

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Wexford - Loch Garman	Ref: 458
County: Wexford	Mark: 351
Category: G	Date(s): 21/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	54	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	32	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	40	42
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	43	45
TOTAL MARK	550	337	351

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

Fáilte go Loch Garman chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. We are delighted to welcome Wexford Town to the 2022 Supervalu Tidy Towns competition – it was a pleasure to visit your town after an absence of several years and observe all the positive changes that have taken place in the interim. Thank you for your entry form, which was clear and concise. The map was a little on the small side to be able precisely locate your projects but google maps and the easily-attained Wexford tourist map showed us the way. We get the impression that you and other organisations have big ambitions for to rejuvenate your historical riverside town. Hearty congratulations on your Gold Medal award – a sign that things are on the up in Wexford. It is encouraging to hear that the award has further galvanised the voluntary effort and encouraged new members to join up. You work with a wide range of community groups within the town such as the Swan Learning Centre, Wexford Parish Care for the Earth and local sports clubs. Many businesses support your efforts as do outside agencies such as Wexford County Council and Wexford Local Development Company. Thank you for your concise 3 Year Action Plan (2019 – 2022), which lays out your priority actions. This and other interesting information can be found on the user-friendly www.wexfordtidytowns.com. As you will probably be reviewing your Plan over the winter months, we might suggest that you include actions under each of the TT category headings, as also suggested by last year's adjudicator. You make smart use of social media (Facebook, twitter) as well as traditional communication channels to convey your messages to the wider community. Your ongoing efforts are applauded - keep up the good work.

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

Wexford town is steeped in history with a rich architectural heritage to enhance the visitor experience. Strategically located streetscape art features are a recent phenomenon in Wexford. We admired the new 'Phil's mural' in Redmond Square – a Tidy Towns initiative. It appears to be doing its job of brightening up this space and deterring graffiti. We observed one of several painted utility boxes nearby, which along with some clever landscaping, makes a feature of a once neglected corner space. You are in the process on embarking on Phase 2 of this worthwhile project so we look forward to seeing the results next time.

The 'Walls of Wexford' Street Art Project is about to be rolled out following a recent tendering process. Funded by Wexford Borough District in conjunction with Wexford Arts Centre, these will greatly enhance the cultural spine visitor experience as will the newly refurbished Arts Centre due to shortly reopen its doors. Some buildings that caught the eye for their impressive presentation included DNG, T Morris, Selskar Bookshop, JJ Kearney, Vine Restaurant, Frank's Place, South-East Radio, The Pantry, Wexford Credit Union, Asple & Co., John Barry's, Stable Diet Café, Bugler Doyle's, Fitzgerald's, Carraig Donn, Meyler's, Bank of Ireland and Kehoe & Assocs to name but some.

It is wonderful to read that both Active Travel and Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme funding is bringing about the full pedestrianization of Monck St. This, along with outdoor covered outdoor dining facilities will introduce a whole new dimension to the town centre. Works were in full swing when we visited so we look forward to seeing the retractable roof next time!

We commend your efforts to tackle derelict sites through ongoing engagement with Wexford County Council and individual property owners. This is a long and frustrating process. It is positive to hear that you have had a few good results in the last year. Well done. The 5 new outdoor trading kiosks are meeting the increased demand as we spend more time outdoors. All was clean around these sites. We're impressed to note that they provide reuse options though we didn't notice any promotion of same. Unfortunately, the beautiful Bullring building was closed during our visit so we had to make do with having a sneak peak through the railings.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The newly opened (Aug '21) Min Ryan Park was the highlight of our adjudication visit – it was buzzing with various activities on a summer's afternoon. We love the design and the balance that has been achieved between the formal and informal – the informal being pollinator-friendly banks of wildflowers and grass meadows. The state-of-the-art playground was busy on the day. Accessibility is a key feature as seen by the 'Changing Places' facility and related signage. We read with interest about the life of its namesake Mary Josephine 'Min'Ryan, a local heroine now recognised by all in Wexford. The multi-use games area is a welcome addition. We look forward to seeing the completed skate park next time. The fine school next door is nicely landscaped.

Another playground at Redmond Park has been replaced with a modern version including wheelchair accessible equipment. This is complemented by the nearby installation of new adult exercise equipment – something active for all ages!

We are in awe of the powerhouse that is 'Wexford in Bloom', a sub-committee of Wexford Tidy Towns responsible for pollinator-friendly 'flowering-up' of the town each year following lots of plant care and engagement with businesses. A substantial 320 hanging baskets were produced this year, 103 of which are self-watering. This enterprising group is also responsible for planting over 1,500 bulbs in key locations over the last three years. Special mention to the Whitford House hotel for always maintaining a high standard in this prominent location. Planters at the Faythe are beautifully maintained.

New Seating at the Ferrybank Pedestrian Walkway is noted, thanks to sponsorship from Wexford Lions Club and Wexford Soroptomists. This easily accessible area is popular among local walkers.

The Rocks is another valuable open space in the heart of the town – the perfect location for educational initiatives such as the annual planting of trees by children from St. John of God Primary School, in conjunction with South End Community Centre, Wexford County Council and Tus workers. We found it a little difficult to find the access area to this park. Is signage needed? We acknowledge your plans to work in partnership with the newly set up "Wexford Parish Care for the Earth" group. Planting three trees to represent the three operas is a lovely idea and an investment in the future. We are delighted that you are taking previous recommendations on board and have embarked on a town tree survey. Please give us a bit more detail as to who is carrying out the survey on your behalf – it is important to show the adjudicator that you have expert guidance. We look forward to seeing the results next time.

