

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Wicklow** Ref: **244**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **311**
Category: **E** Date(s): **26/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	44	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	32	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	450	304	311

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you for your very clear and comprehensive Entry submission and copy of your 3 Year Plan and well done to your committee for all the work undertaken by Wicklow Tidy Towns over the last year. You are very welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2017. Following the comments in last year's report regarding the quality of the maps, the two maps provided as part of the submission this year were very clear and assisted greatly in the judging of your town. We noted with great interest the explanation of the long history of Wicklow Town and in particular the derivation of the Town's name from the Norse and Gaelic equivalent. It is noted that you have 8 Members on your Committee meeting monthly and a further 46 local residents who volunteer to carry out your works programme on Tuesday and Thursday nights and on an ongoing basis. It is great to see your Committee has established and maintained strong links to other bodies, clubs and associations (11 plus) such as Wicklow Municipal District, Wicklow County Council, local schools, St Patricks GAA Club, Wicklow Rovers F.C., Wicklow Rugby Club and BBH Residents Association, Crinion Park Residents, Men's Sheds, Buion Mhuire Lourdes Guides, Scouts, Super Valu, Wicklow Chamber, Ecology Centre and Dominican Farm and St. Patrick's Church. You have therefore, worked extremely hard this year to increase your involvement with the wider Community in Wicklow thus creating a better awareness of the work of Wicklow Tidy Towns within the Community. Events which you have organised and been involved in such as the Biodiversity Workshops and Biodiversity Plan Launch, National Spring Clean along the beach, Coastwatch Event, Up-cycling Night, Taste of Wicklow, Culture Night, Children's Planting Project all prove that Wicklow Tidy Towns is a vibrant and dynamic organisation which is making a real impact on the Town of Wicklow to the benefit of all inhabitants and visitors alike. Your Committee's success in securing significant funding for worthwhile Projects in the Town is worthy of great praise and we wish you well with the successful completion of these projects. It is very encouraging for the Committee that there is a very positive attitude amongst the public towards the work of Tidy Towns in Wicklow and this is reinforced with good communication methods employed by your Committee, such as your very active Facebook page. As you know Tidy Towns is all about Communities working together for the betterment of all and we wish you well in your future endeavours in inspiring cohesion amongst all those bodies involved in improving the Town of Wicklow which we have no doubt will have lasting economic and social benefits.

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

The streetscape pattern and building forms in Wicklow Town are of significant architectural quality and Heritage value and largely remain intact in the central core of the Town. The shopfront at Philip Healy's Public House premises was particularly admired as was Tá Sé's artistic external presentation with its excellent window displays. The presentation of the Bridge Tavern and the Bridge Street Book Store which had a wonderful window display, both impressed. The colourful plant displays outside the Bloom and Plants Garden Centre were admired as they provided some interest and colour along Abbey Street, although it is important to ensure such external displays do

