

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Wexford - Loch Garman** Ref: **458**  
County: **Wexford** Mark: **322**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **28/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	51	52
Streetscape & Public Places	60	46	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	44	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	31	31
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	47	49
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>322</b>

### Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir fáilte roimh Wexford – Loch Garman páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Wexford Town is very welcome to the Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition 2019 and in your 10th year of entry into the Competition. Thank you very much for your welcome letter particularly the letter 'as Gaeilge' which was much appreciated. Thank you for your very comprehensive, clear and informative Submission and Application Form provided with many photos showing your work activities during the year. It was a good to read about all the activities undertaken by Wexford Tidy Towns Committee set out in such a clear and concise manner. The maps provided with your application were excellent, clearly indicating the location of projects undertaken under the various categories and also covering outlying areas. This was very helpful to the adjudicator in navigating your town and in locating the various features of interest. The Wexford Cultural Spine route map was also very useful in identifying sites of cultural and historic importance in the Town which were of particular interest to the adjudicator. You have 9 full time members on your Committee who meet at least once per month with a further 15 -30 regular volunteers who provide assistance with your work programmes. Contact with Volunteers is made through group mobile text alerts, social media and attending public meetings etc. You have a further sub-committee structure in place together with a newly formed Junior Committee. The voluntary commitment you show as a group of Volunteers towards the enhancement of the Town of Wexford is very considerable and you attend meetings involving a wide range of outside agencies and groups, to whom you provide advice and assistance and which also sponsor and support your work activities. Great thanks are due to your many supporters and sponsors who are too numerous to mention. The strong links you have established with Presentation Secondary School through the 'Build a Bank Scheme' and the subsequent setting up of the Junior Tidy Towns Committee, will enhance the future viability of your Committee and certainly augers well for the future. It is noted that Wexford Town has been nominated to take part in the '2019 Irelands Best Kept Towns' competition and we wish you well in your endeavours in this regard.

### Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

Your Committee has undertaken significant work in in relation to dealing with a number of derelict sites and unoccupied buildings in the town -well done. This work is very important as derelict sites can significantly detract from the appearance of the streetscape of a Town. It is good to see that the unoccupied premises at the rear of McCauley's Chemist at Redmond Square have now been taken over by Ard Aoibhinn 'Activation Services' and the site is now under regular maintenance. It is also great to see that they once derelict shopping mall between Mallin Street and Main Street has been extensively renovated and is now a focus point for artists to meet and connect with each other. Your laneway naming and illumination project is very worthwhile as many of these laneways in the Mediaeval Town of Wexford are steeped in history and it is good that the public can get a sense of their historical significance as they pass by. Redmond Square was found to be an attractively presented space with closely mown

grass and the Lime trees here which are clipped to create a rounded shape, provide welcome shade and a great sense of place. The general maintenance of this area was to a good standard. **The railway station building opposite is attractive traditional type building but the facade has deteriorated and would benefit from external painting.** The colourful planters provided on the traffic islands here enhanced the entrance to the Station. Perhaps **more covered-in cycle parking facilities could be provided in the Station area** as the current provision seems inadequate. **The wall of the Advanced Pitstop premises facing the public road would also benefit from painting,** as this currently detracts from the overall appearance of this area. The presentation of the frontage of Slaney Flowers was particularly admired. However, not so the **Bridge Casino premises** nearby which does not enhance the streetscape here. The Centenary Stores premises is a building which is joy to behold with attractive bold colours and an outdoor seating area dominated by an oak tree providing a central feature here. The presentation of the Ulster Bank was particularly admired with the external walls nicely painted in the pleasing light blue colour. **The Sa Ria Boutique** shopfront is attractive but has seen better days and would benefit from repainting.

