

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Wexford - Loch Garman</b>	Ref: <b>458</b>
County: <b>Wexford</b>	Mark: <b>363</b>
Category: <b>G</b>	Date(s): <b>05/06/2023</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	55	56
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	33	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	42	43
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	45	46
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>363</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2023. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór....

The first thing we noted from your application was the formation of a new environmental group called 'Wexford Parish Care for the Earth' and we saw some of their work on our visit. We also noted the 'Wexford Environmental Network' is added to your associated groups that work with you – we counted a total of 22. That is very impressive. Your committee of 8 members work with another 75 volunteers and you use various media types for communications. It is great that you work with the 8 primary and 6 secondary schools and congratulations to all of them for achieving green flags.

The specific projects you would like us to inspect are the plantings in the twin churches as well as the spring planting of daffodils by 'Wexford in Bloom'. Participation in Tidy Towns has been more than 12 years for you, and you are rightly proud of your achievements over the period. This year you are emphasising the diversity of your volunteer force which includes people from other countries.

It is good to have a plan for each year and monitor progress. In that regard, we had a look at your draft plan 2023-2026 and while it includes many objectives, it would be much improved if you prepared in a matrix highlighting when it is anticipated to achieve specific targets. The review of the past 3 years is helpful to see how much you have done. Thanks for your map with a legend. Unfortunately, even the enlarged section was too small for us to read on site, so we suggest you enlarge it next time to fill the A4 page. The other problem is that while some street names are marked on the map, we could not find any such names on many streets. We reverted to using our phone with Google maps app open and that helped. We realise that local Wexford town people who know their streets and perhaps do not even notice the lack of street names on the corners of buildings, would not have these difficulties. However, you should assume that the adjudicator will not be familiar with your town and therefore, have your map assessed beforehand by someone who does not know the area well. We also suggest that an inventory be done of each street with a view to having plaques with street names (bilingual) placed on each corner. Finally, it is great that you included pictures within your application but please label them if they are alongside pictures of some other projects.

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

Well done on the renovation and refurbishment work at Wexford Art Centre – it is good that the project was completed in time for the 2022 Opera Festival. Whilst in the town, we had difficulty finding street names on the buildings. We saw the planting scheme on Abbey Street that is shown in the pictures (unlabelled) on the application form and assume that it is the public realm project. This scheme brightens up the area and allows a view of the old round tower. Finally, with the aid of Google, we found Monck Street – the firm of T Morris on the corner had several displays of Petunias, Pelargoniums and Begonias attached to the building façade. We drove to Trinity Wharf and

viewed the hoarding which we assume hides the proposed works going on there. It is a project for viewing in years to come. Your action on derelict sites has been noted and we agree, it will be important to make progress on that initiative before the 2024 Fleadh Cheoil. Main Street with its many busy shops is a delightful place to walk without the fear of traffic. Most shop fronts looked well and enhanced by floral displays. The delightful two storey red brick building on Selskar Street, built in 1894 is home to 'Green Acres'. A modern style extension to the building forms a significant façade onto the side street which is nicely paved and lined on the two sides with fine specimens of birch trees. A sculpture of the famous Wexford hurler Nicky Rackard is a focal point for what is known as Selskar Square – an attractive break in the linear street.

The introduction of murals on street buildings is a delightful way to improve the townscape – we enjoyed seeking out the large murals on John Street and High Street. On High Street, they help to brighten the car park area. We suggest that some tree planting should be considered here to soften the hard surface effect. In fact, we found several large car parks throughout the city – some appear to be sites awaiting further development. We suggest that many of these sites would benefit from landscape treatment – either the use of hedges on front boundaries if the site will be subject to redevelopment or the planting of trees within the car park to soften its appearance and reduce the impact of cars.

The Wexford Rape Crisis is a nice building, and we admired the planting. It is pleasing to see many impressive buildings in the county town, especially the several churches, the spires of which dominate the townscape. We liked the bilingual explanatory signs beside the historic buildings, such as the one beside the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. Buildings of note include the Talbot Hotel and the Clayton White's Hotel.

