

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Sneem - An Snaidhm** Ref: **349**  
County: **Kerry** Mark: **332**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **18/06/2019**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2019</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	48	48
Streetscape & Public Places	60	43	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	41	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	38	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	24	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	40
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>332</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Sneem A Snaidhm páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019.

It has been a few years since this adjudicator visited Sneem and we were pleased to see it a very busy centre. Considering the population size of just 258 people it is surprising that your committee has nine members and another thirty volunteers who assist as needed. Many agencies and individuals have supported your efforts, principally Kerry County Council officials and elected members. It was 1987 when you won the overall award and it is great that you have maintained strong interest since then and have been a participant for over 50 years. Communications is achieved via the Sneem Community Notice Board, a local newsletter distributed by hard copy and through emails. You also use Facebook. You have full community support for your work because people have great civic pride and play their part in enhancing Sneem.

Links with the local school is through the School Liaison Officer and children attend workshops and are involved in the gardening club. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with project locations marked for our attention. However, the project numbers are hard to read because they are too small and in a light red font. Indeed, the text is also too small, and some places are not highlighted enough. For example, there is so much focus on the two triangular open spaces and the area in-between that the very interesting garden of the senses, allotments and the bird village seems to get little attention, especially in terms of tourists. Thank you for your summary action plan which is designed to be a three-year plan from every adjudication year. That is an unusual way to set it out but once it makes sense for you that's fine. Attaching letters or minutes of meetings with the Council or other bodies is not a good idea, especially if the print is so small that makes it difficult to read. Our comment refers to the inclusion of minutes with KCC under sustainability.

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

Sneem is a beautiful village with an unique layout of two triangular open spaces on each side of the river. Well done on revealing the artistic exterior of Brud O'Brien's house. Your proactive approach to the Bland Cottage is a great initiative and we liked the changes to the exterior of the Sneem Digital Hub which was officially opened last April. We were trying to convert the French language on the rock with the relief of Charles De Gaulle when we spotted the English version placed discreetly nearby. The Garda Station and the Fire Station looked well, although the boundary wall of the latter, will need painting for next year. We also liked the school and the stone wall boundary there as well. The colourful Day Care Centre had an adjacent community garden with a poly tunnel. It was great to see so many tourists getting off buses and going along to the delightful restaurants just north of the river for coffee etc. With the traditional shopfronts, these buildings enhance the village experience. While a few commercial premises are painted with strong colours, most are a pleasant blend of pastel colours that adds

significant charm to the village. Burns Butchers was admired, and the small Church of the Transfiguration is a special attraction in the village. It is nicely set back from the road frontage with a background of trees and was well-painted. Walking across the bridge is quite an experience to see the sharp rocks that form the riverbed. A walk through the village is a must to view the sculptures and read the plaques, such as John Egan the great GAA star, the inhabitants of the Seven Seaview Cottages, the wrestler, Steve Casey and the stainless-steel art feature on the north square donated by the Government of Israel. It will be great when the overhead wires can be removed from the streetscape. The public toilets were very welcome; it was great to see them well-maintained. The beautiful stone-built church, sitting on rocks and the community centre are located off the south square and there is a fine car park serving both facilities. We liked the murals on walls here and there; they add great interest.

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

The main structural elements in the landscape are trees. It is always important to focus on trees first and then other landscape elements will follow. We note that one of your volunteers is a qualified tree surgeon and has carried out a survey on the north side of the bridge. It will be interesting to see the survey and recommendations that follow. This is important because Sneem needs to plant for future generations and that means including oak trees where they have space to grow, such as the triangular open spaces. There are too many small short living species in the streetscape such as flowering cherries planted on the footpath and surrounded by low stone walls. We wondered if the planting pit included digging through the footpath or is the tree just planted into the area defined by the stones. We assume the latter because the walls have broken which is an indication of root pressure. We suggest that street trees be planted into the road alongside the footpaths in order that they have enough space for roots and for the canopy. In planting new trees, it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity. Also, it is important to ensure that the base of new trees is maintained free of weeds, grass and flower beds to ensure early establishment. We admired the new birch trees planted at the Digital Hub landscaped area. Well done on the community orchard behind the tennis courts and we liked the pollinator beds in the triangles. 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 general, you have followed those principles; we noted the well-planted oak barrel containers at the Charles De Gaulle memorial and at other strategic locations. The pyramids are very interesting features along the river walk. We note that they were done after you won the overall award in 1987. They are a wonderful educational and play feature.

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

There is a pleasant walk from Sea View to the village by the riverbank. The grass is well-maintained with a mown strip by the pathway edge and other areas left unmown. The birch trees are doing well here. Having noted the 1916/2016 commemorative plaque, we wondered where the seven oak trees were planted (donated through the Tree Council in 2016). We are anxious to see these trees each year and see how well they are establishing. Please advise us in next year's application and show on the map where they were planted. Well done on winning the Local Authority Pollinator Award last year and we note that you received funding for a biodiversity specialist to advise you on making further progress. We were delighted to see so many red Valerian plants growing in so many places, especially on walls. Behind the community centre we took several pictures of them and considered this the most impressive planting we have ever seen. We will be using these pictures to explain to others the importance of allowing them to grow and not to consider them as weeds. We also enjoyed the artwork of a bees at work on the hoarding at the back of the community centre. Well done on running the four events in Sneem for Kerry Biodiversity Week. We were most impressed with the garden of the senses, especially so, since we were able to walk all around it and into the poly tunnel and there was nobody doing supervision. Obviously, this little wonder is well respected, and you are fortunate that anti-social elements may not exist within your community. The Bird village was also a delight. Well done to the school for achieving Green Flag status and we were pleased to see the flag flying.

### **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. You have detailed seven actions under this heading. They include a focus on sustainable energy options, reduction of single use plastics, free water refills to reduce the need for plastic bottles, rainwater collection for plants, greater activity of home composting, a water bottle filler which has yet to be installed, and a move to LED bulbs. You also have allotments where people can grow their own food and that contributes further to sustainability. The emphasis here really needs to be on reducing the volume of waste produced rather than recycling (which is taken for granted).

Several other measures that your town can take regarding sustainability are:

- You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition.
- Regarding water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and the task of watering.
- Other waste minimisation projects might include working with retailers to cut down on packaging, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work.
- 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:**

Your system of managing tidiness and litter control is working well. There was a person (in yellow jacket) working away continuously sweeping and picking up litter and we wondered if this person was an employee of the Council or one of your volunteers. May we suggest that some identification (on the jacket) would be a good idea. That person was very diligent and hard-working, so well done. Sneem was very clean so keep up the good work.

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

The Sea View estate has older style house, many with hedges in the gardens, whereas the newer style houses in Sneem Leisure Village have no front gardens. Instead, they are in a sea of open space which as yet does not have trees. Perhaps these are planned for the future. The modern playground at Sea View is no doubt very popular with the children. Private houses in and around the village looked very well. Everyone in the community are at one in their campaign for the betterment of Sneem.

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

The "Welcome to Sneem" written on the rock makes a very good impact on arrival. The planting schemes which followed were fine and the large sign highlighting your success in the competition all looked well. From the western approach, the low stone wall adds enhancement to the landscape and the hedges are most suitable. This treatment is appropriate and welcoming. Road surfaces throughout the village were fine and the presence of so many stone wall boundaries adds great character.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

We felt like tourists during our visit to Sneem because there were so many tourists visiting there at the time. Well done to everyone involved in the maintenance and improvement of your community.