

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Blessington - Baile Coimín</b>	Ref: <b>713</b>
County: <b>Wicklow</b>	Mark: <b>301</b>
Category: <b>E</b>	Date(s): <b>11/07/2019</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	40	43
Streetscape & Public Places	60	37	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	36	37
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	30	31
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31	32
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>301</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Blessington – Baile Coimín páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Many thanks for your colourful entry form and all the accompanying information showing how much thought and planning you are putting into your work. Thank you for your laminated map, including a key or even colour coding project numbers according to category would be most helpful next year as it was difficult trying to relate the map numbers to the text. An adjudicator's job involves an awful lot of going between entry forms and maps invariably while walking or sitting in a car either in rain or hot sun so anything that facilitates this process is most gratefully acknowledged! Also please include numbers for some of your maintenance projects – we would like to have seen a few but couldn't locate them. You have a great committee set-up with delegated jobs and categories and clearly many links with other community groups. You have a great support network of local businesses and public bodies and best of all you have good links with your local schools. Five primary schools is a lot to keep track of but you are managing that and delighted to see that the local secondary school Blessington Community College is also coming on board too. There is lots of scope for projects to work on together with Transition Year and Gaisce Awards etc. Learning about the rewards of volunteer effort within your own community is a hugely valuable lesson for a youngster to learn that will pay them back many times in their lifetime. Well done on organising the Tidy Towns Network Event. In my adjudication travels this summer I have come across several committees who have told us how useful it was so take a bow Blessington Tidy Towns! Working together and gaining knowledge from each other's experiences is very energizing.

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

Blessington is choked by cars and the Town Square regeneration plan is an excellent one showing the potential for the future of this lovely town – we look forward with interest to the development of this plan. The Downshire Monument looked stunning sparkling in the sunshine of adjudication day. Well done on the work on the other monuments nearby – the Four Stone Balls and Tree are so unusual. The skate park looked well and was being very well used during our visit. The Outdoor Gym equipment was noted at a number of different spots around the town. The granite seats project will be lovely when its finished and a nice nod to the granite heritage of the area. St Patrick's Well was visited – well done on all the work you have done here. There is potential for a little more development in keeping with the peacefulness of the spot – a small bench and some pots of pollinator-friendly plants would really finish off this area. Your Best Presented Business Premises Award is a good one. We feel there is scope here for some shop fronts to make more of a nod to the 19th century heritage of the town – this is probably in your thinking already with your future plans for a shop front improvement scheme. Good luck with this – Blessington has excellent 'bone structure' with its history and heritage. It has the potential to rival heritage towns in the country if it looks after these features.

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

Well done on the thinking behind your seed bomb project, however, we have to issue a word of caution here as seed bombs are alright in gardens but many of the species listed are not native Irish wildflowers and one runs the risk of introducing plants that could become invasive in the wild. In many cases, simple changes in grass mowing regimes will result in wildflower meadows of their own accord. Simply manage like a hay meadow leaving the first mowing until July, removing the hay and then a final mowing in September. You'll find after a couple of years the resident wildflowers and grasses will start to flower. Depending on the size and location of your grassy area sometimes it adds a nice touch of grass paths are mown through the lawns to entice the walker. Well done on your tree planting and the John Kelly roundabout looked well on adjudication day with a few of you out weeding it! The planting here was very nice with lovely colour and pollinator-friendly plants used. This was the first time we'd come across a roundabout with its own interpretative sign but sure why not? It makes interesting reading for passing walkers. You carry out a lot of work on the grass verges around the town. Where appropriate you might think of leaving the grass verge near the hedge or wall to grow long and flower and just mow one mower's width on the roadside edge. In this way the verge is managed with wildlife in mind. Posters can be downloaded from [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) to erect and explain what you are doing. This won't work everywhere in a big town like Blessington but there are bound to be some areas that would benefit from this type of management which is all about providing enough nesting habitats for our pollinator species whose numbers are rapidly decreasing in part due to habitat loss. Your spring bulb project sounds wonderful and we note your knowledge that daffodils aren't of use to pollinators but crocuses and snowdrops are along with Muscari (grape hyacinths). We note your remark about sustainable planting and foregoing colour – please note this is not the case! Pollinator-friendly planting is very colourful with herbaceous perennials such as Astrantias, Hardy geraniums, Penstemons, Perennial daisies, Sedums and Japanese anemones all giving colour that lasts from April right through to October. The excellent Pollinator Planting Code freely available to download from [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) will give you lots of ideas and inspirations with lists of plants for every type of situation.

