

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Skerries** Ref: **178**

County: **Dublin(Fingal)** Mark: **303**

Category: **E** Date(s): **19/06/2011**
03/08/2011

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	48	47
The Built Environment	50	36	37
Landscaping	50	40	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32	33
Litter Control	50	35	36
Waste Minimisation	20	15	15
Tidiness	30	20	20
Residential Areas	40	30	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36	36
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	301	303

Overall Development Approach:

Skerries TidyTowns Committee is heartily welcome to the TidyTowns competition for 2011. Thank you for your submission and for the supplementary material that gives a glimpse into the life of the residents of Skerries. Your map is beautifully presented and ideal for the adjudicator on survey work. The 5 Year Plan shows that you are a group with an understanding of problem areas in the presentation of Skerries, that you are a group with a vision of the Skerries you would like to see evolve. Unlike last year's adjudicator who commented that the content of your submission was concise this year's feels that the essay style used in answering questions on, for instance 'the level of voluntary commitment', is rambling. A bulleted format would make the vital, relevant content more accessible to the reader. One is pleased to read that the interaction between the various groups of volunteers creates community spirit and 'a commitment to Skerries'. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

The Built Environment:

It is as if there were two towns in Skerries, the town that lives by the beach and the inland town that just gets on with life. The seaside town is consumed with such trappings as beautifully appointed lifeboat buildings, a Martello Tower, a pier, a Sea Urchin restaurant, promenade walks. It is the sculpture that unites the town. The oystercatchers have strayed from their habitat. Something else also unites the town: the lack of any uniform plan to the design of the residential streets and one- time businesses. Houses crop up, become attached to their more stately or, maybe, more humble neighbours and settle into a harmonious disjoint. Churches of all three denominations are well preserved, the Methodist Church almost hidden away by the surrounding fuss. All three clocks are keeping time and seem as if they have been keeping time since the library was built. The adjudicator noticed the information board on the heritage trail but forgot to read it on leaving the mill complex, another feature of the Skerries past. Take a bow on the name plates on the lanes. Fourteen lanes gives one a sense of town life prior to the motor car. The signage that was already in place

makes Skerries a friendly town to negotiate. Four thatched houses suggest Skerries lives happily between Tiger Ireland and the Ireland of the Forties and earlier. O'Leary's is the favourite with no disrespect meant to the other thatched buildings. Some shop fronts took the adjudicator's fancy, for example The Black Raven, Image Depot, M N Davis Supplies, The Frock Exchange, the Gladstone Inn, Malting House Inn to mention a few. Your submission mentions Skerries Hardware and justifiably so. Well done. The clutter outside the door actually adds to the streetscape and does not impede pedestrians. All buildings cannot be occupied but one hardly notices. An achievement in itself. Then a building without a roof is painted and boarded to keep up appearances with its neighbours. The adjudicator was enchanted by the Gaeilge names throughout from Muilte na Sceirí to Sráid Tomás Láimhín, Páirc Thaobh an Mhulláin. None of the English translations had the same meaning.

Landscaping:

The two town dimension can also apply to landscaping. Parks and amenities are provided for the beach goers. The parks are set up for walkers, joggers, day trippers who watch from the car. The wind will ensure a short life for dainty bedding plants. Hardy shrubs may survive. But inland every opportunity to bring summer colour to an area is grasped unless the space has been designated shrubbery or open space. Attractive beds of summer colour the streets. The parks now are for those involved in contact sport. Just like the beach lovers these athletes are well catered for. The sporting amenities are excellent. The volunteers at the Community Centre have done well in their landscaping and planting. One wonders has there been a change of policy regarding the maintenance of the shrubberies on the slopes at the mill complex. The monument is another delight, its railings adding to its appeal and the summer colour an uplift. The grassed island on the way from Balbriggan is about the only area that could be upgraded though the grass looks fine too.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

A seaside location increases the biodiversity of a town naturally. One reads your submission with interest: People are lining up to adopt a beach. What a wonderful notion. One would love to understand what is involved in adopting a beach. The adjudicator noticed and was pleased that the hedges had a healthy stubble, healthy for the nesting birds. And also looking well. One wonders about the wisdom of planting cordylines after the ravages of the past two winters. The walks up at the Mill and at the Community Centre invite people to have a healthy heart. Slí na Sláinte signs add further encouragement. Not only is this town blessed with miles of seashore but it also has a stream flowing by and a pond with swans and ducks. Beautiful. This must be healthy heart town.

