

# Tidy Towns Competition 2018

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Skibbereen** Ref: **693**  
County: **Cork(West)** Mark: **322**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **10/07/2018**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2017</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46	47
Streetscape & Public Places	50	43	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	42	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	36	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	19	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	38
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>322</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Skibbereen An Scoibairin chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. It is great to see that tidy towns projects have widespread support in your town with the 15 committee members assisted by 26 volunteers and 45 from other community and sports groups helping out. This is a large number of volunteers by any measure in the demonstrates that the level of community spirit in Skibbereen is high. We are pleased to read that your Committee have built up links with a host of agencies and other bodies that include; Cork County Council, the Herald Barry trust and the Heritage Centre. We were surprised to see that Tus and the West Cork Development Partnership were not mentioned and we wondered if they are involved? Businesses in your town are clearly involved with the Chamber of Commerce, Spearline labs, KWD and Vodafone Ireland all providing support and sponsorship. We were particularly impressed by the number of community and voluntary groups who help you out with Incredible Edible Skibbereen, the plastic recycling project, the Herbyville project, the Wildlife Project and Mens Sheds all actively engaged in your work. Your communication strategy is both comprehensive and effective with both traditional and digital communication methods used. We were delighted to read that your committee have built up a close partnership with many of the schools in the town and that schoolchildren are now involved in a range of exciting projects. Why not take the next step and form a junior tidy towns committee and give school children and youth groups responsibility for their own projects? We are delighted that the tidy towns project has enabled residents, businesses and young people in Skibbereen to come together and work towards improving the town and we applaud the committee for its role in bringing everyone together. Thank you for your completed application form. This was a very comprehensive and detailed document and it was helpful in understanding your work. However, at 73 pages, it is becoming a little too long. The map was reasonably good but we wondered if an A3 version of this map be submitted next year? The Tidy Towns Action Plan was read with interest but it is recommended that projects are identified under each of the tidy towns categories over a 3-5 year period.

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

These are exciting times in Skibbereen! We were delighted to see that a major new project is taking place with Uillinn the West Cork Arts Centre under development in the centre of your town. It is noted that the project also appears to involve improvements and upgrading works to the river and surrounding roads, paths and public spaces. It was surprising to see that there was no reference to this project in your application and we look forward to seeing further progress and hearing more details in 2019. Elsewhere in the town, the range of fine institutional buildings that can be observed emphasise the strong role of Skibbereen in education, local government and other matters in West Cork. There is an almost overwhelming range of fine historic buildings to be seen and you are commended on drawing all of these structures together and including them on your excellent Heritage Trail (with smart phone app). A number of these buildings stand out with the natural stone Abbeystrewery Church and the adjacent Hall drawing

positive attention while the majestic St Patrick's Cathedral has a commanding presence. The Courthouse also looked well and we were delighted to see that the old Church on Bridge Street has been returned to active use as a popular restaurant. We would also like to commend the many business and shop owners in Skibbereen who have worked hard to present their commercial premises to a high standard. While they are too numerous to mention, special attention is due to Hamiltons Pharmacy (its wonderfully curved glass window is a true rarity nowadays), Charles McCarthy estate agents, an Chistin Beag, the Tudor style Permanent TSB building and adjacent Higgildy Piggildy, Designs, Sean Murrays, Pierce Hickey, Fields Coffee House and Gruagaire. Both the Post Office and the Bank of Ireland also looked very well. We would like to commend your committee on the completion of a number of excellent projects for this year. The three signposted walking trails are a wonderful new addition to your town and they draw together all of the built and natural heritage highlights of Skibbereen for the visitor. Project paint up is an excellent initiative and we are no doubt that it has had a strongly positive influence on the smart appearance of your town centre. We are pleased to see that the Russagh Mill Hostel is in the midst of a big cleanup and well done on writing to the owners of derelict houses and requesting them to tidy up the buildings. The newly painted hoarding on North Street is a colourful and engaging diversion and we were delighted to read that An Post have taken over a derelict site on Market Street and look forward to seeing it developed in the years ahead.