not adversely affect the walkability of footpaths in the Town. The Monument commemorating Captain Halpin at Fitzwilliam Square and the surrounding trees here, really enhance the historic character of this part of the town. The painting of the railings is noted here. Public seats placed at various locations in the Town have advertising inset panels which, from the point of view of this adjudicator, are of variable quality. The use of these seats and the prominence of the advertising and its impact on the appearance of the Town, might be reviewed? The Jack and Jill shopfront sign is partly missing and could be replaced. The quality of the shop-signs on a number of premises could be reviewed, such as the E- Cigarette Store and Mick's Barber Shop. The Plaza and outdoor seating area, including formal tree planting at Market Square was particularly admired. This is a wonderful public space and the trees and floral displays here really caught the eye. The use of recycled plastic seats and planters around the town was noted positively. The entrance to Wicklow Jail is a high quality public space and with great facilities for parking bicycles! Perhaps the public phone-box located here, which generally detracts from the area, could be removed? It would also be beneficial to try and restrict unsightly Temporary/Commercial signage attached to the railings, surrounding the Grand Hotel. It is noted that you have identified six premises requiring immediate attention along Main Street and have secured funding for the necessary remedial work - we wish you well in progressing this project. The Abbey Grounds were visited and the importance of this site in terms of its historic Ecclesiastical ruins and mature trees was fully recognised – this is a wonderful Heritage Property which it is understood is open to the Public during daylight hours. However, it may be largely overlooked by visitors to the Town? Subject to the normal security arrangements, perhaps consideration could be given to providing greater connectivity between the adjacent Public car park and the Abbey Grounds to enable the site to be developed as a tourist amenity, in consultation with Church Authorities? The site of the Black Castle was visited and we note you have received funding to undertake a Geo Survey etc. here in conjunction with the School of Archaeology, UCD. The views up and down the coast at the Black Castle site were particularly admired and it is great that you have been able to secure funding for research, improved public access and heritage signage at this important Heritage property. The extensive areas of natural rock and cliff face were impressive as were the swathes of naturalised sea-thrift plantings in flower- perhaps a greater area of uncut grass where ground is uneven could be retained so as to encourage wildlife diversity. No doubt Public Safety is also a major issue to consider in the vicinity of the cliffs! A scaled down version of the Castle as it once looked during the early Middle Ages or a graphic representation of same, might be erected on site to provide visitors with a view of how the Castle looked in its heyday- you may already have plans for this? A small stone structure with a heavy stone roof was noted near the Castle site and it was wondered what was the function or importance of this building? The presentation of the RNLI station on the south bank of the Harbour was greatly admired.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The 'Orchard' Public Park situated to the front of the high perimeter wall of Wicklow Jail was presented to an excellent standard. The appropriate and well-tended planting schemes and tastefully designed and presented commemorative Sculpture feature here, greatly impressed. The tall perennial planting scheme situated on the road margin under the trees opposite the Bay View Hotel provided a riot of pink colour and significantly enhanced the presentation of Main Street. The unusual specimen weeping Monterey Cypress tree situated on the Abbey Grounds at the entrance to the public carpark was noted positively as were the floral displays and the two small trees which frame the AIB building at Abbey Street. The colourful planting bed at the entrance to the Public car park, greatly enhances this area. The banner signs fixed to the lighting poles and the hanging baskets added great colour and interest along the Main Street.

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

One of the highlights in the Town under this category is an open section of stream located adjacent to the Old Forge and Penthouse Night Club premises. This natural feature enclosed by old stone walls is of significant wildlife, heritage and amenity value and efforts should be made to ensure the stream and environs are not adversely affected by any future development in this area. A pied wagtail was even spotted feeding here! The spherical granite bollards, triangular seats and the avenue of trees at Bachelors Walk were admired. It was noted that you have established a Biodiversity Walk here and the colourful herbaceous perennial planting schemes are also pollinator friendly. The 'Sensory Bed' at Bachelor's Walk designed for colour as well as scent was noted positively. The floral displays attached to parapets of the concrete Parnell pedestrian bridge over the Leitrim River, close to Bachelor's Walk were also noted. As these displays require considerable maintenance and watering etc. perhaps in the longer term, the effort to maintain these plantings might be reviewed in the context other worthwhile planting projects in the area. 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 on these over the year.

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

You have been very vigilant in identifying suitable items which can be saved for re-use for Wicklow Tidy Towns works such as the stockpiling of topsoil generated from a footpath improvement works, making use of recyclable equipment such as a golf buggy for litter collection and installing salvaged 2x 1000 litre water containers for rainwater harvesting, which facilitates watering of plantings during dry periods. Waste segregation following litter picks continues and you save all plant containers and trays for re-use, where this is possible. Bike stands have been provided at the Leitrim cycleway following discussions with the project engineer and you have arranged an upcycling event dealing with the re-use of old furniture in conjunction with a local business Collette's Creations. It is good to note that a range of Sustainable Waste topics are covered on your Facebook Page, with regular tips provided on how to reduce waste and save energy. For next year Wicklow Tidy Towns could consider further initiatives under this category such as ; encouraging local people to engage in further sustainable waste, water, energy and transport actions e.g. car-pooling and park and ride initiatives, promoting the use of low carbon electric vehicles, promoting the installation of extra e-car charge point(s) in the Town, extending cycle parking facilities in

