

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Lacken - An Leacain** Ref: **2233**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **240**
Category: **A** Date(s): **11/07/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	35	38
Streetscape & Public Places	60	30	33
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	30	33
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	15	18
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	5	7
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	25	27
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30	31
TOTAL MARK	470	220	240

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Lacken - An Leacain páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachmhara 2019. Welcome Lacken and thank you for your entry form illustrated with lots of helpful photos and a great, really clear map. This is only your second year in the competition but as time goes on and you develop more projects, it will be helpful colour code projects on your map according to category and also differentiate between M, N and FP. You have a terrific number of people to call on for a small population – this alone tells a huge amount community spirit in the west Wicklow hills! You have lots of support also from many local businesses and keep up your liaising with public bodies and authorities as they will be able to help you with all sorts of projects on into the future.

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

It's only your second year in the competition but you've carried out a huge amount of work already! The Nook is a lovely spot showing off the gorgeous local granite. The planting above it is lovely and will mature nicely over the coming years. We loved Irish inscription on the new granite seat and hope many great stories are told and heard here over the years! The old school building is an absolute gem sitting perched above the lake. All the details of the building are just beautiful. We noted the application for planning permission sign for it to become your new Community Centre. It will be great to have the building made ready for a modern thriving community to use, however, please get all the advice you can about ensuring its wonderful vernacular character is retained because once lost they will be very hard and expensive to retrieve. The Heritage Council have published lots of helpful guides for communities dealing with old buildings. Their website is www.heritagecouncil.ie It can be a tricky balancing act trying to match characterful old buildings with modern needs but many communities around Ireland have successfully achieved it! Richardson's old shop is another prominent feature in the village and it has the potential to be a great addition or an eyesore depending on how the future pans out for this lovely building. Hopefully it is possible for it to have a bright future at the heart of your community. Several villages in south-west Wicklow are running their own community shops and cafes after losing their village shops. Maybe this might be something that could work for Lacken in the future too? Your planting schemes in the planters around the school were looking lovely on adjudication day and we were delighted to see all the pollinator-friendly herbaceous perennials.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We walked the first few hundred metres of the new Mass Path and we were absolutely smitten! This path is beautiful and will add so much to the quality of life for Lacken residents and visitors alike. The huge importance of quiet green spaces for our mental as well as physical health is rightly being recognised so very well done on this

wonderful project. The nature and biodiversity value of this path is huge and so far you seem to have developed it sensitively. The naturalness of this path is a big part of its attractiveness so make sure not to urbanise it. You are tying in both your social and your natural heritage with this project. We look forward to returning to walk it all when it is completed. The Boat planter is a lovely idea facing the lake where you found it! It has some nice plants in it adding a splash of colour. A possible future use might be to make it your community herb garden? It could feature short and tall herbs such as rosemary, chives, thyme, fennel, sage, parsley etc, all of which are pollinator friendly and make for a nice area of community use as well as looking good! The Planting Code mentioned below will have more suggestions. You mention in your 3 Year plan that you hope to plant some roses at the church grounds. This sounds a lovely project but when planning for it please make sure to use plants listed in the really helpful 'Pollinator Planting Code' available to download at www.pollinators.ie/resources We have lost 17% of our bumblebees alone since 2012. It is a responsibility of Tidy Towns groups who are planting in public areas to do what we can by providing lots of pollinator food by way of long flowering herbaceous perennials, leaving grass verges for their nesting habitats, letting wildflowers flower instead of mowing and strimming them away and not using poisonous herbicides. Roses are beautiful but the hybrid ones with lots of petals are of no food value to pollinator species – best to go for the open flowered varieties. The Code will have lots of suggestions. Your planting schemes around the village are good with lots of herbaceous perennials seen – you obviously have some green fingered volunteers! And of course the other great factor about these plants is how they can be split after a few years and planted elsewhere thus providing free plants and saving Lacken Tidy Villages money not to mention time and effort because they don't need to be planted each year.

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

We noted how you are managing the grassy area behind the boat as a wildflower meadow. This is great and works perfectly in your rural area. It won't need much work – just manage like a hay meadow each year with a first mowing as late as possible – May, June or even early July. Remove the cuttings (so they don't enrich the soil) and then one more cut in September, again removing the cuttings. Gradually after a few years you will notice more and more wildflowers coming in naturally. There is potential for you to manage all or part of the Cilin and Graveyard the same way – graveyards are often havens for wildflowers and pollinators. Grass paths can be mown through the meadow vegetation if liked. The season of interest for wildflower meadows can also be lengthened by planting bulbs such as crocuses and muscari through the lawn area. Both are also great for pollinators. Unfortunately, daffodils and tulips are of little value to pollinators. Download your copy of the community version of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan for lots of helpful guidance and advice. Also The Heritage Council has produced a helpful guide for communities 'Guidance for the care and conservation and recording of Historic Graveyards' which is available to download from their website as mentioned above. We saw the bug hotel at the school grounds as well as the lovely apple trees which featured lots of fruit ripening. Great to hear the schoolchildren were treated to a visit by bird expert Eric Dempsey. In Lacken, they are surrounded by an area rich in birdlife and gaining knowledge about the birdlife will enhance their enjoyment of their home place. We loved the photos of the 'Gardens on a Plate' entry. Lots of imagination and thought put into them! You mention how you plan to install bat boxes in future. Make sure to contact Bat Conservation Ireland who will have lots of advice for you and some great community resources free to download from their website www.batconservationireland.org You could also create a wonderful community event around having them come and lead a bat walk around Lacken which you could follow with a community barbeque or picnic perhaps? Lacken is bound to be home to several species of bat and their life cycles and biology always fascinates people.

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

Well done on your evident re-using around the village. Great to hear your water tap is listed with refill.ie – very fitting as you sit above the reservoir! This category is becoming more and more relevant and important but can be difficult for groups to incorporate into their communities. Look to other communities for ideas and your Wicklow Co. Co. Environmental Awareness Office who offer lots of interesting workshops and information.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Lacken was looking very clean and tidy and litter free on adjudication day. Well done on this work. We also paid a visit to the lovely beach which you also work on and this too was litter free after what must have been a few busy sunny days down there. Great to see you are taking part in the Pure Mile project which has been so successful all across Co. Wicklow.

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

All was looking well on adjudication day around lovely Lacken. It displays a typical Irish rural pattern of dispersed settlement and plenty of nice mature gardens too.

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

Several areas along some approach roads were noted to have been recently sprayed with herbicide. Apart from being an unsightly dead brown where the eye expects to see vibrant green, this practice is incompatible with protecting our threatened pollinators. The overuse of herbicides throughout Ireland in recent decades is a contributory factor to the alarming decline in these important species. The pollinators website mentioned above will have helpful information about this and alternatives although we need to look at 'weeds' with new eyes – e.g. scientists now realise the huge importance of dandelions in feeding bumblebees emerging from hibernation. Tidy Towns groups all over the country can use their knowledge to inform those in their community about the consequences of herbicide use on their local biodiversity and help to find a new way to manage things.

Concluding Remarks:

We really enjoyed our visit to beautiful Lacken and were very impressed with the amount you have achieved in just two short years of entering the competition. The best of luck with all your future projects and we look forward to a return visit.