Review of Wexford Tidy Towns Plan 2019-2022

Overall Aims 2019-2022

❖ To enhance the appearance of Wexford Town for its people and for visitors.

The Tidy Towns has certainly enhanced the appearance of Wexford Town. The evidence for this is our Gold Medal win in 2021 after many years of effort. In 2022, Wexford was judged to be “clean to European norms” by Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL)

❖ To continue to foster a spirit of community involvement that is inclusive and based on equality of esteem for all of our citizens.

Wexford TT experienced an increase in volunteers after our success in receiving a Gold Medal. A number of our new volunteers are from other countries - Tidy Towns is a great mechanism for inclusivity. We also have new volunteers from the local community.

We are also delighted to say that we have widespread community support from many organisations and businesses in Wexford.A very good example of this support is the participation by businesses in flowering up the town. This is organised by Wexford in Bloom, a group that is central to the presentation of the town to citizens and visitors alike.

❖ To educate people about the core values of the Tidy Towns’ movement.

Wexford TT’s main method of communication is through Facebook, where we have 4,500 friends. This is a great channel to get public support.

Following the pandemic, Wexford TT has renewed it’s efforts to visit and work with schools. In 2022, we have been able to visit all of the secondary schools in the town.

❖ To enhance the distinctive culture that exists in Wexford.

Wexford has a distinctive culture, a place rich in music and the arts. We have been able to channel this creativity by commissioning a large mural opposite Dunne’s Stores.

This has been augmented by the a number of other murals in the town and the artistic initiative by Wexford County Council in commissioning local artists to paint electricity boxes all over town. All of this artistic endeavour has enhanced and changed the look of the town for the better.

❖ To work to achieve Gold Medal Status during the term of the Plan

Wexford achieved Gold Medal status in 2021

❖ To enter and win Special Awards annually

Wexford Tidy Towns has entered Special Awards up to 2021. Unfortunately, no entry for a Special Award was made in 2022.

Specific Aims

To improve our marks with the Tidy Towns Competition to bring us to Gold Medal Status.

Gold Medal Status achieved in 2021.

❖ To develop a more co-ordinated plan to achieve our goals and to maximise our potential.

This three-year Plan has been effective because it was based on achievable objectives, which gave TT a focussed approach to achieving these objectives. We hope to put a similar Plan in place for the next three-year period, with a focus on achievable goals and objectives.

❖ To increase the number of individuals and organisations involved in Tidy Towns work and to develop ways of working that suits the time people can give to Tidy Towns.

Increased volunteers have joined Wexford TT following our Gold Medal success. In addition, Wexford TT is back working with the town schools after the Lockdown and has had a successful year in 2021.

❖ To maintain and develop the relationship we have with Wexford County Council and Wexford Borough District as befits their position as our major partners in Tidy Towns work.

Wexford TT has maintained a good working relationship with WCC and WBC, working closely with both organisations.

❖ We will continue our quest to access a permanent office and workshop base.

Wexford TT obtained a headquarters in the Bull Ring Marketplace from WBC in 2020. It is a great town centre location and allows us to have a focal point in the town, as well as meeting, office and storage space. We wish to thank those Councillors who helped us to get the use of this building.

❖ We will continue our quest to acquire a van to transport equipment.

We have not achieved this objective to date. WTT will review this air as part of the making of our new Plan.

Priority areas of work

❖ To continue to have more areas adopted by a local community or community group during the lifetime of our plan.

In 2022, our Chairperson, Phil Murphy, worked with students and teachers from the Swan Training Centre in the Faythe to carry out clean-ups in the area.

❖ To form a stronger development group to deliver the Greening Communities agenda and challenge.

It is proposed to set up a new working group to deal with the Green Communities agenda and challenge.

❖ To develop a programme of activities that significantly enhances Wexford and its people, and that challenges and satisfies our volunteers.

The deep cleaning system used by Wexford Tidy Towns is part of our core work and this approach has been embraced by our volunteers. However, we also do normal litter-picking, looking after green areas and planting. We also assist the Wexford Estuary Clean Coasts Group with clean-ups.

These diverse activities help to keep volunteers interested and significantly enhance Wexford and its people.

❖ Trees will be high on our agenda over the course of the plan, both new planting and maintenance of the existing stock. Information sharing on the trees we have in our town will also be a key priority.

Work has begun on a Tree Survey in Wexford Town. TT volunteers have begun a count of the number of trees in public spaces.