Wexford Town has an abundance of well cared shops and business premises and the standard of shopfront presentation is generally excellent. Imaginative, bright colours are used on building facades throughout the Town which gives streetscape a great sense of vibrancy and life with a good mix of new and traditional shopfronts. Many business premises have adorned their properties with **hanging baskets** and this definitely adds to the vibrancy of the shopping precinct and they are to be commended for this. One must be careful not to overlook the attractive upper floors of buildings, as in some cases there is some obvious neglect here. **Redundant structures such as flag poles, wires, lights, old signs etc should be removed as these just create visual clutter.** The adjudicator noted the **absence of street name signage,** normally present on the corners of buildings, at a number of locations which caused some confusion in navigating the Town. Wexford is fortunate to have many superb civic spaces in the centre of the old Town including the Bullring and the Bullring Market which together provide a very special place for local residents and visitors alike to meet and chat. Again, the use of clipped Lime trees here provide an important focal point and structure to the space. The Cape Bar was particularly admired for the quality and presentation of it's shopfront. Wexford is fortunate to have a very well developed and attractive shopping precinct and the footfall and hustle and bustle noted throughout conferred a great sense of vibrancy and activity. Your **National Opera House is a standout** building and it is quite amazing how well it has been expertly incorporated into the existing streetscape of the Town. **Metal bollards** are used at a number of locations in Wexford to control traffic movements and to provide separation between cars and pedestrians. They should only be used in very limited circumstances as over time they tend to suffer vehicle damage, deteriorate, requiring maintenance and can therefore, add to visual clutter and a general visual dis-improvement. The use of **bollard advertising** is also quite prevalent nowadays and this can also detract from the streetscape. Reserving areas exclusively for pedestrian use is a better approach, where this is possible. Car encroachment or parking can also be deterred through the use of higher than normal kerbs. The **Robert Brennan memorial** was visited and this adds greatly to the attractive presentation of the adjoining green space. It was a concern to see the **buildings opposite the entrance to the Westgate Heritage Centre,** which are now in a poor condition and one wonders are there plans in place to restore these important buildings in the near future? **Overhead power lines** create serious visual clutter and disamenity at a number of locations in Wexford Town including along the Quays, George Street and King Street and no doubt efforts are being made with the ESB to have these placed underground in the future, as funds become available. The new paving works carried out at **Henrietta Street** were admired but it's it is unfortunate that bollards are required here to separate traffic from pedestrians. The **refurbishment works at St. Peter's Square** was inspected and this important civic space has been re-energised as a result of the recent work here. One wonders whether it will be possible to **restore the fountain** here or is it just temporarily switched off ?

A number of Marquees and a Funfair were in the process of being erected on the Quayfront on the day of adjudication. The **area around the Tourist Office would benefit from the introduction of some landscape elements and possibly a seating area** as at present the surrounding area is dominated by hard surfaces and traffic movements and is somewhat unwelcoming. The trees along the Promenade are of variable quality and no doubt suffer from intensive coastal exposure. Some of the larger mature specimens no longer require **tree guards** and these can be removed.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

Wexford Town centre due to its historic mediaeval layout, does not have extensive green spaces within the historic core. However, those green areas which are provided were found to be maintained and presented to a very good standard. Floral displays including planters and hanging baskets were also well maintained and generally added to the character of the Town. **Tree planting** provides an important role in relation to the overall presentation of the Town and by and large the tree planting schemes which have been carried out over the years have been very successful. The trees planted along Wexford Promenade, which are Aspens (*Populus tremula*) can suffer from coastal exposure and drought and may be slow to establish. However, the mature specimens located here are growing reasonably well and it is the view of the adjudicator that the metal surrounds can now be removed from some of the larger trees. Any further planting of trees along the promenade where required, should **use suitable species such as Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus* varieties)** which are generally very tolerant of coastal exposure and poor soil conditions. It is noted that due to safety concerns you have not been able to arrange for the placement of planters and John Gate's Street - perhaps this area can be considered for permanent planting in the longer term. Well done and the completion of the refurbishment work at St. Peter's Square and it is great to see that the Junior Tidy Towns group have agreed to take responsibility for it's future upkeep.

### **Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:**

The adjudicator is pleased to note that you have moved towards providing bee-friendly plantings at various locations around the town. The **Ely Square biodiversity wildflower garden** was visited – this is a wonderful space which has an abundance of different wildflowers providing sustenance to our much- needed pollinators. The garden provided a

great floral display on the day of adjudication and the significance of the site in the context of its use by the American Army during World War 1 was well explained on the display board. Well done to the students and staff of Wexford Christian brother's School who have, as part of their woodwork classes, made bird boxes and insect hotels which have been placed in wooded areas around the town. You have identified a number of sites suitable for the development of pollinator friendly plantings and we wish you success in your endeavours with this.

