

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newcastle** Ref: **1037**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **295**
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36	38
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	34	36
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	37	37
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	38
TOTAL MARK	450	287	295

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

You are very welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2017. Well done to your Committee for all the work undertaken by Newcastle Residents Association over the last year, as set out in your Submission and Application form. Thank you for your very clear and comprehensive Entry submission – The Application Form was very informative and the photographs showing works undertaken and initiatives progressed this year were very helpful. The laminated A3 size map attached to your application with a numbered key, facilitated the easy identification of the specific projects areas of interest on site. We note that you have 5 members on your Committee meeting monthly and this is supplemented by additional sub-committee meetings for specific projects, with a further 30 volunteers available to assist with your work, as required. It is good that this year you have focussed on encouraging and developing more Community Involvement. We note you have undertaken a Community Survey eliciting 50 responses- this is a very worthwhile method of engagement and allows you to assess the needs of local residents and receive any ideas they may have and plan better for the future. The public meeting called '2020 Vision' attended by 85 local residents was very worthwhile and it is noted that a sub-committee to work on a Village Design Statement has been established. It is great that Newcastle Residents Association have prepared a draft Strategic Plan for the village 2017-2022 identifying a need for a Village Design Statement, socio-economic profile, and a Tidy Towns Plan for the village, based on a 4- year cycle. Your use of Social Media and establishment of an Instagram Account as well as progressing your on-line presence is to be commended and will facilitate greater youth involvement into the future. The e-mail and hard copy Newsletters together with Social Media activity provides a great resource which keeps all local residents 'in the loop' as to what is going in the area. This regular communication is also so important in bringing the Community together facilitating responses to specific local incidents where they arise e.g. your generous fund-raising activities which helped local fire victims. You have established strong linkages to a wide range of bodies, agencies and businesses and this co-operation is important and will assist in the effective implementation of your plans. The Free Coffee arrangement with Irish Country Markets is definitely a win-win and provides a very good incentive for new volunteers to engage with Tidy Towns. We note that you currently have a three-year rolling plan based on the Tidy Towns Judging Categories which runs out in 2018. The strong commitment to the future sustainable planning and development of Newcastle and its environs led by Newcastle Residents Association is worthy of great praise.

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

Saint Francis National School was visited and the general surrounds of the school and Church were noted positively. The Sessile Oak which is a very important and imposing feature at this location was also noted. The single storey Fitzwilliam cottages add greatly to the character and heritage of the village and your efforts in relation to the continued protection of the fabric of the buildings including the chimneys are to be commended. One wonders are these protected structures under the County Development Plan? It would be good to restore and brighten up the

old petrol pumps in the village which are now a little drab. The ornamental concrete planters on the footpath opposite the petrol pumps do little to enhance the area and could be replaced with something more attractive. It was interesting to read about the historical importance of the Pack Horse bridge and its association with King James 2nd who reputedly suffered a nosebleed here, on the way back from the Battle of the Boyne in 1690! Perhaps some information could be provided on site regarding the history of the bridge. We were very impressed with the aerial overview of Newcastle presented on the Heritage Sign located opposite the Sea Road junction. Of particular note and interest was the Newcastle historical timeline representation here, which was very informative. The sign and adjoining seat made from recycled plastic were noted to be very clean and tidy on the day of adjudication. Your Committee has been very active in relation to a wide range of projects under this category which have been noted and you are commended for all the hard work carried out in relation to these over the year.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The three mature Cedar trees spotted in the village were greatly admired. Also noted was the Giant Redwood located at Woodlawn House - it appears to be growing reasonably well despite some die-back at the top of the crown, although this should not compromise the long-term future potential of this tree. The Castle Inn car park was visited and it was disappointing to note the extensive use of herbicides and brown vegetation here particularly along the banks of the little Vartry River. It is understood that the works on the construction of this car park are not yet complete. However, it would be good to retain visual access to the little Vartry from the car park area and to encourage the development of native planting on the riverbanks, in keeping with the riverside location. The extensive use of ornamental shrubs or non-native screen-type planting on the banks here would not be recommended. An overall landscaping scheme would also enhance the presentation of the car park generally. The Tidy Towns Committee should where possible, continue to liaise closely with the owners of this property, as this project progresses. The move towards the use of permanent perennial type planting schemes in the village core is noted.

