

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: Mullingar - An Muilleann gCearr	Ref: 206
County: Westmeath	Mark: 301
Category: G	Date(s): 23/06/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	41	41
Streetscape & Public Places	60	44	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	42	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	25	27
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	12	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
TOTAL MARK	470	290	301

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Mullingar – An Muilleann gCearr páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Thank you for this year's application and indeed Mullingar's participation in the competition for over thirty years now. It is good to know of the benefits that have accrued to the community by participation and the achievements to date which are impressive. The committee have a wide-ranging support network and excellent communication channels; the Mullingar APP is an innovative development. The committee's engagement with schools, scouts and cubs is laudable. The installation of the 1916 memorial signage is a fine achievement which complements the town's Tourist Trail. The map submitted with this year's application was not suitable for adjudication as it did not assign the required N (new), M (maintenance) and FP (future project) to projects identified on the map however it is acknowledged that this was done in the text of the application. We wish the committee success with the implementation of their plan and look forward to future adjudications. Congratulations on being the selected venue for the Fleadh Cheoil in 2020 and on retaining your Purple Flag status first awarded in 2016.

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

The enhancement of Mullingar Town Centre was a work in progress during adjudication however many improvements were at an advanced stage and looked wonderful, your adjudicator is already planning a trip back to see the completed works! The overall presentation of the built environment of the town is good with handsome two, three and four storey buildings still featuring their traditional sash windows. Some premises need refurbishment to their roadside facades however; shopfronts are attractive in general and there are many good windows displays with very little inappropriate signage. A few shabby looking premises at the top of Mount Street are problematic for their streetscape and the same can be said for Mary Street which presents a nice vista of the Cathedral. Dominick Street, Oliver Plunkett Street and Pearse Street all looked wonderful being free from overhead service cables and featuring attractive lamp standards and other street furniture; wirescape on Austin Friars Street is visually obtrusive. The Market House and its Square look superb with its sculpture installation. The wirescape on Church Avenue spoils the vista of All Saints Church of Ireland. Kerrigans Bar and Lounge on Harbour Street is nicely painted and featured colourful flower displays; Gillerans on the opposite corner looked well too. The Presentation School, Loretto College, Saint Bridget's Schools, were all presented to a high standard. The retaining walls to the GAA sports grounds at the Harbour area could be improved. The Courthouse is impressive and it is good to note its universal accessibility and the Swift nesting boxes.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Mullingar is blessed with two Main Parks and a number of smaller amenity areas the most recent of which is Newbrook Amenity Area with its range of canal facilities and again universal accessibility is applauded. The Town Park in the heart of the town is a magnificent amenity with recreational facilities for all and of course its public orchard; Tranquillity Park allows for those of us needing some quiet time out; it is a pleasure to note the planned Linear Park along the Royal Canal which will have access to both the Greenway and the Blueway and we look forward to experiencing it in the not too distant future. Trees planted at the 1916 Memorial site for National Tree Week are a fitting tribute to those who gave their lives for us. Lovely container flower displays were noted throughout the town and those on the Granville Arms Hotel were especially admired; the canopy over at the terrace of shops on Castle Street might feature flower displays to include some trailing plants for movement; the bulbs underneath should be removed. Green open spaces and grass verges are being nicely managed despite erosion to road edges by vehicles; leaving the inner edges of verges for wildlife is appropriate.

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

The biodiversity awareness programme with the Transition Year students of CBS will amply reward the community in years to come and was a wise investment of resources. It must have been wonderful to see the display of their work in the atrium of the County Buildings and know it is accessible to all; we sincerely hope it will be possible to extend the programme to other schools. Collaboration between the Waters and Communities officer and the schools for their ecology trip on the importance of the River Brosna to Mullingar town and to wildlife is an equally significant investment in the future biodiversity of the town. The small stream that runs to the rear of Shaws / SuperValu carpark is overgrown, berries are growing to the outside of the railings, has its biodiversity status been evaluated? The biodiversity awareness evening is favourably acknowledged also. There are many pollinator projects throughout the town ranging from the bee and pollinator garden in the Town Park to the planting of roundabouts and not forgetting flower displays gracing the built environment; your plan to replant all roundabouts with perennials and become a biodiversity town is laudable. At some stage in the future you might like to evaluate the success of your pollinator activities, for information on this visit <https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/fit-count/> keep us updated on the Swift Survey of the town and the nesting boxes at the Courthouse.

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

Mullingar's Gum Bin installations made from recycled gum is a 'first' for this adjudicator and one to follow up for results, well done! The use of the web-site, Facebook and Twitter accounts to raise awareness regarding sustainable living and issues is excellent; we note the designation of last October as a Re-use Month which also involved hosting demonstrations; the on-going (since April) Chose To Re-use / Conscious Cup Campaign involving Cafes and Restaurants signing up to a commitment and a supply of re-usable cups by the Council will hopefully be successful and make a significant difference to the 22,000 disposable cups per hour discarded here in Ireland. The switch to perennials will bring the town closer to achieving sustainable planting; we note the use of river water for planted areas and suggest water harvesting in strategically located barrels also as rivers can run dry with a consequence for their wildlife. Consideration might also be given to an energy saving project, for ideas go to localprevention.ie and the Tidy Towns Handbook. Mullingar's electric car charging points are favourably noted.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Mullingar was very clean during adjudication, very little litter was noted and weed control was good too. There is a variety of litter initiatives in place and these appear to be successful; appreciation is extended to all involved in the 2-minute litter pick as well as the success of the National Spring Clean Day; the daily street sweeping within the town centre and monthly events on approach roads and in estates makes a big difference also to litter management. The Anti-Dumping initiative on the canal and the enhancement of the Green Bridge / Fair Green area prior to works on site for a playground is noteworthy. We note the difficulty regarding the lack of awareness of cigarette butts not being bio-degradable and your efforts to address this issue. Litter bins appear to be emptied on a regular basis, some bins need refurbishment,

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

Mullingar features a range of dwellings styles from different time periods which is visually interesting; the majority of period houses within the town centre are nicely presented and some, near the Cathedral, even feature small gardens to their roadside façade. Residential estates and individual houses on the entrance from the Mullingar Park Hotel all looked lovely however a few roadside boundary walls to private dwellings need attention. Appreciation is extended to residents of estates that participate in the 2-minute sweep and the three estates that participated in the National Spring Clean. Householders participating in National Tree Week and the switch to perennial planting are making an important contribution to biodiversity. New name-stones for estates should be bi-lingual.

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

Bicycle lanes and bicycle stands are a common feature of Mullingar town and lanes are clearly marked. Access to the Royal Canal at many bridges is a fine feature and this connectivity encourages pedestrian activity. Road and footpath surfaces are generally good and town enhancement works in progress are notable; new paving at a number of locations was admired especially on Castle Street. The Railway Station looks appealing with its freshly applied yellow paint. Maintenance of approach roads, roundabouts and the Ring Road is good and we note provision for pollinators and well-informed hedgerow management. Lanes and side areas looked quite tidy but just a little jaded in appearance. Street furniture is nicely presented in most instances and the large planters are truly impressive. Some service poles and litter bins need refurbishment as well as some street name-plates. A lot of well

organised on-street car parking is a feature of Mullingar town centre however your adjudicator wonders if more off-street car parking should be provided?

Concluding Remarks:

Mullingar is a beautiful place in which to live, work and play and your adjudicator plans a return visit for recreation and fun. Your aspiration to become a Biodiversity Town is applauded, consideration might also be given to becoming a Zero-Waste Town.