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

You have developed a novel way of having the town enhanced by flowers by a separate organisation, Wexford in Bloom, to organise the project. We note that they work to advance orders from retailers, which helps in maintaining a uniform style and the inclusion of pollinating plants and the use of seaweed as fertiliser. Delivering 400 self-watering hanging baskets is a great achievement and we note the support of Wexford Co. Co. in hanging the baskets. The spring floral displays are important, even though they are not seen by TT adjudicators – so the inclusion of pictures is a great help. Well done on that initiative and its expansion – money spent on spring bulb planting lasts a long time as the displays come back every spring.

We visited Min Ryan Park which is located on the edge of Wexford town and noted that this is a new park that was opened in August 2021. This modern designed park is a fantastic resource for the people of Wexford. The layout has an emphasis on nature by undulating topography and an environmentally friendly maintenance regime. Children have plenty of opportunities for play and the MUGA and skatepark provides more facilities. The railing around the playground will in time be hidden by the hedge and we noted that trees are planted within the playground area. The use of low walls with timber capping at junctions is a clever way of providing seating at these places. Unfortunately, some of the young trees on the mounded areas are struggling and may not survive. In other parts of the park, some good-sized birch trees are dead, and we suspect it may be a combination of inadequate watering since planting, especially with the competition from meadow plants. There may also be a problem of soil quality. Timber seats throughout the park are dedicated to various people associated with Min Ryan and the turbulent period of the War of Independence and the Civil War – one is dedicated to her. Wildflower meadows looked great, the swathes of yellow buttercups and white oxeye daisies are very pleasant. The colours are even better and more diverse within the planting at the entrance. The park also has a special area for dogs where they can be let off the lead. There is a small commemorative garden for the First World War the centrepiece of which is a replica in granite of the Cross of Ginchy, the original wooden cross being stored at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge, Dublin.

We read about your plans for the 7-acre site of 'The Rocks' and we could see them on the hill as we drove out the R730. However, as noted by last year's adjudicator, they were hard to find because of the lack of signage. The problem stems from an unsuitable map and the lack of signage. Why does such an important part of the town not have finger post signage? The viewing points installed in Ferrybanks and the adult exercise equipment in Redmond Memorial Park are noted.

As we walked and drove around the town, we were impressed by the many fine trees growing here and there and often in private gardens, church grounds and open spaces. What is striking is the range of species – maples, oaks, ash, yew, cedar etc. Last year's adjudicator mentioned that you were embarking on a town tree survey, but there was no mention of that in this year's application nor in the draft plan. We think it would be a very worthwhile exercise to determine how many and what types of trees there are in the townscape and how do they contribute to biodiversity and climate change. We were delighted to see the fine rows of lime trees in front of the Tesco Extra, shopping complex on Distillery Road. This planting represents a high standard and one to be copied for other schemes and streets.

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

Under this heading you have mentioned the Biodiversity, Wellbeing & Horticultural Project at Loreto School. It includes a winding pathway made with mulch. The use of polytunnels for plant propagation, training sessions and composting. They have other plans for fruit and vegetable growing as part of a wellbeing project. Wexford Environmental Network (WEN) has developed an Edible Gardens Initiative under the title of 'ENVITE' on a 'chemical free' basis. Students from the Mercy School and Selskar College planted beans, potatoes, onions, and will continue with this project. Other organisations such as the Men's Sheds have joined the initiative. We note the involvement of four experts. Under the 'Trees for Wexford' initiative, we note the distribution of 529 native hedgerow saplings and 67 trees to 19 groups from various residential estates.

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

We visited planting schemes done by the Group “Wexford Parish Care for the Earth Group” in the grounds of Rowe Street and Bride Street churches. They appear to have established well and surviving this warm summer. The use of weed killer at the base of the enclosing fence takes from the impact of these schemes. The trees growing under the ash tree have some future because the ash tree is dying. However, we do not understand why trees were planted under a healthy maple tree. The maple tree will live for a long time and the volume of leaves will provide a significant amount of Carbon sequestration – whereas the young trees will fail to thrive in the shade of that tree and would best be transplanted to a more open location where they can establish and be more successful. There seems little point in a project that is based on numbers, unless each tree has sufficient space to grow and establish. We have visited similar Miyawaki projects elsewhere in Ireland, but they are planted in open areas, not under established or mature trees.