### **Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:**

Wexford Tidy Towns continues to make good progress under this category and it is good to note that all local schools continue to be actively involved in the **Green schools campaign** - well done to all concerned with this. It is a pity that the new pop up shop in the Town did not prove to be successful, however this initiative is worthy of consideration and expansion for the future. Perhaps a **farmer's market** for locally produced goods could be considered for a suitable site in the Town. You have also taken action in relation to the use of plastic packaging and you are to be commended for encouraging local businesses to use **paper packaging** instead of plastic. Perhaps the 'conscience cup' campaign can be expanded to other business premises across the Town. It is great to note that you have increased the number of self-watering flower baskets in the Town to 86. One wonders whether you have been able to install water butts to enable you to avail of rainwater harvesting. The initiative undertaken in conjunction with the **Lidl and Aldi supermarkets to reuse non-saleable plants for salvage and later replanting** elsewhere in the Town is a terrific idea. Perhaps this arrangement could be expanded to include other supermarkets in the Town. With some further effort you could pick up extra marks in this category by pursuing suitable projects such as **promoting the use of low carbon vehicles in the Town, park and ride and car-pooling schemes, pursuing the installation of additional electric car charge point(s) in the Town and extending cycle parking facilities at appropriate locations.** The promotion of grant aid for the installation of wall and attic insulation on older building stock in the Town, the greater use of **solar panels** on roofs and heat exchange units to reduce energy consumption by households/businesses/schools/Community buildings are also worthwhile initiatives to consider. The greater use of water butts and rainfall harvesting systems for the watering of private gardens and public floral displays during the Summer period aids water conservation and should be actively encouraged. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland website has good information in relation to the development of Better Energy Communities.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

It is great to know that **local groups** have agreed to take responsibility for certain areas and will look after their future maintenance such as Ard Aoibhinn at Redmond Square, the Wexford Lions Club at Selskar Abbey Grounds and the Junior Tidy Towns committee at St Peter's Square. You are continuing with your regular litter Patrol's particularly in relation to litter black spots in the Town. Your Litter Control Strategy submitted as Additional Information is very comprehensive and task focused and clearly has a major impact on the ongoing maintenance and presentation of the Town. Your activities in relation to anti-litter and anti-dumping awareness campaigns appear to be working well and your work in partnership with local communities to deal with incidents of dumping is very important. The action days are also very important in raising awareness amongst the general public of the significant activities undertaken by Tidy Towns in relation to litter control. It is good to note that some action has been taken to remove unsightly **overhead power lines** in the vicinity of Crescent Quay and part of the Waterfront Promenade Scheme and it is hoped that similar works can be undertaken elsewhere in the Town. For a busy town the size of Wexford, the adjudicator did not notice any significant amount of litter along the streets or in laneways on the day of adjudication and the extent of unauthorised commercial signage and temporary billboards etc. was quite limited. The major tidiness issue in Wexford under this category is the presence of heavy overground cables and poles, which are significant dis-amenity at a number of locations.

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

It is great to read from your submission that you have taken up the suggestion of last year's adjudicator and have arranged for information on the Tidy Towns in Wexford to be included in **welcome packs to new home owners issued by estate agents** operating in the Town and also the information provided as part of the Tenant handbook provided by Wexford County Council and Wexford Borough District. Have you considered the possibility of organising a **Tidy Estates competition in Wexford?** This is a good way to ensure the standard of maintenance and presentation in Estates is improved over time. Perhaps a member of the Committee might take responsibility for liaising with housing estates and apartment blocks in the Town and provide advice and deal with any projects which may arise from time to time.

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

It is good to know that you are making some progress in relation to dealing with **the illegible sign and tourist map at the train station** in consultation with the Borough District Council. Some improvements have also been carried out in relation to the 'Welcome to Wexford' signs along approach roads and the works undertaken by the Wexford Men's Shed are to be commended in this regard. Well done on all the work you have undertaken to date to maintain and **clean the narrow laneways in the Centre of the town**, which have been subject to ongoing littering and graffiti over the years. The approach to Wexford from **Gorey side is currently subject to major road improvement works and it is good to note the new roadside footpath provision here.** There is a low concrete post and rail fence adjoining the **roadside boundary of a small green space near the road and the removal of this fence would improve the appearance of the approach to the Town at this location.**

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Wexford is a very attractive and busy Town where both the built environment, consisting of a traditional and historic

core with intimate narrow streets, blends very well with it's wonderful expansive coastal setting. Your efforts are ensuring that the Town of Wexford continues to be presented to a high standard and you are wished well with your plans for the future development and improvement of the Town.