❖ To spread the concept and reality of micro-cleaning through more parts of Wexford.

Micro-cleaning is used by Wexford TT as an effective way to clean downtown areas - it is not just litter-picking, but includes intensive sweeping of these areas (sometimes entire streets), together with the removal of shopping trolleys and other abandoned items. Cigarette butts are an ongoing problem and face masks has become a new issue.

❖ Wexford In Bloom to expand the existing flowering schemes we have in place so that they can reach a much bigger audience - year on year increase of 20% would be desirable.

The number of businesses taking hanging baskets and window boxes (including window boxes in public areas such as the Bull Ring market) has grown to almost 500.

❖ Growing the Tidy Towns project in a sustainable way to ensure that we can reach and maintain our aims.

Wexford Tidy Towns is experiencing a growth in the number of volunteers and an increase in activities such as school visits and participation in Wexford in Bloom. We will also be more active in Green Communities, biodiversity and wildlife and natural amenity over the coming three-year period.

❖ Wildlife and Natural Amenities - in an urban environment like Wexford this area of work is an ongoing challenge so we have to devise strategies that suit Wexford and are appropriate to our natural resources.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities has proven to be a challenge in the town environment. It is hoped that some achievable targets in this area can be identified and included in our new three-year plan.

❖ To continue to report derelict sites to the local authorities and ask them to serve notices on the owners. This action is very important as we do not have the authority to do so.

Plans to have a better system in place identify derelict, potentially derelict and vacant sites are being worked on by Wexford TT at present. County Council reports do not give updates on individual properties and it is difficult to know the current position with regard to any individual property.

It is noted that Brady’s Pub, a long-standing run-down site in the Faythe has recently been cleaned up.

❖ Waste Minimisation and Prevention has to form a very important part of our work over the next three years as the reduction of waste before it is created is the vital step in making a town more wholly green. This does not mean that we will abandon recycling projects but that we will develop alongside them strategies to ensure that the waste is not produced in the first place.

In the new three-year plan, achievable priorities in the area of Waste Minimisation and Prevention will need to be identified and included in the Plan.

❖ We will develop a strategy to engage and keep volunteers involved in Tidy towns work.

Our success in the Tidy Towns competition has had a direct impact on recruitment of new volunteers. Working with Wexford Volunteer Centre has also led to finding new members.

❖ Each year we must develop new and imaginative approaches to our work in order to keep it exciting and challenging. We also need to listen to more radical voices than our own and find a way to include their thinking in our work.

The involvement of new volunteers will be important in developing new approaches for Wexford Tidy Towns in our next three-year Plan.

❖ Our volunteers have expressed, very often the ambition to visit and learn from other groups and we will progress that ambition during this plan.

The Lockdown held up this objective, but, hopefully, we will be in a position to make contact and visit other groups in 2022/23.

❖ This three year plan is a rolling plan that can be changed and developed to meet our changing needs, all specific plans will be rolling plans. We will devise a way that is suitable, democratic and efficient to our needs.

It is hoped to make a new three-year plan before the next Tidy Towns competition in 2023. The new Plan will focus on achievable projects over the next three-year period.

❖ We will work with relevant professionals to get best advice on how to progress our aims.

Wexford Tidy Towns will continue this approach in the next three-year plan.

❖ We will commission works of art related to the environment for various locations in Wexford - three to be achieved by 2020.

Large-scale mural was commissioned by Wexford TT at a site opposite Dunne’s Stores.

❖ We will establish appropriate working groups as suits our needs and aims.

Plans are in place to establish a working group to strengthen our Administration and to deal with Biodiversity.

❖ We will increase our work with young people.

Our schools programme has been re-activated following the Lockdown.

❖ We will devise and deliver a Tidy Towns School Programme.

Wexford TT has re-established our relationship with local schools, both primary and secondary in 2021-2022. It will be a challenge to come up with a new School Programme, but there is an increased awareness and concern about the environment amongst students and TT hope to come up with a Schools Programme to harness this energy.

❖ Our final priority will be to find a large scale project that will make profound difference to Wexford. Having found the right project we will plan it’s achievement during the course of the plan to ensure that this generation of Tidy Towns Volunteers can have a legacy and example to pass on to the next generation.

This objective was hampered by the Lockdown restrictions. This is still a priority for Wexford TT and it is expected to be considered again in the course of the making of the next three-year Plan.