

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Skerries** Ref: **178**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **327**
Category: **E** Date(s): **18/06/2016**
06/08/2016

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	50	51
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	43	44
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	39	40
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	18	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	61	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36	36
TOTAL MARK	450	321	327

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We would like to welcome Skerries back to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2016. It was a pleasure to visit your lovely town after a long absence and to be pleasantly surprised by the many improvements that have been made in recent years. Your sizeable entry was clearly laid out. Thank you for addressing the previous adjudicator's comments. We had picked up a copy of the Skerries tourist map earlier in the day and found this useful in getting around. Skerries is at the top level of the national Tidy Towns competition – we congratulate you on your recent achievements and ongoing hard work. Thank you for including your new 3 Year Tidy Towns plan that enables you to focus on particular areas and monitor your progress going forward. You have a strong community-wide involvement and are encouraging all groups, clubs, businesses and individuals to play their part. You have good networking opportunities through your involvement with Skerries Community Association and the successful Skerries Liaison Committee. This is reflected in your recent results - it is so important (and not always easy) to have the wider community supporting your activities. Your efforts to encourage new residents are lauded. You have two committee members who liaise with youth groups and schools respectively – this is leading you to get more participation from your younger residents.

Well done for seeking help for specific tasks within the community, Not everybody wants to attend meetings or clean ups but there are plenty of other jobs to be done! Your positive working relationship with Fingal Co Co is standing to you. Your committee is well organised and has as strong 'sustainability' ethos. Residents of Skerries are obviously proud of where they live and the reasons why are obvious. You use a wide range of channels to keep the community 'on message'. These include among others your Community Association 'newsflashes', (is this text messaging?), your Facebook page, and parish newsletter. Keep up the excellent work!

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

Skerries has a fine built heritage that you are doing your best to preserve. Some carefully considered painting jobs have been carried out along Skerries main Streets. Many of the shopfronts along the main streets are sympathetic to the traditional character of your attractive streetscape. Your 'best signage' and 'best business' awards are working. This can make such a difference in making the street inviting and attractive. We are delighted to note that funding has been made available to refurbish your lovely Carnegie library – well done for your lobbying efforts in this regard and also in relation to the renovation at Supervalu. 'Before' and 'after' photos would be most helpful to the adjudicator. The unusual Floraville Park project was admired – we're not surprised that the seals are a big hit with the local children! Many buildings caught the eye including the Little Theatre, T.E. Duff Funeral Directors, Garda Station, John Fox's, Skerries bookshop, Skerries Fish Market and Skerries Allcare Pharmacy. The stone buildings at Skerries Mills were admired. Bi-lingual green/white street signage was excellent. All was in neat order at the Dart station – efforts have been here with floral displays. Down towards the pier, the Blue Bar was nicely presented.

You have updated your heritage trail map – well done! Maltings House was admired. Skerries Harps on the Dublin Road is a well-maintained facility. The Health Centre is definitely one of the better ones we have seen, in terms of presentation. Marios Take Away looks well; window boxes need attention however

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

We have to commend you on your various landscaping projects. It is difficult to get it right in a seaside town but we think you have done just that. We especially liked the sensitive planting along Skerries beach and the bright purple blooms that enhance. Your landscaping is used to define boundaries, welcome visitors to the town and 'bring back' otherwise forgotten areas. Yet it is restrained and doesn't detract from your lovely architecture and natural amenities. You now plant mostly perennials, which is an advantage in terms of attractive wildlife, less maintenance and less use of water resources. The Hamilton Monument on the other hand is surrounded by a blaze of red and white – befitting of this more formal setting. Floraville Park (mentioned above) has a more modern landscaping theme and we liked the clean lines here. We particularly admired the seaside-friendly planting in the many beds along the long South Strand Stretch. You are fortunate to have support from groups such as your Guerilla Gardeners, Crann Phadraig the parents. You continue to plant spring bulbs and native trees – a wonderful investment for the next Skerries generation! We admired the cormorant island planting – another fitting piece of sculpture.

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

You are leading the way in this category, which is not surprising as you are so proactive in your approach. Swimming areas at the lovely Red Island were well sign posted with good signage and some suitable planting nearby. Well done to the volunteers who regularly test the water quality here. Interpretative signage with regard to this category was excellent. Skerries is a haven for bird watching and you are fortunate that you have an active local Birdwatch Ireland branch to run several interesting community events during the year. We would be interested in seeing results from the Winter Bird Survey. It is reassuring to read that conservation measures such as the dune fencing project have helped to protect the dunes and further promote wildlife and biodiversity here. There was plenty of information available on all local walking routes, including Sli na Slainte. We are delighted to read that your 'Adopt a Beach' initiative has been relaunched. The area along Skerries beach has some wonderful planting befitting of a seaside area, while still bringing some colour and cheer. You are conscious of the need to maintain wildlife corridors and leave certain areas as they are or more lightly managed. We could see that Fingal Co Co have also adopted this best-practice approach as less used grass verges were left longer than those close to footpaths and footfall areas. This is one of the simple recommendations in the recently launched National Pollinator Plan, which aims to assist our struggling bee population. Similarly Approach roads are well defined and welcoming but not over-manicured – this works perfectly in your natural seaside setting. We particularly like your innovative idea of putting pull-out centre pages relating to Skerries flora and fauna in your local magazine. We read with interest the brief excerpt from Birdwatch Ireland's report on the Tern population. 'Edible Landscape' is another worthwhile project that that would help raise awareness of your local biodiversity in a fun way. Do continue to show that you consider wildlife and biodiversity in all of your planting schemes – in particular bees, butterflies and birds. Well done to the TY students and to the Foroige group for getting involved in biodiversity projects that will make a difference. The information sign on birds at the Mill Pond was particularly admired. Keep up the good work.