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

The range and quality of landscaping schemes to be seen in Skibbereen on adjudication day revealed that your committee have been very busy with projects under this category. The use of colourful landscape beds and planters to enhance key points throughout the town such as the Square and the space to the front of the Library and the courthouse is acknowledged. The landscaped beds (and seating areas) enhance the square in the centre of the town while the shrubs and trees in the permanent beds at the Library and the Skibbereen Adult Education Centre provide further interest. The well-stocked hanging baskets and raining flower boxes in front of the Courthouse provide warm summer colours on this key approach to your town. The newly planted beds opposite the playground of North Street looked bright and fresh during our visit. The nice planters and treeplanting in front of the Aldi store also looked well. While the impact of the colourful seasonal planting is appreciated, it is recommended that a greater proportion of perennials and evergreens is considered for permanent planting beds— such as those in the square. Additional perennials and evergreens will provide you with a number of advantages including greater year round colour and lower maintenance and watering requirements. We were delighted to see that the roundabouts were replanted and well maintained as their attractive appearance helps to create a positive first impression of Skibbereen. It is also pleasing to see that additional tree planting (in partnership with the schools) is taking place and the Herbville initiative (started by the sustainable Skibbereen group and helped by Mens Shed) is applauded. We also enjoyed seeing the interesting Currach planted feature at the Lidl roundabout and the planting at the old Forge garden. The park surrounding the playground also looked well with its mature trees, trimmed grass and colourful clumps of roses in bloom. Don't forget that it is an identified priority of your wildlife strategy to develop a bee and bird haven in Skibbereen and this objective can be supported by undertaking pollinator friendly planting in your landscaping schemes.

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

Like the adjudicator in 2017, we are most impressed with your considered approach to projects under this category with good examples to be seen of protecting and conserving the natural amenities and habitats and raising awareness of them among the wider community in Skibbereen. We applaud your decision to undertake a wildlife scoping study over the next three years and we note and appreciate the aims of this study. While we concur that your committee, Sustainable Skibbereen, the community, businesses and schools should be involved in this project, we recommend that scoping study should identify specific tasks that can be undertaken by all of these groups in recording, monitoring and conserving wildlife and habitats when the scoping study is complete. This will ensure that the recommendations of the study can be more easily implemented and that it succeeds in raising awareness of biodiversity in your town amongst the wider community. The involvement of the schools is seen to be particularly important in this regard and while we note that a key role is envisaged for the schools in the GIY project, it is recommended that their involvement is not limited to this. It is further recommended that the identified objectives of your wildlife strategy are reflected in other tidy towns categories like landscaping (whereby pollinator friendly planting is included in your landscaping schemes) and approach roads (with strimming of roadside verges and hedge cutting being reduced to facilitate the development of wildlife corridors). The joint venture between the Ludgate and UCC in streaming an online 8 session training course on sustainability is also applauded and we wondered if any committee members from the tidy towns group or its volunteers participated in it?

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

This has become a very strong category for your town with many high-quality projects being undertaken to reduce waste and sustainably use resources. The range of excellent projects under way in St Patricks Boys School which include planting the herb spiral, keeping chickens, growing organic fruit and vegetables, making compost, planting native trees and hosting workshops for West Cork primary educators is applauded. The excellent work of the new Gaelscoil, Abbeystrewry National School, St Josephs National School, the Skibbereen Community School and the Sustainable Skibbereen Group is similarly impressive and we urge them to keep these high-quality projects up. It is also recommended that consideration is given to entering some of these excellent projects into the tidy towns awards. However, like the adjudicator in 2017, we need to be conscious that the objective of these initiatives is to effect behaviour change in communities and it is necessary for us to quantify the impact that these initiatives are having. For example, how much produce comes from the Community Orchard? We note that your committee makes its own compost, harvests its own seeds, grows its own plants and captured rainwater for watering your planting schemes. These are all commendable actions and we wondered if you are now 100% self-sufficient and no longer