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

The Sea Road was visited and the section of stream at Calder's Bridge (in the vicinity of Healy Farrell Park, Newcastle GAA Club Grounds) was greatly admired. There is an abundance of natural riverside vegetation here which is worthy of protection and the water quality in the stream appears to be very good. The sensitive clearance of briars at this location is no doubt required from time to time. It was good that the stream and environs can be easily viewed over the low wall by pedestrians using the footpath. The access to the beach on Sea Road at Six Mile Point was also visited and the old Railway Station cottage at this location greatly impressed. Unfortunately, due to time constraints it was not possible to identify any of the threatened Red Data List plants such as Sea Kale and Yellow Horned Poppy which are growing on the adjacent Newcastle Beach. It is noted that you are currently carrying out research in relation to the preparation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for Newcastle aimed at protecting the landscape and natural heritage of the Newcastle area and we wish you well with this work.

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

You continue to progress your 'Community car-pooling initiative' through carsharing.ie which is successful and is now yielding some benefits. The reduction in food/shopping miles resulting from the success of the long established North Wicklow Country Market held in the Community Centre, ties in well with your 'Think Global, Buy Local' strategy. The re-use of glass jars, bottles, plastic and cardboard tubs in conjunction with the Market is also a worthy initiative under this category and it is noted that you have a 'leave one take one' library operating from the Community Centre. The tradition of collecting kindling on walks along the road or along the beach promotes tidiness and provides a free local source of fuel and is to be encouraged. Thank you for printing your application double-sided this year in response to last year's comments! For next year you could consider further initiatives under this category such as encouraging the use of zero - carbon electric vehicles, providing an e-car charge point (s) in the village, providing cycle parking in the village, the development of Greenway trails and cycle routes in the area, encouraging the development of small solar farms on appropriate sites, the greater use of solar panels on roofs, heat exchange units to reduce energy consumption by households/businesses, greater use of water butts for watering gardens and village planters, organising stop food waste awareness seminars etc. Grant funding may be available to provide energy efficiency upgrades for community and commercial facilities.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is good that local schoolchildren are involved in your anti-litter campaign by designing posters to raise awareness of the need to 'Keep Newcastle Clean'. The erection of signs at the beach targeting dog-fouling will, we hope yield positive results. It is good that your campaigns over the years seem to be having an impact in that the total number of bags collected from the village and from the beach seems to be dropping to the extent that it is normally not necessary to order a skip for disposal- keep up the good work on this. Your 'Strut and Pluck as you Pound' initiative for local walkers is a great idea, as much of the litter generated along roads in the area and along the beach seems to be discarded from passing cars. There was an absence of litter in the core of Newcastle village on adjudication Day – hearty congratulations on this.

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

Hunter's Leap housing estate was visited and the presentation of the estate was found to be excellent - well done to all the residents concerned here. The standard of maintenance of open spaces street trees and roadside kerbs at Racefield estate was also admired. Seacourt housing estate was inspected and it was noted that works were underway on footpath improvements here. The traffic ramps in the estate would benefit from renewal and an old

stump of a tree near the entrance could be removed to ground level to ease grass maintenance here. The sylvan approach and entrance to Castle Manor Estate was particularly admired. The standard of maintenance throughout this estate was excellent. However, the sweeping of road surfaces at kerb edges is important for overall presentation and there was some discarding of green waste noted on the open space towards the inner- most part of the estate.

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

The overall finish on the roundabout at the N 11 approach to the village was admired and in particular the roses planted and in bloom under the Traffic Chevron signs, looked very well on the day of adjudication. Road surfaces within the village and along approaches were generally of a good standard. The grass area and boundary hedgerow along the frontage of the property known as 'Watchtower House' was maintained to an excellent standard and considerably enhances the approach and entrance to Newcastle. The stone surround to the 'Welcome' sign on the Dublin approach was admired. The stone 'Style' in this area was also noted and this is a feature of significant heritage value worthy of protection. Roadside margins and road signage within the village and on the approaches to the village were generally maintained a high standard.

Concluding Remarks:

We trust your efforts to attract more local support and engagement with your activities will yield results. Newcastle has an attractive streetscape and has significant heritage features in the area and the village has potential to progress well in the Competition. It is noted that you have chosen a 'Rook' to form part of the new 'Newcastle Heritage Village' logo symbolising the important role of Community and we salute the Committee and all those volunteers and members of the community who have assisted you with your work during the year. We hope you find the comments in the report helpful and wish you well in your future endeavours.