the Town, the development of further greenways 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, promoting greater use of water butts for watering in private gardens, organising stop food waste seminars etc. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland website has good information in relation to the development of Better Energy Communities. You could also speak to the Environmental Officer at the Council on possibly participating in the European Week for Waste Reduction which takes place in November each year. Visit www.ewwr.eu for more information. www.stopfoodwaste.ie is a website that you may also find helpful. The Green Home Programme may also be of interest to residents living in Wicklow (www.greenhome.ie). Grant funding may also be available to provide energy efficiency upgrades for community and commercial facilities.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Following on from the Green Dog Walker's initiative you have piloted a 'Dog Fouling Project' using an Audio Device placed at the playground on the Murrough. The results of the survey to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of this initiative are awaited with interest. It is noted that Wicklow Tidy Towns has taken control of the maintenance of dog bins in the Town and you also work closely with staff employed by the Municipal District Council in the control of litter, including carrying out 3 litter picks per week, during the summer months including Sunday Mornings. The cleaning of Bottle banks at AIB car park and the Bus Eireann Shelter opposite Tesco are now within the remit of Wicklow Tidy Towns – a significant task and your group has also been instrumental in the removal of unsightly phone boxes at Fitzwilliam Square and elsewhere. On adjudication day, litter control in Wicklow Town was good and the Town was largely litter free.

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

Marlton Demesne Estate was visited and was well presented, with an absence of litter in the estate. Perhaps the ESB kiosk on the open space could be screened with some perimeter hedge planting? A perennial planting scheme could be provided under the 'Welcome to Wicklow' sign at Marlton Road. At Brooklands estate there was significant growth of grass and weeds along some of the roadside kerbs. Saint Manntan's Park was well maintained and presentable. Consider planting the roundabout near the entrance to Crinnion park to provide a feature here and to reduce grass maintenance. The narrow margin behind the footpath at the entrance to Colley Row could be reinstated. Tree guards and stakes might be removed from some of the trees in this area. Ballynerrin Playpark was visited and the fabulous views across the town, landscape, coast and mountains beyond were greatly admired. The general maintenance of this Park was good. However, the main litter bin has seen better days and could be replaced. It would be good to paint the traffic safety barriers at the entrance to the Park situated along the main St Laurence's Road.

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

It is noted that you have concentrated your efforts this year on the Dublin approach to the Town and have carried out works such as the painting of fence at the Wicklow Rovers frontage plus path improvements, the washing of the bus shelter opposite Tesco and clearance of vegetation where necessary. The colourful rose planting under the sign on the Dublin Approach to the Town was noted positively. On the Brittas approach, along the very scenic Dunbur Road the public car park overlooking the Wicklow Golf Course was visited and it can be reported that it was completely litter free. However, one of the picnic benches here has seen better days and may need to be repaired or replaced. The planting scheme beneath the 'Welcome to Wicklow Town' sign was very colourful and provides a very attractive feature at the entrance to the town. The maintenance of the margins along the Dunbur Road from Brittas Bay were particularly admired, with many areas left to grow naturally with long grass, thereby encouraging biodiversity. Hawkstown Relief Road was visited and there were some issues with regard to the landscape maintenance along this road - the establishment of hedge planting along the margins is somewhat patchy and there is significant growth of weeds at major road junctions, where groundcover planting has failed to establish properly. A landscaping scheme on the Ashtown Roundabout would be of benefit, so as to remove the grassed area and provide a feature at the entrance to the Town. The spraying of herbicide along the footpath at Marlton Road was noted.

Concluding Remarks: