

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tralee - Trá Lí** Ref: **351**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **331**
Category: **G** Date(s): **15/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	48	48
Streetscape & Public Places	60	43	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	46	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	41	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	22	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	470	323	331

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Tralee Trá Lí páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019.

Not only have you stated the number on your committee, you have also listed their names; that is a first for this adjudicator. We can see that the committee represents the local authority, Tralee Chamber Alliance and several other groups. It is obvious you are well organised but, in this case, that is a problem because your application is too large, too detailed and as far as we can see, you have not taken on board the suggestions from last year's adjudicator, which is hereby repeated.....

“Thank you for your most thoroughly prepared entry into this year's competition. This was clearly laid out and amply illustrated. It must be said that it was a little too lengthy. You could have easily said less and still got the key messages across. There was a little bit of repetition too. You effectively listed all your priority projects twice. Look to slimming down your entry please in next year's submission. You proffered no fewer than 6 maps for the adjudicator to find your projects. Please consider someone travelling around Tralee (this adjudicator favours a bicycle, but by whatever means) and trying to find your indicated areas. Now imagine doing that and switching between numerous maps”

We agree with these remarks and ask you to make a better effort for next year's entry. In particular, it is not convenient to go over and back between six maps to understand and locate what you want us to see. So, try and produce one map for next year, which can be an A3 size folded into A4. The other problem is; you have two application forms and the pictures are taking up too much space; they can be reduced in size. The first one is an outline and then a second which is detailed. You are doing so many things to a high standard; we are confident you can do the same with the application form and in the process gain more marks under this criterion next year. Nuff said!!

We wish to compliment you on the success annual Féile na mBláth, it is a wonderful community event and a great way of raising standards. You also run food festivals, the Kingdom County Fair and several other festivals, and of course the most famous “Rose of Tralee” festival. We liked the colourful Garden of Contemplation in Pearse Park, built by the Bahá’I community in Kerry. Our only question was, is this a temporary project or is it intended to be a permanent one. It looks like the former.

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

We liked the new urban design at the Mall. It is truly to a very high standard in terms of paving material, colours and seating. You have managed to make this area so pedestrian friendly. It is a pity about the staining on the paving but

no doubt you are pursuing this. Unfortunately, the fine specimens of hornbeam trees do not look happy, but it is difficult to successfully grow trees in containers; they are much happier when planted directly into the ground, if the tree pit is constructed in accordance with best practice. We assume the existence of underground services may have reduced planting options here. The adjacent Square which is older looked very well and has not dated. We admired the statue of Christy Hennessy and can still hear his songs. The only problem here is litter control, a product of its popularity. Denny Street is a delight with its line of elegant houses on both sides of the street with Thomas Ashe Hall forming a focal point at the end of the street. We admired the Dominican Church on Day Place. It is a beautiful part of your heritage and is even more important because it is so conspicuously located. Prince's Street is dominated by the fine Brandon Hotel opposite which is a large car park. The contrast between the mature trees fronting the hotel and the much smaller trees in the car park is a significant one. Of course, this is due in part to the time difference which highlights the importance of planting trees as early as possible. We noted the newly surfaced Tarmacadam and marked parking areas which look well, but we also missed the new trees that were planted a few years ago throughout the car park to break up the large expanse of hard surface. It is a pity they were sacrificed in favour of more cars. On John Joe Sheehy Road, we admired the new development of Aldi stores with a landscaped car park where the colourful Photinia hedge is well established and the adjacent Corrib Oil Texaco Service Station and Spar Supermarket. It looks very new and gives a lift to this area. The smaller site for future development is fenced and looks neat and tidy. Austin Stack Park dominates the skyline here. The artwork at Mitchel's Estate was visited and admired as indeed were the numerous artwork features in various parts of the town, including the one of the famous Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty (in Strand Street), who saved thousands of Jews during the WWII, the Sistine Chapel Mural at Boherbee and the paintings erected in laneways of Denny Street. The modern church of Our Lady and St. Brendan is a lovely modern feature in the streetscape. We liked the "Voyage of St. Brendan" symbolised on a cross set out within the paving on the front approach to the building. There is scope for more trees in the front of this building, but we were most impressed with the trees, shrubs and wall plants growing to the side of the car park. This is perhaps the best example we have seen of how to improve a concrete wall with plants. The Manor West Retail Park is well laid out and the standard of landscape treatment is very high.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The jewel in the crown is Denny Park and we enjoyed our visit there to see the wonderful open space with a range of mature trees, the playground and of course the roses. A principal feature of the park is the large oak near the toilet block, but we were saddened to see it in decline. Looking more closely, we observed two types of leaves, some were shrivelled, and others were fine, and this made us wonder if the shrivelled ones were due to a recent storm or had there been an attack from a pest or disease. Either way, we advise that the tree be examined by an arboriculturist. Looking at the rather light leaf canopy, we wonder if there is a compaction problem around the roots. Because of the tree's age, we suggest it would be better protected at ground level with a railing mounted on the concrete circle. It may also be necessary to have the roots treated to reduce compaction. It is worth everything to ensure that this iconic oak specimen is saved for future generations; it should have many centuries more to live. We were surprised to see so many weeds in the rose beds. These were still quite small but given a few more weeks they will greatly take from the impact of the rose beds. The positive story here is that the weeds indicate a non-chemical spraying regime! Having noted the retirement of the gardeners Brendan and Lorna Enright, we wonder if this weed problem is associated with that loss of expertise. The special Autumn Cherry planting was a very appropriate tribute to their 40 years of working in the Town Park. The resin laid around trees at several locations in Tralee, including the Square, was noted. The main benefit is the improved safety for pedestrians and the gas exchange for tree roots.

In the car park opposite the Brandon Hotel, we saw two young trees near the entrance and the stem base is almost concealed with concrete. These trees have no future if this matter is not dealt with. The concrete should be removed, and the tree pit enlarged and surfaced with resin. Elsewhere in Tralee, there are many stands of fine specimen trees which add great character to the town. However, we were horrified to see the mature trees in front of the Dominican Church at Day Place were simply beheaded at approximately 6-8 metres high. Why was this done? It looks awful and sends out a very bad message, especially to adjudicators for this competition. However, there are good examples of tree planting in Tralee, one is in the grounds of the CBS Primary School at Leaside. We visited Mulchinock's Corner and wish to compliment everyone for the work done in April; the new grass is growing well. However, we have several suggestions for further consideration. From a design viewpoint, this area is too fussy with different shapes and sizes. One small tree has one branch still alive (looks like *Rhus typhina*). This tree has no future and should be removed. The concrete rings around the base of trees have no aesthetic value (in this adjudicator's view) and should be removed before they impose limitations on the root systems of the trees. Flowers should be planted in open locations where they can benefit from light and not have to compete with tree roots for nutrients or moisture.

Tralee has decided to use tiered containers for flowering plants, and these have been used at several locations around the town centre. Such containers are very demanding on maintenance, especially watering and we wonder if the impact is worth so much trouble. In their favour, they are tall and the black colour should allow the flowering plants to make better impact when they grow some more during the summer. 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:

When we think of this category and think of Tralee, we immediately think of the wetlands and the wonderful resource you have on your doorstep and how you developed this into a very inspiring centre. Well done on that development which makes good use of the rich natural area surrounding your community and the importance of

promoting an awareness of its many traits. Other projects mentioned were the biodiverse flowerbed at Skehanagh Roundabout, beehives at the Rose Hotel, a biodiversity walk and talk on Irish bats during Biodiversity Week. There were also talks by the Environmental Taskforce/GLAN Tralee Outreach. The Community Garden Project is a special feature of Tralee. It is well placed in the town and is well managed and yet it is within easy reach and very visible. We are delighted that it is so successful as evidenced by the range of activities undertaken there. The butterfly garden at Manor Village is a great initiative as it teaches about the use of plants for attracting butterflies.

