

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Listowel - Lios Tuathail** Ref: **345**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **344**
Category: **D** Date(s): **14/06/2019**
30/07/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	52	52
Streetscape & Public Places	60	45	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	44	44
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	41	41
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
TOTAL MARK	470	339	344

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Listowel Lios Tuathail páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019.

Well done on having a committee of 20 members which are supported by volunteers including children. Congratulations on achieving the overall award last year in your 24th year of participation in the competition. Kerry County Council has been very supportive of the work done by your enthusiastic team and you also receive support from business interests in the town. You avail of Community Employment and Rural Social Schemes for implementation and ongoing maintenance and you organise Best Kept estates and garden competitions. The use of Facebook, notice board newspaper etc., are your means of communication. Having a School Liaisons Officer to work with schools and youth groups is a great idea and with three primary schools and three secondary schools in Listowel, he/she has plenty of work in their brief.

Many thanks for attaching a very good map of the area with project locations marked for our attention and some photographs. We repeat the suggestion from last year that the use of colour coding on project numbers and legends would improve the quality of the map and allow the adjudicator to get a grasp of the range of activities at a glance.

Your 3-year plan looks like a good working documents as evidenced by the various comments/updates. Last year's adjudicator advised on reducing the volume of paperwork and we note that the reports mentioned are not included anymore. Thank you for that. There is still scope to reduce the appendices and additional information. It is difficult for an adjudicator having to go over and back through two documents, so please put everything into the one application in future. We don't need to see so many paper clippings, you are being judged on how you manage your community. Finally, we note you are using a template for the application form and that is good, but please update your template because some criteria have changed titles and marks.

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

You have detailed an impressive number of new, maintained and future projects totalling 26 in all. The new projects a new housing scheme, primary health care facility, the new Halo Health eco-friendly shop on Upper William Street and other shops. We were most impressed with the Lartigue Monorail & Museum Heritage Project. This is unique to Listowel, is a wonderful attraction and is so well maintained. Pat McAuliffe's stucco works are also unique, and you have rightly promoted it through a seminar and publication. The "Maid of Erin" is a significant piece of his work in the town centre. This is one of your 97 protected buildings and it is good to see that the planners in Kerry County Council are proactive in their conservation. Well done on the improvements done to the Sports Complex and to the volunteers who helped with the painting. It looks very well. The heart of Listowel is the Square dominated by St. John's Theatre, formerly, a Church of Ireland building. It is a great focal point within the square and it is great to see

anew use for an old historical building. No doubt everyone is pleased that the Kerry Writers Museum is now a fully accredited museum; another unique feature for Listowel. Well done on using window space of vacant buildings to promote events and for holding a best kept shopfront competition. You have identified some buildings for future projects so there is little chance of getting a rest after your great success last year. The Teampill Ban Famine Graveyard is a poignant reminder of our history and helps us to realise how fortunate we are compared with our ancestors. The oratory is well done and no doubt functions well when services are held. One automatically expects to see signs of graves, but of course, these were mass graves without markers. The grounds are well maintained. The larger cemetery of St. Michael's Burial Ground is in reasonable condition, most graves are maintained. What is missing are trees. What a pity some trees were not planted when there was space and help make the cemetery a park.

St. Patrick's Hall was admired but we suggest that the pole and wires directly in front of the building takes greatly from the façade. We liked the small stone cottages on Courthouse Road, a wonderful part of your heritage as is the Youth Centre, a former Carnegie Library building.

Well done on achieving a Green Flag for Childer's Park and Woodland which is your town park and we note it is well used by every sector of the community. Listowel is very fortunate to have such a large park in the town and to have indoor and outdoor recreational facilities in one location. Well done on installing an eco-counter and what a record it is to have 600 vehicles per day use the car park. We note that several walks are possible and these assist with rehabilitation for stroke victims. There is a link with the graveyard and the Garden of Europe is a significant feature. This is a wonderful park, but the trees need attention and overall, maintenance could be improved. We admired the new planting schemes constructed in front of the library which we note was done with a contribution from your winnings last year. The river walk is a terrific resource that facilitates access to nature and to the town.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Community Fruit and Nut Orchard beside the handball alley is a delightful feature with 18 fruit and nut trees and some bee nesting boxes. It is great to see it so successful. The Calvary outside the wall of the Presentation Secondary School caught our eye. The blue background is a good setting for the figures and the ivy growing overhead adds an important dimension. The stone walls flanking this feature look well and provide a contrasting background for the seats and floral displays. We note this is lit up at night-time. The main structural elements in the landscape are trees and it is great to see that Listowel has a good number of trees in the Square, in the town park, in front of the Listowel Child Care premises and at other locations. While the established trees in the square are healthy, they are smaller than would be expected for their species (Having made a comparison with Google Street View 2010). Instead of the annual pruning of top growths, we suggest that the trees be allowed to develop a shape, height and character that is typical of the species and become landmarks within the square. We are pleased to learn that you have been influential in reducing the use of pesticides within the town park. We liked the 1916 Memorial Garden in the park. Take care to ensure that all the seven trees continue to establish.

Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible; they should not in themselves attract any notice. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. In that regard, we suggest that the use of containers on the R552 route be revised, especially the large pink concrete containers. We also suggest that rather than having large containers at the junction of the N69 and the R552, on the island in front of the Classic Movie Play building, that it would be better to make a ground level planted area that would take in the supporting poles and help to disguise them with plants rather than having the containers compete with them. If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming.

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

Last year's adjudicator mentioned the problem of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, both of which are invasive species and you have mentioned using the area across from the Presentation Secondary School as a test case for using Roundup Pro Bioactive. Good luck with that project. You have surveyed bird/bat boxes to determine their level of usage and found that 6 out of 26 were used. Perhaps some more of the boxes will be used next year. Birds like to check out possible nesting places and sometimes it can be years before a box is chosen for nesting. You continue to use community biodiversity/pollination workshops and find that people are becoming more familiar with a different regime of maintaining grassed areas for supporting pollinators. The schools are playing a major role in the campaign of supporting wildlife through the Green Flag Programme. It was a good investment to grant schools €50 'seed money' for their pollination projects.

With the River Feale and the town park as well as the surrounding agricultural lands, there is a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information.

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

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land

use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero-waste society. Your town is certainly playing its part with a list of eight new projects in addition to twenty existing projects under maintenance and a further five future projects. All of these initiatives make good sense and demonstrates that you have cracked through the barrier that many other communities fail to do in regard to sustainability. Your projects deal with climate change, energy, water conservation, waste reduction, especially food waste, composting, recycling. The emphasis here really needs to be on reducing the volume of waste produced rather than recycling (which is taken for granted). At this level of the contest the adjudicator wants to see innovation in tackling bigger issues of food waste, plastic disposal and energy use.

Other measures to consider are...

- One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition.
- Working with retailers to cut down on packaging and reminding people to re-use shopping bags
- In response to an overuse of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative.

These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on your success with candidates for the elections in not having posters. Some other communities should follow your example. You are actively managing litter and graffiti and have adopted the early morning litter pic from 7.00 am to 8.00 am. That is great dedication and we note the addition of the Community & Business Alliance in this project and members of the local Women's Group. The 'Look after your own space' campaign for the business community appears to have been a success, perhaps due to the personal approach. You participate in the K.W.D annual event and the National Spring Clean in April and you have mentioned several other initiatives aimed at Tidiness and litter control. While you have some vacant sites and premises, you are dealing with them as best you can. Most commercial premises in Listowel were well painted and in good condition.

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

The annual Best Kept Garden and Hanging Basket competition is a great idea and you have added the most 'bee-friendly' garden. We visited last year's winner, Kenny Heights where the planting at the entrance impressed us greatly, as did the well-established hedge of copper beech. The line of birch trees made a lovely entrance to the estate. We were also surprised to see a high standard of planting and maintenance at Ashfield estate where the entrance walls are perfectly covered with climbing plants and Ferndene residential estates where Phormium (New Zealand Flax) is a popular plant and makes quite an impact. These are perhaps some of the best estates in terms of landscaping that we have seen in Kerry. In Ashgrove estate we were pleased to see quite several trees on the open space but please check the stake and tree ties before they damage the stem. Ideally, stakes should be removed after two years but because of the frequent high winds in your area, they may have to be retained for longer. They should be checked annually, especially in autumn when the stems swell. We also advise on controlling weeds at the base of newly planted trees to reduce the competition for water and nutrients which the trees need. In general, we were surprised to see so little street tree planting within residential estates.

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

What surprises in Listowel is how quickly one reaches the town without getting a view of it from a distance? Most approaches look well and are fronted by hedging on fields or private gardens. The River Feale forms a beautiful approach coming across the bridge followed by a view of the Millennium Arch. Other approaches are less significant or memorable. We noted the resurfacing in the Square, it looks well and has been marked out for parking spaces etc. John B. Keane Road is an important artery which helps to reduce traffic levels in the town centre. For large sections of the road, particularly opposite the Lartigue Monorail and Museum, there is a long concrete wall that is crying out for some softening in terms of greening. There are good examples of how to do this in some of the residential estates so why not copy what they did. There is enough place to plant, just cut out a narrow section of concrete, say 150 x 225 mm, replace with soil and plant ivy. A few years later there will be a green wall which will make the trip down this road more enjoyable.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done on your wonderful achievement last year and for keeping up the good work this year. Our visit to Listowel was most enjoyable.