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

Many of the flower beds along the Main Street were noted containing perennial shrubs but most do need an injection of colour – hopefully the advice above will help here with perennial plants that won't need too much maintenance and will last for years thus cutting out the yearly costs of annuals. Well done on your Urban Orchard extensions – this is such a great biodiversity project for the community with benefits all round. Your plan to extend your Wildlife Corridor is very laudable – you've clearly learnt plenty from your Local Biodiversity Action Plan and this is great to see – it's clearly not one of those plans that collects dust on a shelf! Well done on your Bee Habitat Creation Workshop – we look forward to future projects carrying out further work on this around Blessington. You've great pictures of dandelions showing you putting the 'Don't mow, let it grow' motto into action. It's really important that you've been letting people know why you are doing it and hopefully more Blessington gardens will feature dandelions next spring! Don't worry about your Pyramidal orchids – they will look after themselves if you manage the road bank as a hay meadow – with the first mowing after the orchids have set seed in late July. Your interest in the Swift Project could be enhanced further by participating in a Swift nestbox project – contact Birdwatch Ireland and the Wicklow Heritage Officer for more information. It strikes us that Blessington would have some perfect buildings for putting up the swift boxes and encouraging these beautiful birds to nest in your town. As with all categories you've lots of plans for the future – a NeighbourWood Scheme would be wonderful and we look forward to it happening in the future.

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

Many congratulations on establishing a SEC in Blessington. This will take a lot of work but will bring many rewards for the town. The self-watering planter boxes sound interesting – keep us informed of how they perform on into future competitions. Well done on your bamboo cups and the Tap Map project – the latter in particular is something that will only get bigger as more and more people are using reusable water bottles. You have several different projects ongoing in this category – you are clearly giving it lots of thought! The 'Don't fume campaign' is very commendable – something that could be spread right through the country, people just don't realise the extra pollution they are creating with their idling cars never mind the wasted expensive petrol and diesel. The plastic free 5k race is another great idea that could be spread elsewhere. Well done Blessington – you're blazing a sustainability trail!

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

Well done on your tidiness and litter control, Blessington was looking well on adjudication day. It is acknowledged that having the very busy N81 run right through the heart of your town cannot be easy but you have a great work plan in place and lots of volunteers to help by the looks of things. The Adopt a Patch project is also great for getting others to start thinking a bit more about what is involved in keeping a town tidy and will hopefully result in more volunteers to help out. Great to see you taking the initiative to send local TY students to the Leave no Trace workshop in Laragh – no doubt they are spreading the word amongst their peers and some Blessington Tidy Towns members of the future are being created!

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

The Pride in my Estate competition is a great way of involving and supporting the many housing estates in Blessington. Have you thought about having sub-categories with prizes for biodiversity, best sustainable project etc? Participation in the National Spring Clean is very good and another way of promoting community spirit and

awareness.

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

Well done on having the Age Friendly Walkability Audit carried out – another sign that Blessington Tidy Towns are considering all ages in their community. We take a lot for granted and often miss things that could be obstacles for others older than ourselves. You mention in future projects that further wildflower strips are to be added. These need not be seeded with wildflowers but simply manage the grass mowing as described above.

**Concluding Remarks:**

Blessington has grown to become a large town as it is within commuting distance of Dublin, however, Blessington Tidy Towns are working to preserve and maintain the town's distinctive heritage as well as working to improve the environment for all. Keep up your great work and we look forward to our next visit to Blessington.