Litter Control:

Adoption is a concept you should sell to other less successful entrants in this competition whose committees find it impossible to cope with the strain of the work. 'Adopt a patch' may be the way forward in litter picking. Some strategy is working in Skerries. Your litter awareness strategy in visiting the schools is noted and commended. But there is litter, yet nothing to complain about. There are different styles of bin, as if to confuse the adjudicator. The bin at the oystercatchers suits its surroundings as a modern piece of street furniture and is used. The bin at the green on Red Island is a robust one of material that will resist the corrosive salty air. It too is used to great effect.

Waste Minimisation:

Thank you for not presenting the content of this section in essay form. Each project flashes at the reader from the page. Each flash is exciting. The adjudicator looked forward to seeing the allotments but could not locate them. Include their location on next year's map. One initiative that caught the eye was the use of left over paint, clever. Well done also on the use of the train. You are making great strides in this section.

Tidiness:

This adjudicator feels that by its nature a seaside area should not look too tidy, that wilderness is a part of the seaside experience. One has that experience in Skerries. Skerries has not been sanitised to appear neat and tidy. The opposite to tidy is not necessarily untidy. The rehabilitation of that shed down at the pier, an ice cream shop now, shows what a coat of whitewash can do to uplift an area. A letter missing from a shop sign has the opposite effect. Traffic does well in a busy port and seaside. One information board has been badly vandalised at the Mill. What a waste. On some roads the surface is an issue.

Residential Areas:

Mourne View looks very well as a traditional estate from many years ago. It does not seem daunted by its more modern neighbours at Skerries Rock, also beautiful. Maybe the cottages about the town should be dealt with under built environment but they are for the most part occupied and in all cases charming. Styles vary. Once we have a terrace of white cottages. Then the delightful ones near Pump Lane. A different style ageing on the Old Dublin Road. All gracious. Did those terraces once have individual names? Another feature of the housing is the number of small pockets of housing that crop up all over. Shenick Park has an ideal open

space for your meadowing plan.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The namestone on the road from Rush is discrete due to space constraints. We learn that Skerries is twinned with a French town.

No trumpets sound on the approach road from Balbriggan. It is most likely felt that the car driver is distracted enough by the view to have to multi task and appreciate the welcome. The sea is sufficient welcome.

Residential areas and the sea usher one into town, the residential areas brightening up the experience with their colourful planting.

General Impression:

There is a special challenge in presenting a seaside town. The wind and rain, the constant traffic, the day trippers can leave walls looking faded, jaded and shabby. Not so in Skerries. Walls are intact and sturdy. The area of the Red Island is accessible and attractive looking. The inner town has to deal with the problems of any inland town, especially the threat of vacant buildings. Unless one looks for them one will not find those because they are made to fade into their immediate surroundings. But those comments are confined to what the eye experiences. The eye is missing when the sale of kids' clothes is held. One cannot knock at a door and ask to see if energy saving light bulbs are in use. But one believes they are. Well done to Skerries.

Second Round Adjudication:

Congratulations on another excellent submission to the competition this year. This paints a great picture of your work, achievements and overall philosophy in which the environment seems to be central. Well done. This wasn't the adjudicator's first visit to this charming town and it was great to be back here on a bright summer's day. The town really looked its best with so many businesses putting in a big effort to keep their premises bright and appealing. The multitude of eateries and cafes where one can sit out on the wide pavements really adds to the holiday atmosphere. It was great to see two second-hand shops so well stocked and patronised. There are simply too many great shopfronts to single out the exemplary. One mini-supermarket/newsagent has made little effort however, and detracts from the overall impression of the street - there is broken signage and unnecessary clutter. Traffic was calm on adjudication day and correct parking was being sternly enforced! The adjudicator is so impressed with the adopt-a-beach programme. This is inspirational and sets a great example for the rest of the country - keep it up! The dune conservation work is first-class and many wildflowers were admired. Your work with Birdwatch Ireland is excellent - the articles were enjoyed. The adjudicator also saw in the current Skerries News that the community had helped to avert a potentially disastrous pollution event. Your vigilance is admired. The heritage trail is excellent but keep an eye on the signs that condensation doesn't obscure or ruin your really informative signs. The beach was busy with swimming lessons underway on a day that was more suitable for sailing than swimming! The former was also the subject of classes near the pier - the town was really abuzz on the waterfront. The pier looked improved although works were underway on adjudication day. The public toilets literally gleamed! Well done on having cycle-parking facilities there were many fellow-cyclists on day of visit. Road surfaces are poor on the Dublin Road and dangerous in one part of Station Road. The roundabout by the bridge is simply lovely. Well done to the Fingal County Council crew who were out on day of visit. The library is a real gem and the landscaping here is also beautiful. You have much achieved of which you may be justifiably proud.