Second Round Adjudication:

This adjudicator hopes that Listowel Tidy Towns Group, your community and your myriad supporters enjoyed to the full your achievement as the 2018 Supervalu Tidy Towns National Winner. You had added satisfaction to become the National Winner in your 25th year competing. The first adjudicator has taken you through all of the material you submitted to us for the 2019 event. Clearly you are focussed on maintaining the momentum of your win and you have 2019 "Fixits" taken from the 2018 Tidy Towns Adjudicator. They made reassuring reading.

Your commitment to the final year in your 3-year plan will see you through to further advancement in this competition. You have heeded the advice that it is not quantity that wins through, but quality. You have the maturity to identify projects that will further your strengths and you should concentrate on them. This adjudicator has been impressed by the quality of your iconic projects.

In no particular order the sheer expertise and commitment that resulted in the magnificent Lartigue Monorail deserves the highest praise. It is flawless in its presentation. The pride that the staff show in every aspect of their work is exemplary. They are role models for others. The Famine Graveyard is another example of sheer pride in their project for the few that service it. From the freshly painted entrance throughout, especially the mural on the gable end, there is pride exuding from this project.

By coincidence this adjudicator singled out residential areas similar to the first adjudicators. Ashfield has held the Best Big Estate from 2014-2018 and it deserves it. The next estate on the road into town is Ferndene with good landscaping. Beech Grove is winner of the Medium Estate. Nearby is the Tim Kennelly roundabout and Kenny Heights. They compliment each other with good landscaping. These and other residential estates enhance the town without imposing a burden on you, I suspect. I may have missed even more attractive residential areas.

Curiosity drives this adjudicator to discover unexpected attractions and a numeral 9 on our map showed a cul-de-sac named Tae Lane which prompted a visit. Far from being a cul-de-sac it led to a panoramic view over the river to the largest racecourse this adjudicator has yet to see. It is not shown on your map. A footbridge over the river was the only access visible. A plaque at the locked gate to the bridge says, "Listowel Races AD 1858". Beside it dates were given for the next races.

What looked like an unofficial path beckoned and it led to a riverside walk by the Big Bridge. A metal steps led under the bridge to a host of attractions – the Community Fruit and Nut Orchard, ball alley, notice advising about an invasive species Japanese Knotweed, Garden of Europe Town Park, Millennium Arch. So much to see, so little time.

The most memorable was a sculpture in the Garden of Europe's Ireland section. It is a large, upright metal plate cut into a silhouette of John B. Kean, officially unveiled by Brenda Fricker on 25th May 2008. Having been in the FCA a reference on your map acted as a lure which in turn lead to the Courthouse and Civic Space. Not much here for visitors to see. An immaculate Fire Station as one would expect it to be, a grey courthouse without distinguishing features, a neat and tidy administrative building, a library, a residential area – Courthouse Lawn, Enterprise Units, excellent landscaping and adorning of the Administration building. Overall, antiseptically clean as the Listowel Tidy Towns Group would have it. En route to this Civic Area St Patrick's Hall looked well, a short cut up a lane revealed a mural which has a Tidy Towns panel until an exit was reached at a road that had, on both footpaths, well filled half barrels of flowers and a row of trees with recent compost.

It brought this adjudicator to what could be called "Cottage Country" – streets of terraced cottages, well presented and well swept. One street was being neatly tarred to improve its surface. Listowel has lots of laneways and all were litter free and well swept. One opens to an imposing 3 storey Garda barracks with good landscaping in its recessed front garden. Why is one that big needed in Listowel?

The first adjudicator dealt with the Square – its buildings, arts, theatre, castle, etc. Listowel has lots of schools and, randomly, one is selected for mention. Scoil Réalta na Maidine has a large stone crest standing on well kept grass. It is a fine building which is well presented. Nicely painted, more colour is added through well filled window boxes on the windowsills. Copper beeches also contribute. Carnegie Free Library stands out. A very attractive large mural was admired. John B. Kean and Bryan MacMahon feature in it. It is not all good news. There are 2 elephants in the room. The Old Mart Yard and Diarmuid Tarrant's garage. It has been a pleasure to be associated with this report. The first adjudicator dealt with all of the material that you submitted with your entry and has covered all categories and I concur with this report.