require shop bought products like compost or plants? It is great that the walk to school schemes are taking place and we would like to know what proportion of students are participating and how frequently they are walking to school? The Incredible Edible Skibbereen initiative is wonderful and we wondered if it is possible to quantify how many locals are growing food and what impact it is having. Perhaps a survey could be undertaken of the participants to establish this? The zero waste Skibbereen group is a wonderful initiative and we encourage you to run follow-up events to monitor what it's 90+ members are doing and the impact it is having on waste minimisation and sustainable resource use. Recording the results of all of the above actions and the other laudable initiatives set out in your application form will enable you to quantify the overall impact of all of this work and allow you to conclude more environmentally sustainable behaviour is taking place. We would appreciate updates on all these projects in 2019.

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

A high standard of litter control could be observed in Skibbereen during adjudication with the vast majority of areas appearing litter free and neat and tidy. This is a great performance and it reflects the hard work of the committee, volunteers and schools during your spring clean events and regular litter patrols. We were delighted to read that you have extended your cleanups to Lough Hyde, Tragumna beach and three approach roads. The involvement of schools and local sports clubs (like the kayaking club) is seen to be particularly important as a means of raising environmental awareness. Well done to the Skibbereen Community School for setting out the HANNAH principles and demonstrating the clear links between single use and surplus packaging to litter. You are commended on carrying out an analysis of the survey and we would be interested in hearing the results in 2019. The standard of tidiness is generally very good and your work removing the weeds from paths, kerbs and roadsides is appreciated. We are also pleased to see that electric cables have been placed underground on Mill Road. Improvements are possible. The landscaping beds to the front of the Library and Adult Education Centre were weedy and in need of attention. A number of examples of untidy signs were spotted (such as the yield sign at Norrie Blues Boreen) and it is recommended that a signage audit takes place to identify all signs within the town that need to be cleaned, repaired or replaced. The litter bins around the town should also be included in this audit. The railings in front of the courthouse would also benefit from a fresh coat of paint in time for 2019.

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

The standard of presentation of residential areas was generally good during our visit. We loved the traditional streetscapes which could be seen on Ninety Eight Street and Mardyke Street in the town centre and we were very impressed by the standard of maintenance of the neat and orderly terraced dwellings. Home Rule Terrace is also very nicely maintained with all houses appearing freshly painted. We were delighted to read that the residents in a number of residential areas around the town are proactive in maintaining their estates. We are pleased to report that the standard of presentation in these areas was particularly good. The Mills looked exceptionally well with its modern houses, gardens and amenity areas that looked smart and well kept. The Hawthorns nearby could be improved by ensuring that the entrance landscaping is regularly maintained. Gorthnaclohy Heights looked well with its trimmed grass areas and young trees and we enjoyed seeing the mature residential area of Pound Hill with its neat houses and attractive green areas. The Moorings and Cois Caol also looked very well.

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

We loved the network of wonderful lanes and 'porches' that link the main streets of your town and we commend you on the signage which highlights their eye-catching names like Brewery Porch, Windmill Lane and Norrie Blues Boreen. Has any consideration been given to providing storyboards on how these names came about? These are a wonderfully distinctive feature of your town and they could be very effective in promoting walking and cycling as they greatly improve permeability. The standard of presentation of the key approach roads into Skibbereen is generally very good with the approaches from Cork and Schull standing out. The wonderful roses in bloom on the roundabout here and the colourful flower boxes on the bridge are particularly eye-catching. The grass and public art features on the Baltimore Road roundabout (and the landscaped 'namh og' boat feature opposite) are similarly impressive. The Mill road (opposite the playground) looked exceptionally well with its newly constructed natural stone wall, pavements and pleasant landscaping.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

We would like to congratulate your committee and volunteers on an excellent performance in this years competition and we look forward to returning next year to see many of the exciting projects that are currently underway completed.