Other measures such as installation of bicycle racks and changing to LED bulbs are noted and will contribute to changing patterns of movement by people as well as energy reduction. The e-bike sharing scheme is noted and we look forward to updates on its success

Thank you for the review of activities undertaken in Wexford which are relevant to this criterion. We have noted projects under the heading of tree planting, spring floral displays, making your own self-watering hanging baskets, the Monck Street project, solar powered litter bins, looped bus routes within the town, availing of unsold plants from Aldi and Lidl that might have been discarded, cycle routes, bike stands, LED lights, PV panels on new housing and electric car charging points

In addition, we have noted the projects listed by last year’s adjudicator and which dealt with recycling initiatives, sustainable planting, the green schools programme. It is important to note that 23 marks for this criterion should not be viewed as 41.8% success, because that is not how the system works. Instead, you retain your marks for previous years and obtain additional marks each year for new projects. There are many more areas that you can consider for sustainability for example, tackling food waste and reuse of coffee cups (conscious cup campaign), reducing the use of chemicals for weed control, altering grass mowing regimes and not collecting grass clippings, and working with retailers to cut down on packaging and reminding people to re-use shopping bags. We suggest you consult the handbook on the following link for more ideas on projects under this criterion.

<https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/handbook/>

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

Well done to the core volunteer group with support from schools and community groups to manage litter picks and clean-ups on a regular basis. The grounds of the churches are maintained by the church caretakers. We note your micro-cleaning approach of managing weeds, litter and debris in the one operation which allows you a 6–8-week period before it needs attention. It is great that staff from businesses such as the AIB group provide some help in this task. We recognise that the area from the Quay front to and including Main Street is perhaps the biggest challenge for you because of the volume of people who walk or drive there every day. You also get help from some volunteers at times when they are available and assist by having Wexford Co. Co. pick up the material they collect. There is a problem with cigarette butts when the disposal boxes are vandalised by people seeking to reuse the tobacco. You have been successful in attracting foreign nationals to volunteer to join your group. We note that the volunteers are from 11 countries outside Ireland and the experiences were positive. Thank you for the information on the Gum Litter Taskforce which was launched last year. Well done on all the efforts to keep Wexford town clean and tidy. Within a town the size of Wexford it is difficult to keep it free of litter and weeds, so were not surprised to find some here and there.

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

With so many residential schemes in Wexford town it would indeed be difficult to have an estate competition. However, many local authorities successfully organise ‘Tidy Districts’ or ‘Pride of Place’ competitions, so perhaps that idea could be explored with their Community Department.

We visited the two schemes in the Clonard Area – Beechville and Bloomfield and liked the standard of house and garden maintenance as well as the open spaces. While we were delighted to see quite a few trees on the open spaces, some in Beechville estate were planted too close to the road edge and may in time have to be removed. It is important therefore to plant another line of trees away from the road edge to replace the existing line at some future date. The larger Mount Prospect estate has larger open spaces and greater scope for more tree planting.

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

On approaching Wexford town, we were impressed with the three roundabouts on the by-pass. Tree planting in the roundabout’s looks very well and the slightly different layout on each roundabout helps to identify their location. On the New Ross Road roundabout, we liked the curved planting areas of mainly herbaceous plants displaying colour and texture that added to the scene near the edges. Areas surrounding the roundabouts were appropriately maintained to allow wildflower meadows to develop. While allowing wildflowers to develop in grassed areas looks fine, it is less pleasing to see weeds develop in hard surface areas around poles. The Wexford Bridge from the town to Ferrybanks is impressive and a delight to drive.

## **Concluding Remarks:**

Congratulations on presenting your town for the competition and for making such a great effort to develop projects that will improve the townscape and environment. Well done on your achievements over the past 12 years. We hope that our comments and suggestions in this report will provide guidance for more projects.