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. Biodiversity is under threat globally and sadly Ireland is a part of this trend. 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 playing its part by first looking at the volume of waste that is generated. 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. What are homes and businesses doing to tackle these? You have listed nine projects under this heading, five of which involve GLAN. We note that this is an initiative of Tralee Chamber Alliance and involves volunteers working to make Tralee a very attractive and environmentally sustainable town. It is a very positive development and as we can see it is very active. Your projects have focussed on talks and actions on climate change, energy efficiency, using LED bulbs, lower carbon emissions, student protests aimed at better government action on the environment. You have also used social media to raise awareness on sustainability and environmental issues. We read about the top ten pledges signed by businesses.

There are several other measures that your town can take regarding sustainability. Contact your waste contractors and try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. 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. 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, discouraging junk mail, 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:

Actions undertaken by your team include participation in the County Clean-up day which attracted 6,000 people to participate. The two-minute street clean has been popular in Tralee, the Island of Geese tidy up, the "Butt Ballot Poll" on the Mall (aimed at stopping people from smoking), the fight against plastic pollution (20 bags of plastic litter collected) and several other schemes. The entire community are to be congratulated on these actions. In our travels we observed some traffic signs that need cleaning, one of which is to the rear of Thomas Ashe Hall. There were also some finger post signs that needed cleaning, especially the older ornate signs (top of Denny Street). Some litter was seen here and there in various locations. Unfortunately, this problem requires constant attention. Any untidiness was mainly associated with vacant buildings and temporary car parks.

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

Most of the information provided under this heading dealt with enhancement schemes such as road surfacing and footpath repairs as well as entrance plaques/stones. We were quite taken with the renewal scheme in the Mitchel's residential estate. In particular, the use of trees at junctions to aid in traffic calming and to improve the aesthetic appearance of the houses. This was very successful, and we were delighted to see good quality specimens of trees planted in prominent positions and given special protection of stainless-steel barriers, which were most unusual. At Tobar Naofa, we were very impressed with the residential complex which was so inviting but most of all we enjoyed viewing the oasis of beauty that is the little garden at St. Patrick's Day Care centre. We admired the lighthouse at Manor Village and feel happy that the adjacent boat will not hit the rocks. Many gardens in this estate are looking very well and we admired the street trees. Quarryvale residential estate also caught our eye.

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

In general, the approaches to Tralee look very well and there is a strong landscape element everywhere. The by-pass is a convenient route and in most cases is landscaped. However, we noted that some young trees are struggling, even after several years. In contrast however, the mixture of broadleaved species growing on one side of Dan Spring Road are well established and we were pleased that the scorched base around the trees due to herbicide usage was not present on this occasion. This is an indication of reduced use of chemical weed control. Further south on that road, we admired the stand of established poplar trees. We are aware of the harsh climate in Kerry, especially windstorms and wonder if the poor establishment is species or wind related or perhaps both. Roundabouts are excellent places to make a distinguishing mark but too often road safety concerns limit that potential. The Forge Cross Roundabout was planted last April. Given a year or two, it should be well established. Joe Keohane roundabout is more established and looks well. Having seen what can be achieved in countries such as France, this adjudicator would welcome initiatives to make roundabout planting more interesting. You have several such opportunities in Tralee and of course we saw the iconic roses planted in many locations. A wonderful feature throughout Tralee are the many stone walls that are built to a fine standard. Well done.

Concluding Remarks:

We enjoyed our visit to Tralee. It is great to see improvements taking place with each passing year. Congratulations on your many achievements and keep up the good work. The success of tree planting does not seem to match that of your forefathers, and we wonder if the difference is due to species choice, standard of planting and after care or whether you have advice on Arboriculture available. We suggest it is time to develop a tree strategy for Tralee to ensure that future generations will enjoy trees in their environment. This would be a well worthwhile project for inclusion in your planning programme.