a dual function; similarly, perhaps Talbot Green should be noted under 'Residential' but planting goes hand-in-hand with housing here and the trees and extensive green are park-like; something of the same concept was seen at Fishers Row where the terraced planting of mainly roses rises up to the frontages of the homes. Wexford in Bloom clearly inspires the enormous number of hanging baskets, tubs and window-boxes throughout the town; well done to the many businesses who, you tell us, pay for baskets, and the sponsorship of Done Deal, the Credit Union and the Local Authority. One would not have been aware that Carcur Corner had been a 'troublesome area' were one to look at the planting that now features a handsome 18C basin and the imaginatively conceived landscaping surrounding it. The municipal buildings are nicely planted too. Perhaps the green between the Arts Centre and the town wall needs enlivening by, say, shrubs, whether evergreens or otherwise; it has always looked somewhat unconsidered though not neglected. Best wishes for St Patrick's and St John's graveyards, the one behind its fine stone wall the other behind its whitewashed wall, neither of which could be entered but work was seen to be in preparation. The interpretative sign boards are most interesting. Very good wishes to the GAA for the completion of their extensive redevelopment of grounds at Trespan Rocks.

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

The number of organisations appropriate to this category that are centred in Wexford is impressive. The work of the Naturalists' Field Club must surely be a major influence on your work; you mention monthly field trips and lectures; congratulations on their recent specialist publication. Congratulations too to Citclops for holding the first Blue Info Day in Ireland in Wexford. The Wexford Wildfowl Reserve is celebrated far beyond the confines of this island. The Love Redmond Park group, with its practical interest in bird and bat conservation, raises the level of this park beyond that of the usual town gardens. It is noted that the primary schools took part in the Leave No Trace programme. Well done on the action of the Local Authority in striving to eradicate Japanese knotweed. – 'Activity' is the key word in all these engagements: thank you for drawing attention to them and to others such as the Dandelions-a-Plenty scheme and the bee-friendly planting on roundabouts. The 222 young trees quoted as having been planted by 12 local organisations is fairly formidable; what catches the attention most forcibly is that this was no mere distribution but workshops were organised with 20 schools during National Tree Week at which the importance of trees to the wellbeing of the earth was demonstrated.

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

You list upwards of a dozen shops, both commercial and charitable, that 're-use material that would otherwise go to landfill' and you make the telling comment that new clothes-alterations businesses indicate that 'clothes are no longer the immediately disposable items of the boom period'. This encapsulates a real understanding of the waste-management theory. It is clear that you carry theory into practice in several cogent ways and thank you for listing them as the information is valued, the projects being 'invisible' to the adjudicators – among them the Stop Food Waste challenge that resulted in a 45% reduction in food waste among participants; the Christmas decorations made from waste material initiative; and the shredding of 728 Christmas trees for (presumably) horticultural use. The WEEE initiative is applauded. Recycling centres at Ferrybank and Wygram Place were seen. It is quite remarkable that twelve schools have achieved Green Flag status, the Mercy Convent and Kennedy Park School having six each. You probably find that the schools lead the way in promoting waste minimisation to the wider community. Most interesting to this adjudicator was the information that you have been awarded a Greening Community flag by An Taisce and that you are one of three partners, the others being the two Local Authorities. Best wishes to all three for the additional effort required.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is very good news that street cleaning is now entirely professionalised, enabling the Committee and its volunteers to devote time to more creative issues. It might be feared that the change would cause a relaxation of public attitudes to littering and that litter would be dropped in the expectation of immediate removal – but this does not seem to have happened as the town was really remarkably litter free at the time of judging. It is not surprising that you have come 5th-equal in the IBAL anti-litter league. Your Micro Cleaning programme is effective and probably unique. Well done to the Local Authority on enabling you to promote anti-dog fouling, cigarette butt and gum-litter measures. The suggested mark is high under Litter Control but unfortunately under general Tidiness there is much to be desired and this reduces the increase proposed on last year's figure. Some of the tidiness/untidiness issues are: overhead wires and ugly poles supporting clustered cables : where these are not, the streetscape benefits enormously; unsightly 'joins' where residential/commercial areas converge, such as in the Clonard area where there are broken fences and neglected sites – rubbish had been dumped here; gates and hoardings near the Sinnott roundabout that are taking on a venerable look due to ongoing environmental works ; the site for the new

Garda station that has aged into disrepute; some outworn traffic control structures at Ferrybank; a rash of unsightly advertising signs on the road from Rosslare; unseemly gaps on handsome George Street filled by concrete block walls; extensive 'backs' used as car-parks disclosing areas never intended to be seen publicly. The point must be made that the Tidy Towns Committee can hardly be expected take any kind of responsibility for such discrepancies though the Committee may use its influence on the Local Authority to take remedial – and, where necessary, punitive – action.

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

Small and medium-sized street houses of traditional design, as in John Street and The Faythe, are one of the most attractive aspects of Wexford. A concerted scheme of colour washing would give a great visual 'lift' – not harsh West Cork colours but e.g. shades of primrose, cream, lilac – to residential streets of this kind. Part of the success of the appearance of the Talbot Green area is that the houses are smartly painted (though in one shade) whereas at Fishers Row (and many other neighbourhoods) a uniform grey predominates. A short colourful terrace on William Street/Rosslare Road as seen looking down The Faythe certainly lifts the appearance of that neighbourhood. The curve of older white cottages on Redmond Road is most attractive. Charming well-preserved Georgian and Victorian homes on Spawell Road and Waterloo Road were favourably noted. Among the more recent developments seen on a 'spot-check' basis, the extensive Clonard Village of houses and apartments, with its exemplary planting of conifers amongst other trees, impressed. So did small neat homes in Richmond Park/Drive but kerbside weed was surprisingly prevalent. Herbaceous borders at the entrance to Whiterock Heights could hardly be bettered. Cromwell's Fort and Mulgannon benefit from their elevation and their backgrounds of mature timber. At Hillcrest – and possibly elsewhere – tree specialist would not advise the planting of annuals round the boles of trees. Priory Court and Priory Hall are two of many supremely well presented enclaves.

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

Your detailed work on the R730 has certainly been appreciable. The first class condition of the Rosslare approach was noted where individual industrial and commercial units as well as impressive new developments are mainly well kept; advertising signage has been unfavourably noted above. New to this adjudicator were the Seamus Kelly roundabout on the north end of the R730 and the link road to the R769 with appropriate paving and lighting – a highly successful infrastructural initiative. For this adjudicator the Whitford/Distillery Road gives the most favourable first impression of the town because of good surfacing, trim verges, pleasant adjacent housing and absence of obtrusive advertising signage. Perhaps the Corish roundabout should be favourably mentioned here although the adjacent planting might suggest the Landscaping category above. Well-surfaced car parking was seen in several places among them Wellington Place and Crescent Quay. First class internal signage was favourably noted. Some of the lanes in the neighbourhood of South Main Street are less than well kept – it must be a matter for the local businesses to attempt improvements.

Concluding Remarks:

This committee, along with its supporters both official and voluntary, has set itself an enormous task which it appears to be pursuing with diligence, efficiency and imagination.