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

'Sustainable Skerries' is a term that encapsulates your approach to Tidy Towns. The whole ethos of your Tidy Towns programme appears to be based on minimum environmental impact in whatever you do. You are getting good advice and implementing simple yet effective measures to reduce waste and use of resources locally. You are fortunate to have several local groups with the same core principles in mind, such as the Skerries Allotments - a worthwhile project where participants are growing a range of vegetables, thereby reducing the need for packaging, chemicals and air miles. We are impressed by the Skerries Cycling Initiative, which aims to promote safer cycling, a healthier lifestyle and ultimately fewer car journeys. We like the way that this initiative aims to link up the town, schools, amenities and residential areas to make cycling/walking safe and convenient for Skerries residents. Bike lockers and bike lanes are also helping to promote cycling. Well done to the schools and businesses involved in Green Flag and Green Business initiatives, in particular to the Supervalu for its energy conservation programme. The Sustainable Living workshops sound very interesting – who facilitated these? Your successful 'Repair & Revamp' business is a wonderful way of giving items another life. Do you have a Men's Shed group in Skerries? Keep up the excellent progress.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your busy town was very clean on the day of our visit. There was a boating event finishing up at the pier, yet the surrounding area was spotlessly clean. Your ongoing litter picks and awareness-raising are paying off. Litter bins were well maintained and in a good state of repair. The fact that you have managed to have 50 patches 'adopted' is impressive. Again, you have your young residents to help out with clean ups – scouts, Foroige and local schools. Your 'Adopt a Beach' initiative is also helping in maintaining these areas to a high standard. You are segregating collected material for recycling. There was just a little litter at the bottle banks near the beach. The receptacles here appear rather small in size, however overall they appear to be working ok.

Thank you for clearly spelling out your various actions under the 'Tidiness' heading. Your vigilance in monitoring unauthorised fly posting/posters/signs is commended. Your annual survey and approach to business owners is helping you in presenting a tidy town centre. You are paying attention to vacant properties and trying to ensure they

are kept clean and presentable. Attention is paid to weed control with minimum use of weed killer due to its potential risk to the environment. We acknowledge that the site at the north end of South Strand is derelict. The rather unattractive fencing is not totally secure in its current state so we were just wondering if there was a possibility of removing it or coming up with an alternative?

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

Residences along the main streets and approach roads were, on the whole, well maintained. Skerries has an attractive mix of period homes, fisherman style cottages and modern housing developments. We observed some sensitive modern conversions to adapt some of the older homes for modern lifestyles without taking from their unique character. We admired some lovely gardens with interesting planting for year round colour and interest. Thanks for conveying to us how you engage with residents and get their buy-in for the Tidy Towns effort. Your 'Best Kept' awards are a good way of getting residents into the Tidy Towns spirit. The Adopt a Patch Initiative extends to housing areas and ensures that they are kept litter free. We admired the beautiful home at the junction of Miller's Lane/Holmpatrick. The thatch cottage, with its white/purple colour scheme makes for an attractive colour scheme in the town centre. Any residential areas visited were both neatly maintained and litter free, for example estates off Shenick Rd, Balbriggan St and Sherlock Terrace among others. Residents are obviously proud of their town - well done to all for playing a part.

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

Approach Roads are welcoming and maintained to a good standard, while not over manicured. Your comments with regard to verges and promotion of biodiversity are noted. The approach from Balbriggan is most scenic and nicely maintained. Information boards and Tourist Signage were in good order as was directional signage for drivers. Bilingual street name signage was evident throughout. We were particularly happy to see that you are embracing your charming laneways. These were clean, inviting and each had their own identity. Some interesting street names were observed on our walkabout, giving a glimpse of the town's history. Skerries has some attractive pedestrian and cycle connections that enable people to stay away from busy traffic and have a more enjoyable experience of the towns. The Swords Approach Road is particularly welcoming and shows a sense of care and pride. Your vigilance regarding advertising signs (see tidiness) is also making a positive difference to the presentation of your approach roads.

Concluding Remarks:

An excellent presentation of information and the reality on the ground doesn't disappoint. Well done Skerries Tidy Towns! Keep up the excellent work.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure to return to Skerries for second round adjudicating. It is impressive to see that your performance in the competition is still progressing forward. It is suggested that you list your projects in order that they will be seen. It was difficult to follow the map with written numbers, especially as they weren't in order as being visited. The built environment and streetscape of Skerries continues to impress any visitor. The Library remains an imposing structure, suitable adorned with seasonal tubs and window boxes. In stark contrast the modern design of Floraville Park was admired. The thatched cottages throughout the town are very well presented and add such value to the streetscape. The harbour area continues to impress with the sailing club taking centre stage. Landscaping continues to be a strong point for Skerries. The planting of seasonal plants gives a splendid splash of colour and brightens up buildings and street areas. As mentioned by the first adjudicator you are commended on your use of perennials. The planting at south strand blends naturally with the surrounds. Do continue this approach to planting. The allotments were visited and it is impressive to see the numbers that are in use. Is all the waste from the allotments composted? As with the first judging, the town was generally clean and tidy for second adjudication. Some litter was noted in the car park at the harbour but was fresh litter. Some small areas of weed growth were noted at kerbs but these were a minimum. Approach roads were again to a high standard. The roundabout at the bridge on the Dublin Road certainly impressed. The vegetation at the river across from this roundabout seems to be getting slightly out of control. You are commended on this year's application and presentation. You certainly take a strong sense of pride in your town and this is reflected. Well done and continued success.