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

This category is strongly featuring in your current work plan. It is reassuring to know that you draw on local expertise as required. Your forthcoming Biodiversity Plan will provide specific guidance on your various biodiversity areas. One such area where you have already carried out some good work is the transformation of the neglected space at the 1798 garden into a beautiful biodiversity garden. Min Ryan Park (mentioned previously) has been designed with biodiversity in mind.

Wexford County Council's Green Estate Pilot Programme (2021) is a good way to engage with local communities and raise awareness of biodiversity. The programme encourages residents to plant fruit trees or pollinator friendly plants, manage areas for wildflowers while avoiding the use of chemicals. We were delighted to see some examples of community orchards on our travels – 22 further fruit trees planted in 2022. Well done to all involved. It is encouraging to read that 18 groups applied for native trees this year under the Council's 'Trees for Wexford'. Keep up the good work.

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

Your statistics make for fascinating reading that the recent switch to sustainable planting on Wexford roundabouts has saved 6,000 litres of water, 6,500 plastic pots going to landfill not to mention the energy saved in not producing those pots in the first place. It has reduced costs including labour and maintenance costs by €6,000 per year – several good reasons to make the change! Well done to all involved.

Another initiative led by Wexford County Council and supported by Wexford Towns was the National Reuse Month October 2021, which focused on 'Green your wardrobe' and children's creative waste reuse workshops. Please tell us a little more about how Tidy Towns engages with such events (help promote etc).

Other relevant initiatives led by your County Council included the "Green Picnic" Campaign and on-line workshops for Tidy Towns groups on pollinator-friendly planting and general sustainability.

Ongoing recycling programmes for batteries, plants and other items are noted. The quality of projects you submit under this category is a testament to the partnership approach being taken by WTT, Wexford Co Co and other groups interested in making Wexford a more sustainable place to live. The strong level of participation of Wexford schools in the Green Schools Programme bodes well for the future of the town's sustainability. Thank you for the status report with regard to the Green Flags programme in each school.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is wonderful to hear that your recent Gold Medal award has led to an increase in the number of volunteers coming forward – this helps immensely with your litter-picking activities. We were particularly impressed with the cleanliness standard throughout the town, particularly in the busy town centre where we struggled to find a piece of litter. A big well done to all involved in daily and weekly litter picks in such an organised fashion that you are able to maintain this high standard. Wexford Tidy Towns focuses its attention on the Quay front, the Main Street and connecting lanes and parks. The work carried out by residents' associations in 82 estates and 96 streets needs to be acknowledged here also. You also monitor parks and open spaces – quite a challenging task. Your positive outreach to the town schools as been very worthwhile as they have been delighted to get involved with litter action days. We are impressed with the 'micro-cleaning' approach. It is no surprise that Wexford was founded to be 'Clean to European Standards' in the recent IBAL litter league. Your comments in relation to cigarette litter and disposal units are noted. Please do say a bit more about what resources are available to the town in terms of CE and Tus workers. They should get a brief mention in the 'Community Involvement' category.

Some pedestrian crossing and disabled parking road markings need to be refreshed. The poster at the Remembrance Garden Gate could now be removed. What looked like Christmas Decorations over the Main St just look like clutter in the month of June! Hopefully further overhead wiring will be removed in the coming years, do keep lobbying the Council and ESB networks in this regard as it can sometimes tie in with other utilities upgrade works. Some information signage along the quays is in need of refreshing.

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

Your 96 residential streets and roughly 82 housing estates make up the housing stock of Wexford. We are delighted to hear that you engage with as many areas as possible and offer support as needed, for instance the provision of litter picking equipment and bags collection. Having all residential areas on board is crucial to the overall presentation of a big town. We admired some unique residential architecture such as at the Faythe and Kevin Barry St. These and other similar streets really add to the town's sense of character. 'The Pillar' was admired for its attractive buildings and landscaping. A nearby gable end at a major junction needs attention. A-rated homes that include car charging points as standard are no doubt the future of house building. The Talbot Suites is an impressive contemporary building on the Quays. The overall standard of presentation is very high and residential areas very clean so well done to all proud Wexford residents.

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

The new (in-house designed!) signage depicting Wexford's recent Gold Medal win is quite eye-catching on all town approaches. At the roundabouts, planting has moved away from annual bedding to more sustainable pollinator friendly planting, though this was also submitted in last year's entry? Please give specifics and timeframes on larger projects so we can award you marks accordingly.

Wexford Co Co is playing its part as it continued its Road Restoration programme at several areas of the town over the last year, including the N25 to Killeens roundabout and Customs House Quay among others. Traffic calming measures have been installed at Whitemill Road in order to reduce speed through the residential housing estates in the area. It is good to hear that Active Travel funding has led to projects commencing for new cycle paths, footpaths and pedestrianisation – good news for those who seek a more sustainable lifestyle. Your town laneways lend character and interest. Work is in progress to raise their profile and make these areas more inviting. Essential conservation works were undertaken at a section of the medieval wall at Mary Street with the assistance of funding from the Irish Walled Towns Network. We loved the fact that the Town Wall West gate is used on a daily basis to connect to residential areas beyond. Perhaps the nearby blue 'doors' could be painted soon? Selskar Square is modern and inviting. Some finger post signs need replacing soon. We read with interest the plaque denoting the history of Wexford Bridge in all its various guises. It is wonderful to have the train coming right through the town and all was in good order along the railway tracks. Excellent cycling route signage was observed.

Concluding Remarks:

You are successfully engaging with the community and agencies to develop a sustainable town for the benefit of all. Your commitment, approach and enthusiasm are applauded. Thank you Wexford Tidy Towns for your excellent entry and we wish you well in future projects.